



NEWSLETTER

September - October 2007

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Announcements

SAGE October Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, October 4, 2007
Fish & Game Hut 9th Ave & 10 St. S., Lethbridge

There will not be a SAGE meeting in September. The October 4th meeting will include updates on SAGE initiatives, discussion of new issues and planning of SAGE's 2007 to 2008 activities. Any suggested agenda items should be provided to president Kelsey Prenevost by email kelsey@kyotofuels.com

Everyone welcome. Refreshments are provided.

Music for the Headwaters in support of the Andy Russell I'tai sah kop Wildland Park

6:30 pm, Friday, Sept. 14, 2007
Lethbridge University Theatre

The concert, beginning at 7:30 pm, will feature artists James Keelaghan, Lesley Schatz, John Wort Hannam, Sid Marty and Simone Smith. Prior to the concert will be silent auction and displays.

In Lethbridge, tickets are available in advance for \$25 at Marksman Guns & Sports, Penny Coffee House and West Side Stories. Tickets at the door are \$30.

The event is hosted by Sierra Club of Canada, Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition, Southern Alberta Community of Environmental Educators and Southern Alberta Youth for Environmental Education. Sponsors include the Calgary Foundation, City of Lethbridge and Stepping Stone Cabins Bed & Breakfast.

Prairie Citizens Water Directive

Forum on Sustainable Management of Water

6:30–9:00 pm, Tuesday, September 25, 2007
Ballroom, Students Union Building,
University of Lethbridge

The Sierra Club of Canada – Prairie Chapter has organized a ten city bus tour to engage citizens across the prairie provinces in a collective call for action on water management. The forums will feature a proposal for a citizens' directive on water management. Participants will have opportunity to discuss expectations and strategies and actions for change. To register, visit www.aenweb.ca.

Canada West Foundation Student Essay Contest

Who should have the greatest responsibility for reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions: governments, industries or individuals? CWF is offering a \$5,000 cash prize to the post-secondary student in BC, Alberta or Saskatchewan who writes the winning essay (750 to 1000 words). Deadline is 1 Dec 2007. Visit www.cwf.ca for details.

Alberta Airshed Zones Conference Monitoring and Managing Air Quality

October 22-23, 2007, Radisson Hotel Calgary Airport

There will be presentations from all nine Airshed Zones in Alberta. Also featured will be technical sessions on air quality monitoring methods and quality assurance plans as well as management sessions on approval processes, health-based air quality indexes and air quality management in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Registration fee for non-government organizations and the public is only \$50 for the 2-day event. To register, visit www.ceo.ab.ca/airsheds.php.

SAGE News

Report to SAGE on Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership Advisory Committee

(from information provided by Klaus Jericho) – For two years Klaus Jericho has represented SAGE on an advisory committee to the Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership (SAAEP). SAAEP was formed in 2006 by the Boards of Economic Development Lethbridge, South Grow Regional Initiative and Alberta Southwest Regional Alliance. Their goal is for Southern Alberta to be a global leader in alternative energy production and manufacturing. The Advisory Committee was asked to advise SAAEP on alternative energy opportunities and strategies.

The committee, comprised of 13 volunteer members representing, agriculture, research, alternative energy sector and environment, met seven times between September 2006 and June 2007. It created the Green Growth Plan with the objectives to understand the region's capacity for development of the industry, identify potential opportunities and barriers and

conduct a public consultation process to gather information about citizen priorities.

The committee's final report was presented to SAAEP on Jun 27, 2007. The report summarizes input from industry and government agencies and from ten public consultation meetings held in nine communities across the region. It includes recommendations for moving forward including that SAAEP should be retained as an organization to continue to advocate, to build networks, be a clearinghouse for developers, and to plan an alternative energy forum. The pros and cons of specific alternative energy sources were not addressed.

The advisory committee has now disbanded since its work is done. For more information on SAAEP, visit www.saaep.ca

SAGE Participates in Critical Review of Water for Life – In late August 2007, SAGE and eight other environmental organizations jointly submitted a review containing analysis and recommendations for renewal of *Water for Life (WFL): Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. These member organizations of the Alberta Environmental Network represent the environmental interest on the Alberta Water Council (AWC). AWC is a 25-member partnership tasked with monitoring and stewarding implementation of *Water for Life*. All AWC member organizations and other interested parties were asked by government to evaluate the success of *Water for Life* three years into the 10-year implementation plan.

