



NEWSLETTER

December 2005 – January 2006

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Announcements

Next SAGE Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 5 January 2006
Fish & Game Hut, 9th Ave and 10 St S., Lethbridge

The agenda will focus on a presentation by Ann Baran regarding the CASA project to address air emissions from confined feeding operations. Other SAGE activities also will be discussed. Everyone welcome. Refreshments provided.

South Saskatchewan River Basin Draft Water Management Plan Public Consultation Sessions

Monday, December 5, Lethbridge Lodge
Open House: 2:30 – 7 p.m.
Public Meeting: 7-9:30 p.m.

For a copy of the draft plan call 310-0000 then dial 403-297-6250 or visit environment.gov.ab.ca.

Notes and Updates

SAGE Has New Logo – Roundstreet Media has worked with the Board of SAGE and other interested members to develop a logo. SAGE vice-president Kelsey Prenevost has led this effort. Kelsey remarks – “We have chosen a stylistic logo with an environmental theme which can be easily incorporated into our website and shows up well in black and white for our letterhead and for faxing. This clear and simple design conveys the image of an environmental organization that means business.”

Please Renew Your Membership – A membership renewal form is included with this edition of the newsletter. Think about signing up a friend. SAGE's membership year will now begin in January rather than in September as was the case prior to recent revision of bylaws. The annual general meeting will occur in March. Members' support means SAGE can continue to inform citizens, participate in public processes and support sound environmental initiatives and actions.

'Green' Lighting for Sun Ridge - SAGE Director Rena Woss and Jim Mawhinney have met with City staff encouraging measures that reduce light pollution and provide energy savings. Rena reports that the City of Lethbridge is requiring flat lens fixtures that will run at 70 watts in the street lighting for new developments, including Sun Ridge. As well, park lights which are solar powered and flat or shielded are being considered for Sun Ridge. Rena and Jim have developed an excellent PowerPoint presentation on the topic of light pollution which they are willing to share with anyone. Contact Rena or Jim at 329-8547 for more information.

Light Pollution Tip (by Rena Woss) - Winter is fast approaching and this is a perfect time to replace outdoor lighting with fixtures or bulbs that direct the light *down* to areas that you want lit rather than upwards towards the sky. By doing so, you minimize light pollution, thereby giving yourself the gift of enjoying more of the dark night sky with its splendor of celestial lights. Treat yourself and your family to this part of our natural environment. Shielded light bulbs (and star book) make wonderful stocking stuffers.

Oldman Watershed Council Update (by Cheryl Fujikawa, SAGE Director and NGO Rep on OWC Board) -

- The 2004-2005 Annual Report is complete. It will be inserted in newspapers in the basin and is available on the OWC website (www.oldmanbasin.org).
- A consensus method of making decisions has been adopted by the Board of Directors.
- Work is progressing on helping working groups define terms of reference, budgets and fundraising opportunities.
- A State of the Basin report is being developed.
- Half of the OWC Board positions will be up for election at the annual general meeting on March 15, 2006. Individuals interested in representing environmental interests are encouraged to put their names forward to ensure balance in Board deliberations.
- If you have not yet done so, please be sure to join OWC. It's free!

We live in a divine milieu. (P. Teilhard de Chardin, 1968)
Destruction of the natural world is destruction of modes of divine presence. (Thomas Berry, 1995)

Key Recommendations of SSRB Plan – The draft South Saskatchewan River Basin Plan is the culmination of five years of work by government and subbasin advisory committees to define the direction water management should take in southern Alberta. Key recommendations contained in the plan are that:

- Alberta Environment stop accepting applications for new water allocations in the Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan River sub-basins until the Minister of Environment specifies how water not currently allocated should be used.
- Alberta Environment set a limit on water available for allocation in the Red Deer River sub-basin which would be subject to re-evaluation with new information on the aquatic environment and the reliability of licences.
- A committee of sub-basin representatives be formed to provide advice to Alberta Environment on how best to meet the apportionment agreement with Saskatchewan.
- Specific water conservation objectives (WCOs) be established for specific reaches (minimum rates of flow are defined) and Alberta Environment secure water for these purposes through licences. Restoring flows to meet WCOs should be taken through holdbacks during water allocation transfers and encouraging voluntary action by licence holders.
- Improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of water use.

