

Southern Alberta Group For Environment

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NEWSLETTER

June, 2005

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Editor's Note: Your editor will be taking a summer break. No newsletters will be produced for July and August. Be sure to get out and enjoy nature.

Announcements

SAGE June Picnic

6:00 p.m., Thursday, 2 June 2005
Flaig Farm on Broxburn Road

An evening of fun. Bring something to barbecue, a dish to share, dishes, cutlery and a chair. Juice and coffee provided. Bring along a musical instrument if you have one.

Directions to Flaig Farm: Travel Hwy 4 about 5 km south of City limits. Turn left at Broxburn Road sign and immediately left again on the gravel road. The first farm on the right, within 0.5 km, is the Flaigs. Call Lloyd or Helen (327-9791) if confused.

Let's Drive Green Clinic

10 am – 7 pm, 30-31 May, 2005; Home Depot

Free check-ups on vehicle emissions, tire pressure and gas cap seals are provided. Information regarding greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and suggestion for improving air quality through minor vehicle adjustments are provided. The event is co-hosted by the Office of Environmental Management and Urban Sustainability for the City of Lethbridge and Environment Canada. For more information contact Kelly Andres at 320-3058 or email kandres@lethbridge.ca

Lethbridge Environment Week Activities

5-11 June, 2005

June 5 (2:00 pm) – “Nature Recycles”, a nature walk from the Helen Schuler Coulee Centre
June 7 – “Mow Off” with Scouts and celebrity teams at City Hall or Nicholas Sheran Park (watch local media for details)
June 8 – Free Public Transit
June 9 (6:30 pm) – Free Family Event of pond dipping, water sampling and interactive presentation by the Otesha Project at Henderson Lake
June 10 (9:00 am) – Opening of water-wise garden at Wilson Middle School

Rainwater Harvesting Workshop

Thursday, 23 June 2005; Radisson Hotel, Calgary

The workshop will draw on the experience of international and local experts for presentations on the benefits of

harvesting rainwater in a semi-arid environment and how to implement rainwater collection, storage, treatment and delivery. For more information visit www.CWRA.org or contact Rick Ross by email fjross@telusplanet.net.

Notes and Updates

Condolences – Condolences are extended to Gordon Merrick on the death of his wife, Betty, on May 19. In 1984 Gordon was one of five founding members of Southern Alberta Environment Group who signed registration documents. Betty was witness to the signatures. Gordon and Betty have continued to be members of SAGE even after moving to Black Creek, B.C. in 1988.

Credits – Credit goes to Bill Brown, Gerry and Ted Buchanan, Sylvia Campbell, Rae Firth and Cecily Smith for generously providing baked goodies for the audience attending a presentation by Brian Horejsi on grizzly bears in southwestern Alberta. About 90 people attended. The program, at the public library on April 20, was sponsored by the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition.

EcoLogo Paper - The Rolland division of the Cascades group in Saint Jerome, Quebec makes New Life DP100, a paper with 100% post-consumer recycled fibre and produced in a certified chlorine-free process. It is EcoLogo-certified by Environment Canada. The paper is suitable for laser printers, fax machines and photocopiers. For more info, visit www.cascades.com.

Biodiversity Sustains Us All - On 22 May 2005, International Day for Biological Diversity, the Secretary-General of the United Nations reminds us of the central role of biodiversity in sustaining human communities with release of the second Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report, *Biodiversity and Human Well-being*. The report can be found at www.millenniumassessment.org.

The report's authors conclude “Loss of biodiversity is a major barrier to achieving development goals and poses increasing risks for future generations”. Natural systems purify our air and water, stabilize our climate and soils, and provide us with raw resources and much more. Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption have reduced the biological diversity of life on our planet with consequences for the human economy.

Overharvest and loss of fish stocks has had significant socio-economic consequences. Loss of forests and wetlands have led to desertification, water shortages and reduced capacity of ecosystems to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events.

National and provincial government programs to protect natural ecosystems and species are important elements of approaches needed to reduce loss of biodiversity and contribute to human well being. Programs underway in southern Alberta focused on biodiversity protection include provincial and federal species at risk programs, parks and protected areas programs at all levels of government, the Prairie Conservation Forum, and Cows and Fish – Riparian Habitat Management Program. Other government programs to improve management of native forest and grassland and fish and wildlife habitat also contribute to biodiversity protection.

