



NEWSLETTER

March 2006

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Announcements

22nd SAGE Annual General Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 2 March 2006

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

There will be election of a new SAGE Board of Directors. Members in good standing are eligible to vote. The AGM will be followed by a regular meeting including updates on ongoing SAGE activities and discussion of environmental issues and new initiatives. Everyone welcome. Refreshments provided.

Biogas Technology –

Opportunities and Challenges in Southern Alberta

Thane Hurlburt, ECB Enviro North America Inc.

12-1:30 p.m., Thursday, 9 March 2006

Ericksen's Restaurant, 1715 Mayor Magrath Drive S.

Cost: \$8.00 includes lunch

Visit the SACPA website: www.sacpa.ca

Oldman Watershed Council

2nd Annual General Meeting

8 a.m. - 3 p.m., Wednesday, 22 March 2006

Lethbridge Lodge, 320 Scenic Drive South

There will be updates on the work of OWC, executive elections, poster sessions, displays and motivational keynote speaker Tina Thrussell. Fee - \$40.00 (includes lunch). Registration deadline March 13, or by March 3 to be eligible to win a prize. For more information visit www.oldmanbasin.org or call Leda at (403)381-5801

Milk River Watershed Council Canada

1st Annual General Meeting

10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Friday, 31 March 2006

Town of Milk River, Civic Centre

There will be updates on the work of MRWCC, Board election, presentations on water management issues in the watershed and displays. To register for the AGM and for membership info contact Sandi at 403-921-5667 or email palliser.environmental@telus.net.

Notes and Updates

Please Renew Your SAGE Membership – A membership renewal form is included with this edition of the newsletter for those who have not yet renewed. Your membership support sustains SAGE.

Call for Nominations to SAGE Board – Nominations are open for the 2006-2007 Board. Vacancies include Vice President and Director. To volunteer or submit nominations please contact past-president Klaus Jericho at 327-4062. Election will occur at the annual general meeting on 2 March 2006.

SAGE Volunteer Matters:

Volunteers for Home and Garden Show (22-25 Mar)

– Several volunteers are needed to help man our booth at the Lethbridge Home and Garden Show in late March. The booth is a joint effort of the City of Lethbridge, Alberta Environment, Oldman Watershed Council and SAGE. Displays will focus on conservation of energy and water. Volunteer shifts are for two-hour periods on Wednesday to Friday, Mar 22-24 from 1-9 p.m. and on Saturday, March 25 from 10-5 p.m. At least two volunteers per shift are needed. Please contact Sylvia at 328-6502 if you are interested in volunteering a few hours of your time.

Volunteers for Bridge Day (14 Mar) – SAGE has received an invitation from the University of Lethbridge Be-Aware Club to participate in a day of awareness and celebration of the local environment. The event will take place from 9-3 p.m. on 14 March in the Atrium of University Hall. Visit <http://ulethbeaware.blogspot.com/> for more information. Please contact Sylvia at 328-6502 if you are interested in volunteering to help define SAGE participation in this event.

Lethbridge BRIGHT IDEAS Campaign (Jan25-Mar 9)

– City of Lethbridge Environmental Services is offering one free compact fluorescent light bulb to the first 900 citizens who take the One Tonne Community Challenge and send a bright idea for saving energy. Check out BRIGHT IDEA displays at City Hall, the

Public Library and Helen Schuler Nature Centre, visit www.lethbridge.ca or call 320-4038.

Light Pollution Tips (by Rena Mawhinney) - We need to be mindful that every time we turn on a light that we are tapping into fossil fuel. In Alberta - 90 percent of the energy that goes into lighting our streets, industry and homes is produced from burning coal. A good habit is to turn off lights when we leave the room and not use any more light than necessary. Question – when was the last time you purchased an energy efficient light bulb? Or - when was the last time you contacted your MLA to encourage government to increase production of clean sources of energy? Collectively, our effort makes a difference.

The human body interacts and is affected both by light and by dark. It is well known that Vitamin D is naturally produced in the presence of sunshine. Did you know that serotonin, the hormone that is associated with the feeling of well-being, is only produced in total darkness? Even a clock radio shining in the room will affect serotonin production.