The review, largely developed by Bow Riverkeepers, recognizes that *Water for Life* could be a significant progressive step for water management in Alberta, if fully implemented. The strategy embraces a collaborative, watershed approach to planning and places a strong emphasis on having adequate information to support decision-making. It is not, however, backed up by regulation nor is it adequately resourced. Implementation is well behind schedule.

Of primary concern to environmental interests is the lack of progress on the *Water for Life* goal of healthy aquatic ecosystems. The review states that government must provide strong policy and legislation because industry is unlikely to voluntarily protect aquatic ecosystems. For example, consensus has not been reached on a revised provincial wetland policy despite many hours of discussion among interests.

The review specifically recommends that to accomplish the aquatic ecosystem protection goal of *Water for Life*, critical aquatic ecosystem areas across the province need to be identified and legally protected, a province-wide wetland policy based on no-net-loss needs to be adopted, and flows required for aquatic ecosystem health need to be defined and mandated in legislation. Government will need to assure sufficient financial and human resources, information and tools to achieve the goal of healthy aquatic ecosystems.

With respect to the *Water for Life* goal of a safe, secure drinking water supply, the review recognizes that considerable progress has been made in assessing and upgrading drinking water infrastructure. However, more attention to water issues in First Nations communities is needed.

Little progress has been made in defining a sustainable "source-to-tap" approach. The review recommends developing a comprehensive and enforceable source water protection strategy with particular emphasis on headwaters.

A third key goal of *Water for Life* is reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy. To date, work towards this goal includes a cost accounting study of government-owned water infrastructure, an inventory of potential water storage sites, and an evaluation of economic instruments for accomplishing *Water for Life* outcomes, including conservation.

The review recommends managing demand, rather than supply, to achieve water security and environmental protection goals. *Water for Life's* goal of a 30 percent conservation target must be a minimum target for all sectors and meeting targets must be mandatory, not voluntary. In addition, the review recommends there be a critical analysis of Alberta's water allocation system.

The review contains other recommendations for renewing *Water for Life*. Among these are:

- Establish clear roles, responsibilities, accountability and authority for Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils.
- Create clear guidelines and mandatory requirements for watershed plans.
- Manage land and water interaction on a watershed scale, including the integration of groundwater.
- Increase spending to core *Water for Life* activities.

For a copy of the review contact Cheryl Bradley by email cebradley@shaw.ca or phone (403)328-1245.

Issues and Updates

Amendment Would Give Blank Cheque to Irrigators (from a September 5th media release by Danielle Droitsch, Bow Riverkeepers, and Lindsay Telfer, Sierra Club) - A proposal before Alberta Environment would give the largest water license holder in all of southern Alberta the role of water broker. The Eastern Irrigation District has asked Alberta Environment for an amendment to its water allocation originally granted in 1903. "If granted, the amendment would allow the EID to deal out water to uses other than irrigation or agriculture," said Bow Riverkeeper Danielle Droitsch.

"The EID holds the largest water license on the Bow River, accounting for over one third of the flow of the river. This agreement effectively grants the EID permission to become water barons, selling water for any use. On average, the EID only uses 76 percent of their allocated water. Some years, they use less than half of their allocation. There needs to be a debate over whether unused water should go back to the public domain. This proposal is a step in the opposite direction, encouraging the EID to maximize use of its existing license," said Droitsch.

"Rather than give irrigation districts the power to allocate water in any way they choose, we should be rethinking our entire system of water allocation. Our century-old system doesn't allow us to strike a balance between meeting basic human needs in this booming province, protecting environmental flows, and

considering the effects of global climate change and drought,” said Droitsch.

In 2006, the government closed the Bow River basin to new water licenses citing the over-allocation of the river. To assure water is made available to new users or expanding municipalities, the government created a regulated market. This regulated market, called a “transfer system”, brings social and environmental considerations into account, allows for public input, and encourages the “return” of 10 percent of the transferred water back to the river.

“If granted, this amendment would create a loophole allowing the EID and one third of the Bow River to bypass existing government regulation under the ‘transfer system’ and preventing the government from withholding some water for the public good. With over 75% of the Bow’s water licenses going to irrigators, this amendment would set a dangerous precedent. This opens the door significantly toward a more unregulated market driven largely by the mighty dollar.”

