



**“Sustainability takes forever.
And that’s the point.”**

William McDonough

September 2016

Alberta Government Explores Energy Efficiency

SAGE Meeting Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at Lethbridge Public Library, upstairs.

Reuse Rendezvous Returns, September 9, 10, 11. Register at [Environment Lethbridge](#). Get your free yard sign. Put your location on the map.

Green Superheroes. Nominate someone who has worked to become more sustainable. Contact [Environment Lethbridge](#).

Alberta Agriculture & Forestry’s 2016 Water Monitoring Workshop at the Lethbridge Lodge Sept 14 & 15 Register 1-800-387-6030

An Energy Efficiency Advisory Panel has distributed a discussion document detailing opportunities and options for advancing energy efficiency in the province. The timeline for the panel includes public feedback into September, followed by a report to the Minister responsible for the climate change office. Energy Efficiency Alberta will be launched early in 2017.

The discussion document is available at <http://www.alberta.ca/documents/EEAP-DiscussionDocument.pdf>. It provides perspective on the opportunities, barriers and programming tools to advance greater energy efficiency in Alberta.

The focus is on large-scale renewable energy, green infrastructure including transit, and energy efficiency programs for home and business. The panel has been formed to explore: lowest cost, highest impact opportunities; approaches to education and outreach programming; and demand-side energy management (DSM) options that result in an environmental benefit. Programming tools like education, incentives, and regulation will be developed to support the goals of the program.

Energy Efficiency Alberta will become foundational in the transition to a low-carbon energy infrastructure.


SAGE AGM 2016

SAGE completed its Annual General Meeting to complete its 32nd year as ‘a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community’.

Highlights from the past year included advancement of Environment Lethbridge under the direction of Kathleen Sheppard. SAGE has supported the WasteLess project designed to inform Lethbridge residents about our waste, where it comes from, where it goes and how we can do better. SAGE has also supported work on an environmental benchmarking project being conducted by Environment Lethbridge.

SAGE participated in the SSRP review and the Eastern Slopes Communiqué to protect the Castle from undesirable land use. We were also involved in the review process for the Municipal Governance Act, SAGE has advocated for more responsibility being given to the Municipalities for advancing sustainability – particularly through the expansion of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

SAGE members continue to represent our community as members of the Oldman Watershed Council, EcoTrust, CASA, and the Milk River Natural Area Management Committee.



APPLEFEST!2016
...more than just apples

[Lethbridge Sustainable Living Association](#)
September 10th, 2016 at Galt Gardens 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Apple juicing, silent auction, vendors & workshops.
Children’s activities and musicians.
Apple picking volunteers still needed - contact LSLA.

SAGE Meeting Schedule 2016/2017

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Lethbridge Public Library (South) - main floor.

September 28, 2016	January 25, 2017
October 26, 2016	No meeting February
November 30, 2016	March 29, 2017
No meeting in December	April 26, 2017
	May 24, 2017
	AGM TBA

OHVs and the Castle Parks: Are They In or Out?

From the [Alberta Wilderness Association](#):

That's the crucial conservation question left begging in a newly-released document on what Alberta Environment and Parks expects in a draft management plan for the Castle Parks. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) and the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition (CCWC) would like the Minister to answer the question definitively and commit unequivocally to the management plan's vision: "Conservation of nature will be the primary, overriding objective of both parks."

"On the one hand, the proposal contains a number of encouraging statements," says Joanna Skrajny, AWA Conservation Specialist.

"For example, conservation and headwaters protection are intended to be the top two management priorities; they animate the stress placed in the document on protecting critical westslope cutthroat trout habitat." Environmental leadership and evidence based decision-making are admirably placed at the top of the list of principles intended to guide the plan. "But, these positive elements," she adds, "are fundamentally irreconcilable with the document's later suggestion that off-highway vehicles should be allowed in both parks. You cannot seriously prioritize conservation and headwaters protection if you allow motorized recreation in the Castle."

The CCWC, a local, grassroots organization that has been fighting for protection of the Castle Wilderness for decades, joins AWA in this call. "Eighty-six percent of Albertans prioritize non-motorized recreation and the majority of the public believes that OHVs have no place in provincial parks. It pushes out other users and harms wildlife," adds Peter Lee of the CCWC. "Considering that Waterton and all of our mountain parks are bursting at the seams with visitors, it seems like a no-brainer that Albertans are searching for and would be grateful for more of the national park type experience."

The Castle Provincial Park and Wildland Provincial Park were announced on September 4, 2015 by the Government of Alberta. Sadly, despite public outcry and substantial consultation, the recommended management intentions outlined in the document released today – allowing OHVs, recreational hunting, and cattle grazing in the parks – have barely changed compared to what the department proposed more than 10 months ago.