We all can help by expressing support to our elected representatives for government programs that protect biodiversity, by participating in activities of non-government environmental organizations, and by taking actions in our own lives to reduce our environmental footprint.

DFO Cuts Threaten Fisheries - In a cost-cutting measure, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) plans to cut 80 fisheries officers and 42 habitat management jobs. The bulk of these will be cut in the central and Arctic region which includes Alberta. Forty habitat monitoring and auditing positions will be created to work on 'lower risk activities'. Overall losses in Alberta, with DFO offices in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Peace River, are not yet known.

The federal government beefed up its fisheries officers in inland provinces in the mid-1990s after a long legal battle over the Oldman Dam. It is widely believed that fisheries regulations now receive more respect from developers.

There are fears that enforcement of the federal Fisheries Act will be compromised with the cuts to staff and budgets. DFO is one of the most petitioned federal departments. Field activities dealing with violations and complaints related to road and pipeline crossings, urban and industrial wastewater and impacts of confined feeding operations on streams, rivers and lakes are already considered underfunded.

To express your concerns contact your Member of Parliament and the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Honorable Geoff Regan at Min@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Community-Based Wildlife Monitoring in the Crowsnest Pass – "Road Watch in the Pass" gives Crowsnest Pass residents the opportunity to report sightings of wildlife crossing Highway 3. The goal of the project is to collect, analyze and communicate information highlighting crossing locations of wildlife based on local knowledge and observation. The project, initiated by the Miistakis Institute, will provide data to planners, managers and decision-makers. Approximately 200 large mammals are killed in vehicle collisions each year. Knowing more about wildlife movement patterns will allow better road and traffic planning and management. Visit <http://www.rockies.ca/roadwatch> to learn more about this project.

Airshed Zones in Alberta - Under the umbrella of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA), local or regional air quality issues in Alberta can be addressed through locally-driven establishment of airshed management zones. CASA principles of consensus-based multi-stakeholder representation must be followed as well as airshed zone guidelines.

Zones are defined on the basis of emission sources and volumes, dispersion characteristics, impacts, and administrative characteristics such as land use. There are now six regional airshed management zones operating in Alberta. They include Wood Buffalo, Peace, Fort Saskatchewan, West Central, Parkland and Palliser. Interest in forming new zones has been expressed in the Cold Lake region, the Edmonton-Wabamun region, the Calgary-Bow Valley region and the Lethbridge region.

Air quality monitoring networks are fundamental components of zone strategies. Data provides a better understanding of air quality, long-term regional trends and key issues to be addressed. To date monitoring has focused on emissions from non-renewable energy production and use. Recently attention is shifting to emissions from intensive livestock operations, including odours. Assessing ecological effects and implications for animal and human health may also be part of airshed strategies.

Visit the CASA website (www.casahome.org) to learn more about airshed zones.

Municipal Powers to Control Pesticides Upheld - On 13 May 2005 the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that the City of Toronto has the authority to pass a by-law controlling use of pesticides. The bylaw aims to wean homeowners, golf courses and commercial property owners off chemicals and encourage use of natural methods for control of plant and animal pests. CropLife, a pesticides industry association, had challenged the by-law. Sierra Legal Defence Fund and Canadian Environmental Law Association acted on behalf of several interveners including Federation of Canadian Municipalities and physicians' organizations.

The decision is consistent with a Supreme Court decision in 2001 which upheld a by-law controlling pesticides by the town of Hudson, Quebec. These decisions mean that municipalities in Ontario and Quebec concerned with the reduction of pesticide use in their territories can continue with consideration and passage of by-laws to control such use. They confirm that municipalities have the power to protect their citizens from the risks of pesticides and to act in a precautionary way with respect to environment and public health.

Paragon Truck Wash Violations Continue – On 19 February 2005, an order to "immediately cease all pumping of liquid from all cells of earthen manure storages" was issued by NRCB staff to a truck wash operated by Paragon Livestock Exchange Inc. The facility, located between Lethbridge and Picture Butte, washes down livestock trailers. The owner has been subject to four enforcement orders under the Agricultural Operations Practices Act since beginning operations in January 2002. In early 2004, the owner was also found guilty of violating a closure under the Public Health Act and fined \$1100. Doubts are being raised about compliance with the most recent order. The credibility of the regulatory framework for intensive livestock operations is being seriously undermined.

The best servants of the people, like the best valets, must whisper unpleasant truths in the master's ear. It is the court fool, not the foolish courtier, whom the king can least afford to lose. Walter Lippmann