



NEWSLETTER May 2006

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Announcements

Next SAGE Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, 4 May 2006

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

The Board agenda includes organization business and discussion on environmental matters currently being dealt with by SAGE. The proposed Montana Alberta Tie Line project will be part of the focus of this meeting.

Everyone welcome. Refreshments provided.

SAGE Picnic at Setaspell Outpost

June 2006

Debby Gregorash has kindly offered to host SAGE's annual pot luck picnic at her country place near Police Outpost Park. Please mark this date on your calendar.

Details to follow in next newsletter.

SAGE News

New SAGE Board – SAGE's new Board, determined at the April 6 annual general meeting are:

President – Kelsey Prenevost

Vice-President – Edith Olson

Past-President – Sylvia Campbell

Secretary – Faisal Shaffi

Treasurer – Diana Williams

Director – Cheryl Fujikawa

Director – Sister Mary MacEachern

Director – Nicola Miller

Notes and Updates

Lethbridge BRIGHT IDEAS Campaign (Jan25-Mar 9)

– There still is time to submit a bright idea. 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, call 320-4038 or visit www.lethbridge.ca.

Oldman Watershed Council Vision – At the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Oldman Watershed Council on March 22, the Board proposed a vision to guide its work. The vision is comprised of the following outcomes:

- At a minimum, the watershed is managed to maintain existing conditions based on knowledge and activities in 2006.
- The Oldman River Watershed is a well-functioning ecosystem that meets the social, economic and healthy needs of society, now and in the future.
- Residents and users of the Oldman River Watershed adopt the goals of the Oldman Watershed Council and are empowered to accomplish them
- Key reaches of the watershed have been identified for improvement and measures to restore ecological function are underway.
- There is a societally acceptable balance between a healthy economy and a healthy watershed.

Goals have also been defined and work is underway to develop a plan for action. For more information, visit www.oldmanbasin.org.

Churches Walk for Water - KAIROS, an ecumenical group uniting eleven churches and church agencies, is undertaking a social justice campaign on water during 2005-06. The campaign "Water: Life Before Profit!" is encouraging groups across Canada to organize activities celebrating community control of water. On World Water Day, March 22, group members in Lethbridge walked from the Oldman Watershed Council AGM at the Lethbridge Lodge to City Hall carrying pitchers of water. They drew attention to water quality issues in the Oldman River basin and the importance of water as a public good.

Monitoring the June 2005 Flood – At the OWC AGM there were two presentations on the flood occurring in June 2005 in the Oldman Basin. One dealt with water quantity and the other with water quality.

Stew Rood, professor at the University of Lethbridge, reported that it was the 9th highest flood in

120 years making it a 1 in 20 year flood event for the Oldman River. Rain, not snowmelt, caused the flood and was heaviest in the Porcupine Hills. The Waterton River experienced only a 1 in 2 year flood. The flood record does not indicate increasing frequency or severity of floods.

Wendell Koning, Alberta Environment, reported results of a synoptic survey on the Oldman River from its headwaters to its mouth during the flood event (June 7-10). All samples of the main stem and tributaries exceeded water quality guidelines for fecal coliform bacteria. Highest readings were from Pincher Creek, Beaver Creek, Willow Creek, Piyami Drain, Haney Drain and Battersea Drain. High readings may be attributed to runoff from agricultural lands and failure of Pincher Creek's wastewater treatment plant.

Failing to Manage Flows for Cottonwoods - Flows below the Waterton Dam were abruptly reduced following the flood peak in spring of 2005 meaning conditions for cottonwood establishment were not met.

Grizzly Bear Hunt Ceases – On March 3, Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Dave Coumts announced that the spring grizzly bear hunt is suspended while DNA census data is collected throughout the province. Unfortunately he did not commit to protecting grizzly bear habitat.

Provincial Funds Promised for Groundwater Testing and Land Use Planning – In this sitting of the Legislature the Provincial Government has committed to initiatives aimed at addressing environmental implications of rapid growth. These initiatives appear to be in response to concerns expressed by numerous Albertans regarding loss of natural capital.

On March 6 Alberta Environment committed to develop standard procedures and reporting requirements for baseline testing of well water to establish water quality prior to coalbed methane drilling. There also will be a two-year program to map groundwater in central Alberta, in areas where fresh groundwater may be pumped to facilitate coalbed methane development.

On March 24 the Alberta Government announced a \$5 million annual budget increase for the next three years to improve land management. Funds will be applied to additional land management activity, improving land information systems and consulting Albertans on a comprehensive Land Use Framework.

That question is probably better for (Energy Minister) Greg Melchin. (Sustainable Resource Development Minister David Coumts in response to a question about who is responsible for identifying areas that are too environmentally sensitive for development or declaring areas off limits to oil and gas activity, Calgary Herald, 20 Mar 2006)