To learn more and comment on the plan attend the public consultation session in Lethbridge on December 5.

Talks Continue on Sharing of St. Mary and Milk Rivers

– On November 16 SAGE Director Cheryl Fujikawa attended a briefing meeting of the task force charged by the International Joint Commission (IJC) with improving administrative procedures for sharing waters of the Milk and St. Mary Rivers between the United States and Canada. Attendees of the meeting, in the town of Milk River, were an invited group of water managers and the Milk River and Oldman Watershed Councils. Cheryl reports the task force informed participants that several options have been defined, none of which are expected to have significant environmental impact (e.g. large water storage facilities). The task force report will be submitted to IJC in December with public release likely in February 2006.

As an aside, a new board of the Milk River Watershed Council will be elected at a meeting on November 30 in Milk River.

Castle Matters – SAGE has been a long-time supporter of protection of the Castle Wildland through its membership in the Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition and recently through participation in the Yellowstone to Yukon Network. Judy Huntley, CCWC coordinator, attended SAGE's last meeting and brought three important matters to our attention.

1) On September 10 the Court of Appeal overturned a decision at the Court of Queen's Bench which found Alberta Environment's decision to approve the real estate and ski terrain development at Castle Mountain Resort (CMR) without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) "patently unreasonable". Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition is consulting with lawyers to see if there are grounds for an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

2) A Preliminary Hearing by the Environmental Appeal Board regarding expansion of Castle Mountain Resort's sewage treatment system will commence at 8 am on Tuesday, November 29 at the Lethbridge Lodge. Anyone can attend.

3) Conservationists are encouraging the Alberta Government to proceed with establishing the Castle wilderness as the Andy Russell - I'tai sah kòp Wildland Park in memory of Andy and Kay Russell, and in recognition of the Piikani First Nation. The Castle valleys and mountains were a favourite haunt of the late Andy Russell and his wife Kay. The area is part of the traditional homeland of the Piikani (Peigan) First Nation with whom Andy had lifelong friendships. I'tai sah kòp means "where we get the paint." Please join many other Canadians, including Robert Bateman and Right Honourable Joe Clark, in writing letters to encourage Premier Klein to make this lasting tribute. Visit www.ccwc.ab.ca for more information.

The Future of Rich Alberta (the following are excerpts from a presentation by SAGE past-president Klaus Jericho at a Liberal Caucus meeting in Lethbridge in late October) –

Fossil-fuel-rich Alberta is enjoying a surplus in revenue. This revenue should be much bigger than it is if royalties were to favour Alberta rather than foreign industries. This surplus should be used to secure our wealth per capita for the long-term. Wealth is here defined as an economy's entire productive base, comprising man-made capital, natural capital, knowledge, skills and institutions.

We have the opportunity to create a sustainable economy. The present uncontrolled rush to growth is not sustainable. Uneconomic growth occurs when increase in production comes at an expense of resources and well-being that is worth more than the items made. In several "developed" countries the costs of growth are rising faster than the benefits. The measure of progress by Gross National Product is inappropriate as it is a misleading index of human well-being. It needs to be replaced by Net National Product, Net Primary Production, Genuine Progress index or Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare.

Our production of wealth per capita must be reflected in our quality of life. We need a continuous review by society of what we collectively mean by quality of life and progress. Personally, I include the following in quality of life: health care, safe food and shelter provision, freedom of speech with listening decision-makers, leisure choices, minimal congestion, ease of movement by efficient mass transport or non-destructive private transport, conservation of our natural environments, decisive government leadership with a long term vision and the knowledge that the above have a long-term basis.

This is a massive challenge which is further complicated by the reality of the complexity of our physical and biological world, with all its uncertainties. Our revenue surplus gives us the opportunity to at least aim for it. This will require knowledge, foresight and leadership.

To meet these challenges we must foster the knowledge-base of all segments of society. But we do not have the luxury to wait for the young to learn and hopefully behave and lead us correctly. It is essential that we invest in the knowledge base of our present decision-makers so that they may be better equipped to make the best long-term decisions for society in an uncertain world.