



NEWSLETTER

February 2006

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A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

Announcements

Next SAGE Meeting

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

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

The Board agenda includes updates on ongoing activities and discussion of new SAGE initiatives.

Everyone welcome. Refreshments provided.

22nd SAGE Annual General Meeting

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

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

Election of the SAGE Board of Directors will occur at the annual general meeting. At least ten members must be present to achieve quorum. Members in good standing are encouraged to attend and to vote. The meeting is open to the general public.

Oldman Watershed Council

2nd Annual General Meeting

8 am - 3 pm, Wednesday, 22 March 2006

Lethbridge Lodge, 320 Scenic Drive South

Registration fee - \$40.00 (includes lunch). Register before March 3 to be part of early bird draw.

For more information visit www.oldmanbasin.org or call Leda at (403)381-5801

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. Thank you to all who already have renewed.

Call for Nominations to SAGE Board – Nominations are open for the 2006-2007 Board. SAGE Board positions include president, vice-president and six directors. A secretary and treasurer will be selected from among the six directors. According to recently revised society bylaws, terms are two years except for

three directors whose terms will be only one year. 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 Volunteering Matters:

Opportunity – SAGE is seeking a volunteer to participate in the Milk River Natural Area Advisory Committee. Bob Campbell is stepping down from this role after several years of service. The SAGE volunteer joins representatives of provincial and municipal governments, livestock grazing interests and the Alberta Wilderness Association to review and advise on the Natural Area's management. There are two meetings a year, one of these involving a field trip to the internationally significant area of native mixedgrass prairie in southeastern Alberta. Periodic reports would be made to the SAGE Board. If you are interested in this volunteer position, please contact Cheryl at 328-1245 or cebradley@shaw.ca.

Recognition – Bob Campbell, thank you for several years of service as SAGE's representative on the Milk River Natural Area Advisory Committee.

Bonnie Kleinmark, thank you for joining Cecily Smith as a SAGE volunteer on the Lethbridge Environment Week Committee.

Will Eastslope Sculpin Make the List? – As of December 31, 2005 the period for public comment was closed regarding listing of the rare eastslope sculpin as endangered under federal species at risk legislation. The small fish has an extremely limited distribution, found only in the upper reaches of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers in Alberta and Montana. The Milk River Watershed Council submitted a letter opposing protection of the species as it might affect water storage options. SAGE members sent comments supporting listing as it would affirm that our political representatives respect the scientific assessments made by COSEWIC, value biodiversity, and honour Canada's commitment to protect biodiversity. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, responsible for aquatic species, will consider scientific assessment, public comments and analysis of benefits and costs in

advising the Minister of Environment about whether to list or not.

Lethbridge Waste Management and Cogeneration Project Under Review – A public information session was held on January 25 to inform residents about a proposed project which would burn biological waste and generate energy. A Fort Macleod company, ECB Enviro North America Inc., is proposing to construct the “Lethbridge cogeneration demonstration plant” in the County of Lethbridge about 1 km east of Lethbridge city limits just south of the Agriculture Centre. The company’s website is www.ecbna.com.

A preliminary application for approval under the provincial *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* has been made to Alberta Environment. The County of Lethbridge also is being approached to approve siting of the facility.

Supporters of the project, including Economic Development Lethbridge, view it as a way to deal with large amounts of organic waste produced by the intensive livestock industry (manure, dead animals) and food processors while producing energy to run the facility and supply electricity to the provincial grid. As well, overall greenhouse gas emissions in the region would be reduced. Similar projects are operating in Europe. Detractors are concerned about the effects of air emissions, including odour, and project activities (hauling of waste, noise) on health and quality of life.

Alberta Environment is classifying the project as a waste management facility, not an energy generation facility, hence an environmental review and approval is required. Impacts on air, groundwater and soil need to be considered. The initial application has been found deficient in technical matters and is being sent back to the proponent to address deficiencies before it will be considered a completed application.

Once the application is considered complete by Alberta Environment and a development permit is obtained from the municipality the proposal will be subject to public review. Statements of concern may be submitted by potentially affected parties and the proponent will be required to demonstrate concerns of those considered to have standing have been addressed. A decision to approve or not by Alberta Environment can be appealed to the provincial Environmental Appeal Board. Only those deemed to be directly affected can appeal.

Input Sought on CFO Emissions Inventory List – SAGE member Ann Baran currently is participating in a process to identify emissions from Confined Feeding Operations which will be considered as part of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA) process to develop a provincial strategy. Other participants in the process are representatives of the livestock industry and government agencies. Agreement has yet to be reached on an inventory list. Ann made a presentation at the December SAGE meeting and is seeking views of SAGE members on the following matters.

There is a proposal to include total reduced sulphur on the inventory list. Some parties however are

proposing to restrict consideration to only hydrogen sulphide. Which approach do you prefer?

What greenhouse gas emissions should be included on the inventory list?

There is a proposal to include airborne pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, fungi, endotoxins, and dander. Should none, some or all of these be included?

There is resistance to odour being addressed in a provincial strategy to improve emissions from confined feeding operations. Should odour be considered?

Operators of intensive livestock operations have suggested expanding the definition of confined feeding operation (CFO) to include animals in pastures - not just those in buildings or corrals. What are your views?

Please give some thought to these matters and reply to Ann by phone at (403) 738-4657 or by email to couleesedge1@hotmail.com by early March 2006. Ann wants to ensure any position she takes on these matters reflects SAGE members’ views.

Southern Foothills Study – Landowner groups and Municipal Districts in southwestern Alberta are taking watershed planning matters into their own hands. Tired of the provincial government’s indifference to being proactive about the effects of development pressures including coal bed methane (CBM) on native rangelands and water, they are putting out their own resources to initiate a cumulative impact study.

Dr. Brad Stelfox of Forem Technologies has been hired to run a suite of “what-if” land use scenarios in a cumulative effects model (ALCES) regarding predicted future development of energy, residential and agricultural sectors. The results should help stakeholders understand multiple demands and potential impacts on the landscape and on surface and subsurface water.

The Group is keeping the Alberta Government informed of the study and the Government is cooperating by providing some data for input into the ALCES model. Visit www.pekisko.com for more information and to make a donation.

Transparent Process for Public Land Deals Needed

– Environmental interests only recently became aware of a deal to convert two sections of public land to private land for wind farm development in an environmentally significant area on the east boundary of the Peigan Reserve. In exchange the developer, Soderglen Ranches Ltd., agreed to purchase private lands near Del Bonita and give them to the crown. This exchange would have occurred without public knowledge or input if approval by the Municipal District of Willow Creek had not been required to hear arguments about the proposed windfarm development. A contractor for the developer began clearing of the land prior to the land exchange having been finalized.

Lacking is public policy which defines the process by which decisions about public land sale or trade are made and which ensures transparency.

Use Recycled Fiber - The Natural Resources Defense Council has determined that if every U.S. household bought just a single box of 100% recycled tissue, a roll

of paper towels and one package of napkins, 1.7 million trees would be saved.