

Southern Alberta Environmental Group

Box 383, Lethbridge, AB T1J 3Y7

NEWSLETTER

February, 2005

Editor: Cheryl Bradley, phone: 403-328-1245, fax: 403-380-4969, e-mail: cebradley@shaw.ca

Announcements

SAEG February Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 3 February 2005

Fish & Game Hut, 9th Ave and 10 St S., Lethbridge

The agenda includes updates on ongoing activities and discussion of new SAEG initiatives. Focus will be on SAEG's involvement in developing a strategic plan for air quality from confined feeding operations through the Alberta Clean Air Strategic Alliance. Refreshments provided.

Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: Community-Based Social Marketing Workshops

Monday, 14 February 2005, Calgary

Recycling Council of Alberta is sponsoring a workshop on an approach for fostering sustainable behaviour known as community-based social marketing. Expert Douglas Mackenzie-Mohr will address topics such as identifying the barriers to a desired behavior; using behavior change "tools" to design more effective programs; pilot testing a program; and evaluating the impact of a program. For more information call 402.843.6563 or visit www.recycle.ab.ca.

Oldman Watershed Council Annual General Meeting

8 am – 5 pm, Thursday, 3 March 2005, Lethbridge Lodge

The program will include updates on work of various teams, election of a Board of Directors and a keynote address by entertaining speaker Brian Keating, Head of Conservation Outreach at the Calgary Zoo. There will be poster sessions and displays. For more information and to register visit www.oldmanbasin.org or call 403.382.4239.

Notes and Updates

SAEG Offers E-mail Choice – Would you prefer to receive your SAEG newsletter by e-mail? If so, please notify Ken Revak at ken.revak@telusplanet.net. Once SAEG has a website, newsletters can be posted there.

Home and Garden Show 2005 (by Rena Woss) - SAEG will be participating in the Home and Garden Show which runs March 16 – 19th 2005. Last year approximately 30,000 people attended so this is a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase our efforts to a huge audience and bring new members on board. SAEG is sharing space with the Earth Day Committee's One Tonne Challenge and the Oldman Watershed Council's urban stormwater education program.

Volunteers will be needed to sit at our booth for a few hours at a time. We will be doing a phone around about the middle of February to recruit volunteers. In the meantime if you are able to help out, please email Rena at phoenix328@shaw.ca or phone her at 328-2898.

To Be SAEG or To Be SAGE – A suggestion has been put forward to change our name from Southern Alberta Environmental Group to Southern Alberta Group for the Environment. Please provide your views on this to Cheryl by e-mail cebradley@shaw.ca.

SAEG is an Active Partner in Alberta Ecotrust (by Klaus Jericho) - As a member of the Alberta Ecotrust project review committee, I represented SAEG at the public release of the "Assessment of Environmental Priorities and Voluntary Sector Capacity Needs in Alberta" on November 18, 2004. Ecotrust, with 26 partners from the corporate and environmental sector, is the major grant maker for environmental community-based projects in Alberta.

Some 75 invited guests and media attended and enjoyed the following wine and cheese. The summary report "Maximizing Effectiveness" was highlighted and copies provided for the guests. The report was based on data collected by Ecotrust from surveys of 240 environment-related groups in Alberta. Survey results will guide Ecotrust in its project funding and also help Ecotrust with capacity building programs for environment groups. [Editor's Note: See SAEG's January newsletter for a summary of the survey results or visit www.albertaecotrust.com.]

The next day I participated in the project review committee (equally represented by corporate and environmental group representatives) to assess 15 project submissions previously read and rated by committee members. Seven projects were funded totaling \$92,050 and ranged from \$3,300 to the maximum \$20,000 (this maximum amount per project will increase based on the survey results). In addition two projects were funded under the Small Communities Initiatives program for a total of \$9,280. Projects included school ground naturalizations, bear safety education, boreal forest conservation, a commuter challenge, community-based environmental monitoring, sustainable development education, and assessing the needs of Albertans for Smart Growth. There are two Ecotrust project reviews annually with application deadlines on March 15 and September 30.

SAEG Focuses on Light Pollution (by Rena Woss) - During a presentation on January 13, SAEG members learned that light pollution - poorly designed, uncontrolled lighting - leads to a multitude of complex problems. Safety

issues, environmental pollution, inability to see the night sky, and more are direct results of light pollution. Billions of kilowatt hours are wasted each year. It is estimated that New York alone wastes 136 million kilowatt hours each year.

When lights are efficient, shielded and directed to shine down, sky glow is eliminated and pedestrians, drivers and wildlife are safer. Energy demand also can be reduced. To this end, we encourage you to do a survey of your own exterior lighting and determine how you can help in removing some of the light pollution around your own home.

