

Southern Alberta Environmental Group

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NEWSLETTER

November, 2004

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Announcements

SAEG November Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 4 November 2004

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

Updates and discussion of current environmental matters with a focus on water management in the Oldman Basin.

Everyone welcome. Refreshments provided.

Notes and Updates

2004-2005 SAEG Board Acclaimed – At SAEG's AGM on October 7, a new slate of officers was acclaimed.

President – Sylvia Campbell

Vice-President – Kelsey Prenevost

Past-President – Klaus Jericho

Director – Cheryl Fujikawa

Director – Nicola Miller

Director – Cecily Smith

Director – Rena Woss

Secretary – Bill Brown and Janet Walker

Treasurer – Diana Williams

Newsletter Editor – Cheryl Bradley

Highlights of 2003-2004 President's Report – At the October 7 annual general meeting, Klaus Jericho provided a report on his one-year term as president. He noted that 2004 was SAEG's 20th anniversary and that the organization's work is far from done. "The need for SAEG has increased due to increasing environmental impact from human activities in southern Alberta and a greater expectation for SAEG to contribute its expertise and public voice to provincial, municipal and institutional initiatives", said Jericho. Key activities over the past year include:

- Redefining SAEG's vision and mission which will lead to revision of the society's bylaws.
- Participating in the Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative through a project to improve stormwater quality in Lethbridge.
- Participating in the Oldman River Basin Advisory Council to define water conservation objectives.
- Preparing a display and brochure on health of our rivers.
- Appealing a decision by Alberta Environment on a water license amendment affecting the southern tributaries.
- Participating in the recovery team for western silvery minnow, a species at risk in the Milk River.
- Providing a representative to Economic Development Lethbridge.

- Participating in hearings on the intermunicipal development plan for Lethbridge county and city and on the international joint agreement regarding water flow in the St. Mary and Milk rivers.

- Advising the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation through provincial board membership and workshop participation.

- Organizing activities for Earth Day, Environment Week and an international water conference.

- Preparing an Emerald Award nomination. SAEG newsletter editor Cheryl Bradley received the 2004 award for individual commitment.

- Preparing eight newsletters, conducting media interviews and submitting letters to the editor of the Lethbridge Herald on current environmental issues.

SAEG Involved in Beef Plant Evaluation – Past-president, Klaus Jericho, will be representing SAEG on Economic Development Lethbridge Beef Evaluation Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of Economic Development Lethbridge, independent of Lethbridge City Council and City of Lethbridge administration. The Committee's mandate is to evaluate and assess any substantive proposal for a beef processing facility in the Lethbridge Area; ensuring that acceptable standards are maintained for the community.

Factors identified for evaluation include financial sustainability, environmental impacts, social impacts, economic effects, technology standards, transportation implications and adherence to regulations. Potential environmental impacts to be assessed are water usage, waste water, air quality, odour management and waste management. Visit www.ecdevlethbridge.com for more information

Join the Oldman Watershed Council – Membership in the Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is open to any interested individual or organization in the basin supporting the goals of the Council. Join by contacting Wendy Devent by phone 403.382.4239 or email orbwqi@gov.ab.ca.

SAEG supports the goals of OWC which are directed towards integrating sustainable water management and land use practices. SAEG Board member Cheryl Fujikawa is on the interim board of OWC, which already has meetings scheduled for November and January.

1st Choice Savings Leads in Environmental Design - 1st Choice Savings of Lethbridge is taking steps to ensure its new Fairmont Branch is environmentally friendly. Building plans have been developed using a rating system named LEEDTM (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

which began in the United States in 1993. LEED™ Canada was officially launched in August 2004.

1st Choice is seeking Gold LEED™ certification by implementing special measures in six key areas: 1) sustainable site development (reduced development footprint, minimize impacts on stormwater, bicycle storage and changing rooms), 2) water efficiency (water efficient landscaping, low flow plumbing fixtures), 3) energy and atmosphere (energy efficient design, purchase green power), 4) materials and resources (use building products with recycled content, implement recycling program), and 5) indoor environmental quality (control indoor chemicals and pollutants).

The Lethbridge 1st Choice facility will be one of the first buildings in Canada to meet LEED™ requirements. Building contracts currently are out for tender and construction is planned to be complete in Fall, 2005.