“Irrigation districts get this water for free for agriculture use. Is it fair that they can now turn around and sell that same water for profit?”

Visit www.bowriverkeeper.org for more information and write a letter to your MLA and the Premier expressing your concerns.

(Editor's Note: SAGE members are familiar with these matters having appealed a similar amendment to an SMRID licence and being denied a hearing by the Environmental Appeal Board on 4 Nov 2004. Hence, substantive arguments on this important matter of public policy have yet to be heard by a public decision-making body or the courts.)

Recognition and Control of Climate Change (by Klaus Jericho) - In 1988 the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) made its first assessment of the state of global climate. Three more assessments followed every six years with the most recent in 2007.

It's still science, not revealed truth, but over the years the science got better and better. On February 2, 2007 their conclusion was that there is a higher than 90% likelihood that humans are warming the climate by the additions of greenhouse gases.

The IPCC was created by the world Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. For the last assessment, 40 governments nominated 150 lead authors and 450 contributing authors of Climate Change 2007: the Physical Science Basis (Working Group I). Authors had their draft chapters reviewed by 600 volunteers who submitted some 30,000 comments. The IPCC does not only assess the climate but it reports, using the scientific process, on the climate change impacts, adaptations and vulnerability by Working Group II (April 6, 2007) and analyzes the possibility of mitigating climate change by Working Group III (May 4, 2007).

The work of the IPCC is the most thorough and complete assessment of global climate. Now that the debate over the content of the 1000-page Fourth Assessment Report is done it is up to the governments, which have requested the reports over the years, to select suitable and adequate response actions for the common good.

In 1997, three years after the second IPCC assessment, world governments took the warning and formulated the Kyoto Protocol, which 169 governments or government agencies ratified. The treaty came into force in February 2005. The Kyoto treaty was recognized to be the first step in the right direction. The Canadian parliament ratified the Kyoto treaty in December 2002. It obliges us to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 6% below 1990 levels.

Instead of taking early action, we have permitted greenhouse gases to increase by some 27% above 1990 levels. How are we going to reduce emissions by 27% to reach 1990 levels and then go 6% below 1990 levels before 2012? A federal law passed on June 22, 2007 gives the Canadian government 60 days to prepare a greenhouse gas plan with measures to ensure that Canada meets its obligations under the Kyoto treaty. The treaty will expire in 2012 to be replaced by new, and no doubt, even stricter measures to control global emission of greenhouse gases. Will the Canadian government act responsibly?

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has endorsed the work of the IPCC and recognizes the need for urgent action.

Help Protect the Suffield National Wildlife Area – SAGE is working with Alberta Wilderness Association, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Grasslands Naturalists, Nature Canada and World Wildlife Fund Canada to stop drilling in the Suffield National Wildlife Area. Thanks to pressure from these organizations and others, the government has agreed to conduct environmental assessment of EnCana Corporation's proposal to drill 1,275 gas wells in the Suffield National Wildlife Area. That environmental assessment is underway. Public hearings will follow, and we want to be ready.

Suffield, near Medicine Hat, is one of the last remaining large intact pieces of unploughed prairie grassland in Canada. Home to almost 100 federally and provincially listed species at risk of extinction, Suffield represents one of the world's rarest and most endangered ecosystems.

Nature Canada is leading fundraising efforts on behalf of the coalition. Your gift will help reach our fundraising goal of \$50,000 to prepare the best case on behalf of those endangered animals, like the Burrowing Owl, that cannot speak for themselves.

This is a precedent-setting case! No permits have ever been issued for industrial development on this scale in a National Wildlife Area. Your donation will help keep it that way and help to preserve the integrity of all our National Wildlife Areas.

With hearings set to take place soon, we must act now to ensure that these endangered species are represented at the hearings. Please add your voice to those committed to preserving this rare piece of our natural heritage before it's too late.

Donations can be made on-line at Nature Canada's website by visiting www.naturecanada.ca and clicking on Say No! to Drilling: Save Suffield National Wildlife Area. Alternatively, a cheque can be mailed to Nature Canada (Save Suffield Campaign), 85 Albert St, Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6A4.