



# NEWSLETTER

May 2007

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

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## Announcements

### SAGE May Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday 3 May 2007

Fish & Game Hut 9<sup>th</sup> Ave & 10 St. S., Lethbridge

Included on the agenda will be update on the SAGE website, review of SAGE position regarding tar sands development, discussions about potential SAGE initiatives on energy conservation, managing growth and approach to vegetation management in Lethbridge green spaces and highlights of the recent Canadian Water Resources Association Conference. Everyone welcome. Refreshments are provided.

### Rediscovering the Forest Reserve as the Oldman Basin's Water Tower

Dianne Pachal, Sierra Club of Canada

Noon, Thursday, 10 May 2007, Ericksen's

This session of the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs will touch on the cultural amnesia that has occurred regarding the water source for the Oldman River and its management for water supply. It will address the current status and issues, such as the C5 Forest Management Plan and the need for citizen engagement. Cost \$8 including lunch.

### Trails to Sustainability: A national environmental education conference

Thursday 24 May to Sunday 27 May, 2007

Delta Lodge at Kananaskis, Alberta

Visit [www.trailstosustainability.ca](http://www.trailstosustainability.ca).

### 2007 Environment Week, June 3-9, 2007

This year's Environment Week theme is wetlands. Wetlands are as productive as tropical rain forests. They are among the most fertile, complex, and productive ecosystems on earth. And, they are extremely important for storing water, lessening impact of flooding and filtering contaminants. Watch for events being organized in the community and support them. Find opportunities to inform friends or neighbours about the benefits of wetlands. (Source: [www.environment.gov.ab.ca](http://www.environment.gov.ab.ca))

## SAGE News

**Gerry Wright Will be Missed** – Dr. Gerald Wright, a conservationist and long-time supporter of SAGE passed away on March 31, 2007 at the age of 89 years. Gerry was known among SAGE members for his love of the natural world, his mountaineering skills and his good-natured humour. We will miss him. Our condolences to his wife Marion

**SAGE Treasurer Appointed** – Deb Jarvie has agreed to take on the position of Treasurer on SAGE's Board. Thank you Deb.

**SAGE Voice Widespread** – The last newsletter provided a list of SAGE's new Board for 2007-2008. [Here](#) is a list of local, regional and provincial [initiatives](#) in which SAGE [members](#) are a [voice for environment](#). Together we are making a difference.

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Public Advisory Group, Confined Feeding Operations - Ann Baran  
[Alberta Ecotrust Board](#) - Klaus Jericho  
[Alberta Environmental Network \(AEN\)](#), [Water Caucus](#) - Cheryl Bradley  
[AEN, Clean Air and Energy Caucus](#) - Ann Baran  
[Alberta Water Council](#), [AEN alternate](#) - Cheryl Bradley  
[Clean Air Strategic Alliance \(CASA\)](#), [CFO Air Emissions Group](#) - Ann Baran

CASA, Renewable and Alternative Energy Project Team - Kelsey Prenevost  
Coalition of Environmental Groups Reviewing EnCana Gas Infill Development Project in Suffield NWA - [Reg Ernst](#)  
[Economic Development Lethbridge](#) - Klaus Jericho  
[Lethbridge Environment Week Committee](#) - Bonnie Kleinmark, Cecily Smith

[Milk River Natural Area Advisory Group](#) - Cheryl Bradley  
[Milk River Fish Species at Risk Recovery Team](#) - Lori Goater  
[Oldman Watershed Council \(OWC\) Board](#) - Cheryl Fujikawa  
[OWC Urban Team](#) - Cheryl Bradley, Sylvia Campbell, Cheryl Fujikawa, Cecily Smith

OWC Rural Team - Deb Jarvie  
Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership Advisory Committee - Klaus Jericho

**SAGE Donates to SAYEE Envirozine** – At the April meeting SAGE's Board voted to make a substantial contribution towards production of a magazine by the Southern Alberta Youth for Environmental Education. The theme of the 'envirozine' will be "Knowing our Place". Creative expressions about our natural environment and our relationship to it will be featured. Watch for it in the mail and on news stands. To contribute, visit [www.sayee.ca](http://www.sayee.ca).

## Issues and Updates

**SAGE Expresses Views on Tar Sands Development** – SAGE Board member, Braum Barber, has prepared a submission on behalf of SAGE for the provincial oil sands consultations. Key points follow.