"While this is disappointing and frustrating," says Dr. Ian Urquhart, editor of AWA's magazine *Wildlands Advocate*, "there is promise where this document says the Minister still may decide to modify the recommended management intentions to prohibit OHVs and hunting in the parks. It's time for the Minister to decide once and for all whether OHVs are in or out of the Castle parks. Conservation and a truly modern view of Alberta parks demand that she rejects the recommendation to allow OHVs in the Castle."

Local Blacksmith Promoting Sustainability



From <http://reforgedironworks.com/>

Reforged Ironworks is a blacksmithing company located in southern Alberta specializing in hand forged tools built from reclaimed materials. The forge is fueled with charcoal, a sustainable and renewable resource that's been used by blacksmiths for centuries. The design process used takes advantage of all the salvageable material that industrial society produces. Tools are customized to suit the particular environment of southern Alberta.

Interesting Links:

Sustainable Cities Collective <http://www.sustainablecitiescollective.com/>

The Value of a Gorrilla vs a Human http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bron-taylor/the-value-of-a-gorilla_b_10214928.html



Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

sage-communications@sage-environment.org

Myths about Off Highway Vehicle Use

Lorne Fitch, P. Biol. (written May 2016)

Myths can be widely held but represent false beliefs or ideas. They can become more powerful and compelling than reality, especially if repeated often enough, and never challenged. Many use myths to support a particular action or activity. Listening to Off Highway Vehicle users for some time provides a recurring set of statements that fall into the category of myths. These are the prevalent ones:

Myth 1. It's only 1% (or 3% , 5% , 10% ...) of OHV users that cause problems.

Reality: It is the constant, unrelenting traffic on trails (and off trails) not designed for OHV use that is the major contributor to erosion, stream sedimentation, wildlife disruption and loss of quiet recreation. That includes everyone who operates an OHV.

Myth 2. OHV users know how to operate their machines to minimize impacts and be good stewards.

Reality: The sheer amount of damage and problem areas in the form of excessive erosion, ruts, mud holes, trail widening, avoidance of bridges, collapsed stream banks, following stream courses and multiple trail development suggests anything but stewardship. Many operate their machines in ways to magnify the damage.

Myth 3. OHV use has no more impact than foot and horse use.

Reality: The argument OHVs exert no more pressure on the soil surface than a hiker or a horseback rider disappears under the impacts of OHV speed, spinning tires, wider trails and traffic volume. The linear orientation of OHV traffic disrupts drainage patterns, capturing and redirecting flow with increased erosion.

Myth 4. Fish and wildlife populations are not harmed by OHV use.

Reality: Thoroughly researched, objective, scientific studies say otherwise. Noise, traffic intensity and frequency, trail density, incursions into critical areas and increased sediment deposition in streams negatively impact fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

Myth 5. The solution to the problems of OHV use includes more and better designed trails with bridges over streams.

Reality: Linear density (the measurement of trail length/ landscape area) already exceeds critical thresholds for many fish and wildlife species; building more trails will significantly harm fish and wildlife populations, several of which are already designated as "threatened". More trails will intersect or parallel watercourses and require more bridges. Bridges do not successfully deal with sediment from trails since it is the approaches to stream crossings that continue to erode under OHV use.

Myth 6. Use of OHVs is a traditional, family-oriented pursuit that brings Albertans closer to nature.

Reality: While OHVs provide opportunity to access nature, to drive through (or over) nature there is no conclusive evidence their use connects people with nature. OHV use is a pursuit where people substitute gas engines for natural locomotion and distance themselves from the landscape with speed, technology and an obstacle-course mentality. Most seems activity focused, more so than using the machines to reach a destination, from which a direct connection is made with the landscape by walking.

Activities like making new trails, racing, getting stuck, hill climbing, mud bogging, trashing wetlands and splashing through (and up) streams seem inconsistent with an appreciation for nature.

The phenomenon of OHV use is less than two decades old in Alberta, given that statistics on OHV ownership indicate relatively few people owned such machines even 15 years ago. Only 6% of Albertans engage in motorized recreational activity; 67% of Albertans have a preference for non-motorized outdoor recreation. Demographics suggest OHV users are more likely to be younger, male and single than a family group.

Myth 7. Other land uses (like logging) are more destructive than anything done by OHV users.

Reality: Resource extraction industries have created much of the access used by OHV users and the failure of government agencies to effect trail closure and restoration has exacerbated the issues. However, OHV use has never been considered and dealt with as a land use, complete with policy and regulation. In deflecting criticism from the impacts of OHV use, users fail to

Myths about Off Highway Vehicle Use (Continued)

recognize cumulative effects and their contribution. OHV use can delay and prevent effective restoration and extends the life span of industrial impacts.