Reports on Southern Alberta's World Heritage – Reports on the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and Dinosaur Provincial Park have been drafted to meet reporting requirements of the World Heritage Convention. Comment by interested parties is invited. Draft reports are available at www.pc.gc.ca/docs/rspm-whsr/index_e.asp.

Changes identified to improve the integrity of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park include 1) the proposal to expand Waterton Lakes National Park into the Flathead River drainage of British Columbia; 2) new park management plans adopted in 1999-2000; 3) partnership among Crown of the Continent ecosystem managers; 4) new land use plans in Flathead County, Montana, which restrict developments on the park boundary; 5) new regional plan for the southern Rocky Mountains in British Columbia which limits motorized recreation access; and, 6) Nature Conservancy Canada's Waterton Front Project which has secured about 10,000 hectares through conservation easements and land purchases.

Appeal Board Reasons Delay Undue - The Environmental Appeal Board (EAB) has informed SAEG that EAB is "compelled to meet other timelines" and hence cannot specify a date when reasons will be provided for their decision to deny SAEG standing to appeal an amendment to St. Mary's River Irrigation District's water license. On May 25th EAB informed SAEG that their appeal was dismissed and that reasons would be provided in "due course". Five months later one is led to seriously question how a fair and measured decision could have been made without reasons being clearly understood and articulated. Providing reasons for a decision is an administrative requirement of law.

Protecting Alberta's Environment Ranks High - Fifty eight percent of 300,000 respondents to the Alberta Government's *It's Your Future* survey consider protecting Alberta's environment to be a high priority for government spending. Thirty-three percent consider it a medium priority and only nine percent consider it a low priority. Protecting the environment was third in overall priority behind providing a quality health care system and providing an outstanding education system. It ranked above investing in infrastructure, tax reductions and building a diverse, innovative economy.

Provincial Party Environmental Platforms - Albertans will be going to the polls on November 22 to elect members of the provincial legislative assembly. Your newsletter editor has perused the websites of six parties with candidates in the election and summarizes the environmental aspects of their platforms as follows.

The Alberta Alliance Party (www.albertaalliance.com) considers environment as a topic under economic policy. Policies include opposing implementation of the Kyoto Accord, appointing an environmental ombudsmen, instituting a Clean Drinking Water Act, electing EIA review panels and allowing private prosecutions against parties alleged to have damaged the environment.

The Alberta Conservative Party (www.albertapc.ab.ca) identifies "Clean Air, Clean Water, Clean Earth" as an issue and identifies four key topics: "protecting our air; special places, special partnerships; water is life; and waste not, want not". Ideas include relying on voluntary actions rather than a rules-based approach to reducing air emissions, getting everyone involved in integrated resource management, improving efficiency and productivity of water in Alberta by 30%, and turning garbage into usable products.

The Alberta Liberal Party (www.albertaliberal.com) defines a specific platform on "Environment". Six topic areas are identified - climate change, parks and public lands, intensive livestock operations, water management, coal bed methane and sour gas. Ideas include supporting urban design and public transit strategies that minimize environmental impacts, designing a comprehensive land-use policy for public lands based on the principle of conservation biology, mapping Alberta's groundwater resources, and developing new regulations specific to coalbed methane extraction.

The Alberta New Democratic Party (www.albertandp.ca) considers itself the "greenest political party in the province" and states that one of its core principles is "ecological sustainability". The website lists solutions to environmental problems including green incentive programs, overhaul of the oil royalty system, implementing the Kyoto Protocol and a real plan for water conservation.

The Alberta Social Credit Party (www.socialcredit.com) envisions "a clean, well-managed environment". It would investigate water contamination and health effects, encourage the use and development of alternative sources of energy, reduce provincial tax on low-emission automobile fuels, and balance environmental preservation with development needs of Albertans.

The Green Party has recently opened campaign offices in Calgary and Edmonton and plans to run 38 candidates in the provincial election. A platform specific to the provincial election is not available at the website. The national Party's vision links a healthy environment to a healthy society (www.greenparty.ca). Ten key values supporting the vision include sustainability (wise stewardship of the earth), diversity (including biological diversity) and ecological wisdom.

The best way to become informed, of course, is to talk directly to the candidates in your riding about their views on environmental matters. Above all, be sure to vote.

Ancient Reflections on Environmental Assessment

(by Virgil, a Roman landowner)

Before we plow an unfamiliar path

It's well to be informed about the winds

About the variations in the sky

The native traits and habits of the place

What each locale permits, and what denies.