Tar sands development is having a significant impact on environment, including destruction of boreal forests, large water demand and high greenhouse gas emissions. First Nations are also being unfairly impacted.

To properly evaluate the viability of oil sands extraction, one must consider the energy returned on energy invested (EROEI). Easily accessible oil extracted over the past few years has had an EROEI ranging from 3:1 to 3:2. That is, one to two barrels of oil energy are required to produce 3 barrels of oil energy. This value does not include transportation and refining of the bitumen. As the more difficult-to-produce areas of the oil sands are exploited, the energy intensity will rise, approaching the point where development is no longer sensible. At a certain point it would make more sense to use energy directed to oil sands production to directly satisfy our energy demands.

The prospect of using nuclear energy to extract bitumen is of concern. Nuclear energy is not emission-free. There is substantial energy consumed to mine the fuel source, to prepare the fuel, to construct, maintain and decommission the plant, to transport equipment and supplies, and to manage wastes. Of additional concern are release of radiation, problems in managing nuclear waste and increased security risk.

According to the Pembina Institute, the oil sands industry has benefited from an estimated \$1.193 billion dollars in subsidies from 1996 to 2002. These subsidies and low taxation levels have resulted in substantial profits for the producers.

Increasing rate of exploitation of the oil sands for export fails to address global climate change issues and undercuts Canada's Kyoto Accord commitments.

We suggest that as Albertans we need to direct our attention to developing alternative processes that would provide a better return on energy and financial investment and have less environmental and social impact.

We request a moratorium on future project approvals until the full costs and benefits of oil sands development are assessed, alternatives are studied and there are precautionary limits and processes in place that protect human and ecosystem health.

**Suggestions for Alberta's Climate Change Plan** – Several SAGE members attended the April 4<sup>th</sup> workshop in Lethbridge to provide input into Alberta's plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A booklet on "facts about climate change" was provided to participants. Climate change models predict that by the 2050s, temperatures in Alberta will be three to five degrees higher than today. Alberta will see a reduction in surface water and soil moisture, more frequent forest fires, increased threat of insects and diseases, and more extreme seasonal weather changes.

Some interesting facts about emissions also were provided. For example, a third of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions come from Alberta, the most of any province in Canada.

Participants in the workshop discussed issues and submitted their ideas in a workbook. Many suggestions echoed those by conservation organizations, including:

- Put in place absolute emission reduction targets. The current plan sets intensity targets which do not guarantee an overall reduction in emissions.

- Help Canada meet its Kyoto obligations. Canada is obliged to reduce its emissions to 6% below 1990 levels over the 2008-2012 period. Alberta has a role.

- Make industry do its fair share. Over 70% of Alberta's emissions come from producing fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), electricity production and industry. Seven of Canada's top ten emitters are found in Alberta.

- Encourage renewable energy. In 2002, Alberta committed to increase renewable energy by 3.5% by 2008. There are no regulations or incentives aimed at ensuring the target is met.

- Increase energy efficiency and conservation. The Alberta government needs to put in place regulations and incentives to encourage increased energy efficiency. These would include ensuring all appliances and equipment sold is highly efficient, building codes to ensure new construction meets a high efficiency standard, and providing incentives to help people undertake energy efficiency retrofits.

(Source: <http://www.sierraclub.ca/prairie/climate.htm>)

**Drumheller says No to Supplying Water to Balzac Development** - A controversial proposal to pipe water from the Red Deer River to a development in the Bow River basin has run into a major stumbling block. On April 3, 2007, Town of Drumheller Council denied Municipal District of Rocky View's request to use Drumheller's water intake structure and works to withdraw water from the Red Deer River that would supply the United Horsemen's new development near Balzac, a few miles north of Calgary. The MD of Rocky View will now need to look at other options for supplying water to the large racing and shopping entertainment complex. These options include buying water rights from licence holders in the Bow River basin, finding another water intake from the Red Deer River (near Innisfail) or renegotiating with the City of Calgary. New water allocations are not allowed from the Bow River, but still are allowed from the Red Deer River. Alberta Environment's decision on the water licence application is due out by April 30, 2007.

(Source: *Bow Riverkeeper News*, April 23, 2007)