Myth 8. Educating OHV users will solve the problems.

Reality: Education can be a tool for those that recognize the issues, want to change their behavior and don't have a sense of entitlement to freely engage in destructive OHV activity. The education option assumes people want to be educated, that voluntary behavioral shifts are possible with no other inducements (like regulation and enforcement), that forums exist where OHV users can be educated and that all users can read and respond positively to signage.

Education is not a public relations exercise by OHV users to maintain the status quo; it is an endeavor to change attitudes and actions. Only a small percentage of OHV users are represented by an organization. Most users are beyond the influence of an organization and any educational initiative.

Studies indicate OHV users don't want their use restricted, want fewer regulations, do not support user fees, enforcement and government involvement, and want to continue to pursue their recreation with less, not more impediments.

Myth 9. There is a recognition amongst OHV users of the impact of their activity.

Reality: OHV users become more conditioned to negative impacts over time, less sensitized to damage the activity creates, causing the detrimental effects of OHV activity to become less (not more) obvious and less (not more) concerning. It is a case of perceptual blindness, an inability (or unwillingness) to recognize and acknowledge the obvious.

Myth 10. OHV activity generates substantial economic benefits, especially to local communities.

Reality: While OHV dealers benefit from sales, there is no conclusive evidence local communities have enhanced and substantial economic activity because of OHV use.

Money spent on OHVs and their use is discretionary, unlike mortgage payments, grocery bills and taxes. If people don't spend such money on OHVs the money isn't lost, it is redirected somewhere else

in the Alberta economy. Most of the money spent to purchase an OHV and accessories doesn't linger in Alberta; it enriches corporations far from Alberta. The assertion of economic benefits from OHV use always fails to account for costs, including more road maintenance, fire suppression, weed control, emergency services, medical expenses from injuries and loss of economic benefits from bona fide land uses like ranching, equestrian use and ecotourism. Nor do the "benefits" factor in enforcement costs, trail restoration, impacts on downstream water users and loss of biodiversity (including declining angling and hunting opportunity).

OHV activity also precludes other recreational pursuits and the associated economic benefits due to avoidance of areas by people seeking quiet recreation because of noise, real and perceived harassment, concerns of individual safety and loss of ecological integrity.

When our "enjoyment" of the landscape blinds us to the impairment occurring it is time to ask whether the activity is legitimate. Repeating the myths of OHV use, in the hope the messages will become convincing will require an unattainable magic. Substituting myth for fact isn't viable and risks continuing the stereotyping of OHV users as uncaring, thoughtless and irresponsible. At its root, reality is consensual. When a group, like OHV users, makes up its mind what it is going to see, then sees it, it is a crowd delusion. OHV use will never, and should never, trump watershed protection, maintenance of fish and wildlife populations (especially threatened species) and quiet forms of recreation that reconnect people with nature.

Lorne Fitch is a Professional Biologist, a retired Fish and Wildlife Biologist and an Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary.

State of the World 2016: Can a City Be Sustainable?



The annual publication from the Worldwatch Institute is an event as important as Vesuvius Day or maybe even Felt Hat Day. This year's timely topic was *Can a City Be Sustainable?*

The focus of the book of essays was energy as it relates to greenhouse gas emissions, but other topics including waste management, municipal democracy, and remunicipalization were discussed from the perspective of nations both developed and developing.

One of the principles shared by the authors was the importance of raising the standard of living of the poor as a vital component of achieving global sustainability. To do this, wealthy nations must moderate their consumption of resources and pollution sinks: "As cities in poor countries prosper, the challenge is for wealthy countries to create the environmental and resource space needed for poor cities to prosper, and for poor cities to provide dignified lives to residents on a moderate materials budget" (p.32).

The other overarching question in *The State of the World* was how much urbanization can contribute to achieving sustainability goals. Some relationships discussed included a general reduction in infrastructure (around 85% per capita) as urban populations double; roughly no change for human needs like water, energy, and housing; and a 15% increase per

capita of socioeconomic measures like crime and disease as urban populations double. It is clear that sustainability goals cannot be realized without considering safety and equity factors.