Lights can easily be shielded, energy efficient light bulbs installed, and timers used. Shields can be as simple as painted black coffee cans placed around offending flood lights. For a few dollars an offending light can be replaced with better shielded and more energy efficient fixture.

Making the Right Choice for a Frugal Flush Toilet –

Conserving water by using less when we flush was again been on Lethbridge City Council agenda. A resolution, unanimously passed on January 24, directs administration to consider a bylaw which will require low-flow bathroom systems in new homes. SAEG applauds City Council for taking this important step to encourage water conservation in Lethbridge. Another step Council can take is to offer rebates to current homeowners who switch to low-flow toilets.

When Council considered installing two-flush toilets in City Hall last year, there was concern some models are not CSA approved. Investigations by SAEG members into two-flush toilets reveal that an Australian company, Caroma, is the world leader in the technology. Caroma makes three models of two button dual flush systems (3 liter / 6 liter) which can save up to 67% for the annual water usage of a regular toilet. All are CSA approved and endorsed by Energy Smart Canada which is committed to researching and introducing new products from various parts of the world to create a better environment. For more information visit their website at www.energysmartcanada.com.

Foundation Releases Report on Water Conservation –

The Canada West Foundation has just released a report titled *Balancing Act: Water Conservation and Economic Growth* which identifies barriers to advancing water conservation initiatives and suggests future directions to overcome these barriers. The report is primarily based on information gathered at two stakeholder consultations. The report is available at www.cwf.ca.

Four main barriers identified are 1) public policy that discourages efficient use of water, 2) the myths of water abundance and entitlement among Albertans, 3) lack of information on supply of groundwater and surface water and on demand management, and 4) lack of sufficient resources (human and financial) to encourage water conservation and to pilot new technologies.

Update on Milk River Water Dispute –

Five months after public meetings on a challenge by Montana regarding sharing of water from the St. Mary and Milk rivers, the International Joint Commission has appointed a task force to examine if administrative procedures for apportioning water between Canada and the United States can be improved. Under a 1909 treaty the rivers are to be treated as one and divided equally. A 1921 order by IJC specifies how the water is to be measured and allocated.

Co-chairs of the eight-member task force are from Environment Canada and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Other Canadian appointees are managers from Alberta Environment, Saskatchewan Water Authority and Environment Canada. U.S. appointees are from Montana Water Management Bureau, HKM Engineering and U.S. Geological Survey. A final report will be submitted by July.

Meanwhile, the results of a feasibility study regarding proposals for water storage structures to capture Alberta's share of water from the Milk River are unavailable. Public meetings on the terms of reference for the study were held in March 2003. At that time SAEG made a written submission expressing concerns about the environmental implications of an on-stream dam. The completed pre-feasibility study was submitted to Alberta Environment by the consultant over a year ago. Repeated requests by SAEG for the report have been denied.

Smarten up Safeway when it comes to Salmon Sales -

Raising salmon in open net cages increases risk of disease for wild salmon and pollutes coastal waters. In addition studies have shown farmed salmon to contain higher levels of PCBs and dioxins than wild salmon. Environmental groups working on these issues are urging restaurants and grocers to sell only wild salmon. Safeway, a major grocer in both Canada and the US, says it will continue to sell farmed salmon as long as there is a demand for it. Individual consumers can provide a powerful message by demanding only wild salmon and urging Safeway to live up to their claim of environment responsibility by getting open net cage farmed salmon out of their stores. For more information on this issue visit www.FarmedandDangerous.org.

Defining Corporate Environmental Responsibility –

The Pembina Institute and Pollution Probe are inviting a diverse group of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) across Canada to define what corporate environmental responsibility means from their perspective. Stories of successful environmental leadership in the corporate sector are being sought to help define key elements of corporate environmental responsibility. The process will include one-on-one interviews, a draft discussion paper based on literature review and interview responses, a workshop to explore common ground and diversity of opinions and a final report for distribution in summer 2005. If you have success stories or want more information please contact Alison Jamison at 403.269.3344 ext 112.

2005 Emerald Award Nominations Sought –

Nominations are now being accepted from individuals (including youth), community groups, organizations and others in Alberta that have demonstrated excellence in initiatives to protect, preserve, enhance and sustain our environment. Nomination forms are available from the Emerald Awards website at www.emeraldawards.com. Nominations close on Monday, 28 February 2005; finalists will be announced in May and the 14th annual celebration will take place on 7 June at Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts in Calgary.

But environmentalism in the deepest sense is not about environment. It is not about things but relationships, not about beings but Being, not about the world but the inseparability of self and circumstances Neil Evernden.