Is Coal Clean? - In his address to Albertans on February 21, Premier Ralph Klein committed major provincial support towards research and development of clean coal. "Clean coal technology" describes a new generation of energy processes that reduce air emissions (acid-rain forming gases, greenhouse gases and mercury) compared to older coal-burning systems. Alberta will follow in the footsteps of the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom who since the late 1980s have been investing large sums of public money into joint programs with industry to develop and test these new technologies. The rationale is that coal is plentiful and cheap and there's an infrastructure for using coal in place.

Findings however are that cleaner coal plants are very expensive to build and costs to dispose of their waste are high. The new technology is effective at reducing emissions of mercury and acid-rain causing gases but large amounts of carbon dioxide are produced. An average traditional coal plant produces some 750 million tons of carbon a year and the annual cost of trapping the CO₂ would be about \$31 million (U.S.). There also is little evidence that the technology to sequester carbon works. Some analysts and environmentalists are drawing parallels with the nuclear industry.

It is a shame that Premier Klein neglects to commit provincial investment in energy conservation, energy efficiency and low impact renewable energy. Such approaches are cheaper, cleaner and sustainable.

(Sources: *Clean coal: A good investment?* By Katie Benner <http://money.cnn.com>; *Primer on carbon capture and storage.* www.pembina.org)

State of the Earth ('science bits' submitted by Klaus Jericho): Every city and urban region depends for its existence and growth on a globally diffuse productive hinterland up to 200 times the size of the city itself. Policies to decrease the ecological footprint of cities while increasing regional self-reliance may enhance

urban sustainability. (William Rees, *Urban Ecosystems*, 1997)

Sixty percent of ecosystem services evaluated by the Millennium Assessment are either being degraded or used unsustainably. Profound changes are needed in the way global society operates. (*Nature*, March 2005)

Humans consume 20 percent of the Earth's net primary production (NPP) annually. NPP is the amount of solar energy converted to plant organic matter through photosynthesis. It is the chief source of food for living creatures. Human appropriation of NPP is a measure of our toll on ecosystems. (*Scientific American*, April 2005)

Between one-third and one-half of our planet's surfaces have been transformed by human development. (NASA, 2005) These land use changes may be at least as important in altering weather as changes in climate patterns associated with greenhouse gases. (*Science*, December 2005)

C5 Forest Management Plan Raises Ire – Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has produced a management plan for forests between Waterton Lakes National Park and Kananaskis Country that places timber harvest above protecting ecological services and other uses. The plan proposes to increase harvest rates for the next 20 years to reduce the threat of Mountain Pine Beetle, a natural part of the area's biodiversity and ecological processes. According to irate environmental interests, it is a plan to continue subsidizing a few forestry companies operating in the area at the expense of watershed protection, old growth forest and recreation. Comments on the 700-page document, obtained during November 2005 to January 2006, are being reviewed and a final plan is expected in spring 2006.

Being Accountable for Grizzly Bears – NOT! – Several reports by respected scientists indicate that grizzly bears in Alberta are in trouble, yet the province has refused to take meaningful steps to protect. The chronology of unaccountability is thus:

Feb 2002 – Alberta Endangered Species Conservation Committee recommends listing the grizzly as threatened under provincial law. Government rejects.

May 2002 – Province initiates population study and Recovery Team instead of listing.

Oct 2003 – Recovery Team recommends 2004 spring hunt be suspended. Government rejects.

Dec 2004 – Recovery Team submits Recovery Plan to Minister and recommends suspension of 2005 spring hunt. Plan not released to public.

Early 2005 – First DNA-based population study completed. Results withheld.

Early 2005 – Amended report on population estimates completed. Results withheld.

Nov 2005 – Second DNA-based population study completed. Results withheld.

Dec 2005 – Alberta Endangered Species Conservation Committee and external reviewers complete review of Recovery Plan. Results withheld.

Jan 2006 – Recovery Team chair requests updated population information from the Province. Removed from position as Province's grizzly bear specialist.

Let your MLA know this is unacceptable!

(Source: action alert of Grizzly Bear Alliance, 7 Feb 2006)