With respect to energy reductions, "[m]ost of the potential lies in transportation and in residential and commercial buildings via improved efficiency. About one-quarter of the abatement potential comes at no net cost and would pay for itself; these are mostly efficiency measures. Nearly three-quarters of the abatement potential

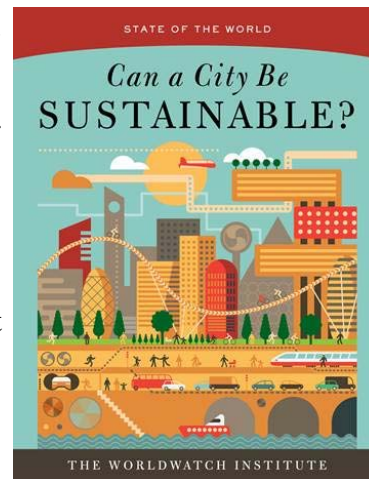
measures are technology-independent or use already-mature technologies" (p.87). One of the main issues, however, is the inertia of current building stock which "will account for nearly 70 percent of all buildings in 2050. In the United States, 40 percent of owner-occupied homes in existence in 2013 were built before 1970, and two-thirds were built before 1980" (p.116). It is much easier to build sustainability into a new design than existing buildings.

Some ideas proffered include the "use of building codes and permits, zoning regulations, building performance ordinances, and other mandates and regulations. Taxes

and other financial policies can provide additional incentives. Requiring building owners or residents to report data on energy and water use can help to establish base-year benchmarks, set goals, and evaluate performance" (p.117). The latter idea of mandatory public disclosure of energy and water consumption by buildings would be a cost-effective approach to establishing best practices in a community.

The example of Melbourne discusses the urban forest as an asset for maintaining cool urban temperatures. The concern with climate change and disease vectors are that trees will be vulnerable. Melbourne has, therefore, established an urban forest policy that increases resilience by increasing tree diversity "with no more than 5 percent of any one species, 10 percent of any one genus, and 20 percent of any one family" (p.156).

The diversity of cities around the world makes it difficult for the authors to make generalizations, however, as always, *The State of the World* opens a discussion for greater sustainability offered by visionary urbanization.





A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

July 18, 2016

Honourable Danielle Larivee
Minister Municipal Affairs
minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca

Re: MGA Review

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the *MGA* Review presentation and open house in Lethbridge. I was very much impressed by the clear and progressive leadership articulated by the Minister and staff.

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) has been a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community in Lethbridge and region since 1984. Through the *MGA* Review process we have been advocating for clearer language related to municipal responsibility to environmental sustainability issues and land stewardship.

As municipalities are directly responsible for transportation planning, water and wastewater treatment, managing municipal solid waste, and planning for parks, it is vital that roles, responsibilities, and processes for environmental stewardship be clearly expressed in the *MGA*. Our key recommendations for strengthening the *MGA* were:

1. The protection and management of the environment is a key consideration in municipal planning.
2. The provision of enforcement tools available to municipalities for the purposes of environmental protection and management.
3. Greater access to revenue generation options available to municipalities to enable environmental stewardship and, particularly, land conservation.

Canadian legal decisions (such as the Supreme Court of Canada Decision 114957 *Canada Ltée v. Hudson*, 2001) have supported the rights of municipalities to make policy that protects the health of citizens and the natural environment. In this decision, Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dubé stated: "Everyone is aware that individually and collectively we are responsible for preserving the natural environment ... environmental protection [has] emerged as a fundamental value in Canadian society." Based this decision, municipalities have been given the right to create policy for protecting and preserving the natural environment which should be reflected in the *MGA*. In addition to the rights of municipalities, the *MGA* lacks clear direction with respect to the *responsibility* of municipalities to do so – this is what we are asking for.

Furthermore, the federal Gas Tax Fund was created a number of years ago to provide revenue to municipalities to facilitate 'cleaner water, cleaner air, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions'. Though this program was poorly reported and audited, one positive outcome was the requirement for municipalities to create Community Sustainability Plans. It is unfortunate that the amended *MGA* has not capitalized on this effort by enacting requirements to enhance sustainability initiatives in Municipal Development Plans, decision-making policy, and regulations. Such an amendment to the *MGA* could also include some reinforcement of the principles outlined in the Alberta Land Stewardship Act as they relate to municipalities – particularly since this relationship has been severed in the current Review process.

We have appreciate the opportunity to advocate for sustainability and the natural environment in the *MGA* Review process. We hope you will consider our suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Braum Barber', written in a cursive style.

Braum Barber
Chair, SAGE



ALBERTA
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Lesser Slave Lake*

AR86279

Mr. Braum Barber
Chair
Southern Alberta Group for the Environment
braum.barber@lethbridgecollege.ca

Dear Mr. Barber,

Thank you for your email of July 18, 2016, sharing the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment's comments on regarding environmental sustainability issues and land stewardship in followup to the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* Review open house in Lethbridge.

This feedback collected this summer will us update the regulations that fall under the *MGA*. We intend to post drafts of these regulations on the *MGA* Review website (www.mgareview.alberta.ca) for public review and comment in early 2017.

Thank you for your submission and continued involvement in the *MGA* Review process. I will consider your input alongside the feedback received from other Albertans this summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Larivee'.

Hon. Danielle Larivee
Minister of Municipal Affairs