



**“We credit scarcely any persons with good sense  
except those who are of our opinion.”**

**La Rochefoucauld**

**November 2011**

#### **Next SAGE meeting**

Thursday, November 3rd  
at 7 p.m., Fish & Game  
Hut.

Debby Gregorash speaks  
for SAGE on CTV against  
the conversion of grass-  
land to irrigated agricul-  
ture near Bow Island.

Catch Lorne Fitch’s article  
in the Lethbridge Herald,  
October 27th Guest Col-  
umn on the preservation  
of native grasslands.

### **Castle Logging Gets Final Go-Ahead**

The ministry of Sustaina-  
ble [*sic*] Resource Devel-  
opment has given the  
final approval for logging  
the Castle Special Place.  
Worse, the approval ex-  
pands the land area in  
the license to include  
Whitney, Mill and Glad-  
stone valleys within the  
forest reserve.

Spray Lake Sawmills are  
expected to begin clear-  
cut logging the area be-  
fore April 2012.

This decision contradicts  
the Special Place desig-  
nation for the area and  
precedes the results  
from the regional land-  
use planning process.

It is interesting to note  
that the Land Use  
Framework Summary  
listed ‘Forestry’ as the  
number one reason to  
limit residential and  
commercial develop-  
ment (p.15).

Furthermore, independ-  
ent research suggests  
that people in the region  
vastly prefer the area be  
used for recreation and  
for tourism, and would  
restrict logging activities.

Clearly, logging the Cas-  
tle is being advanced  
against the desire and  
best interest of Alber-  
tans. Watch the website  
[Stop Castle Logging](#) for  
updates.

### **Good News on Grasslands-for-Potatoes**

The Government of Alber-  
ta has cancelled the Re-  
quest for Proposals to  
convert 16,000 acres of  
native grassland to irrigat-  
ed potato crops.

The Governments cited  
their concern over lack of  
transparency and public  
input during the process,  
and “that there might be  
an impact on water and

on the ranching commu-  
nity.” The land is current-  
ly under a grazing lease or  
permit.

The news release states:  
“Public consultation and  
water use and availability  
are priorities for this gov-  
ernment.” That would be  
nice.

### **Keystone XL Pipeline**

TransCanada’s Keystone XL  
pipeline is planned to carry  
bitumen from the Alberta Tar  
Sands south to the Gulf Coast  
at Port Arthur, Texas.

The route would take the  
bitumen over 1700 miles,  
cross 1904 waterways and  
the largest fresh water aqui-  
fer in the United States. The  
State Departments Environ-  
mental Impact Statement has  
no environmental concerns.

It is interesting to note that

the TransCanada’s Keystone I  
pipeline was designed for 1  
leak/spill every 7 years on  
average. This pipeline has had  
12 leaks in the past year  
alone, spilling over 110,000  
liters of oil. The pipeline has  
been shut down until safety  
problems have been correct-  
ed.

Even more interesting, Trans-  
Canada has spent over  
\$500,000 lobbying in the U.S.  
for the Keystone XL pipeline  
in the last few months.

## Prayer Gathering Menaced on Blood Reserve

An event called a "Drumming for Earth Gathering" organized by Mike Bruised Head was ordered off of the Blood Band Ranch on October 1st.

The event was organized to pray for the protection of Mother Earth and was attended by elders and families of the First Nation and guests from the region.

The ranch manager menaced the gathering with threats of police involvement. He claimed to have acted on orders from superiors, even though permission had been granted by the Chief. The peaceful gathering dispersed leaving a feeling disappointment for those concerned about the recent drilling activities.

A week earlier, the Council of Canadians organized a rally in Galt Gardens for the protection of our water. Speakers included Lois Frank who presented her experience being

arrested for her engagement against fracking on the reserve, and Mike Bruised Head told of the substantial contamination to his drinking water. Jim Byrne from the University of Lethbridge and Sheila Rogers of the Council of Canadians provided insight on the threat of oil and gas exploration to our water. And Tom Cain from Greensence provided some thoughts on alternative energy

sources that would make this controversial source of shale gas unnecessary.

The administration of the Blood Reserve and departments in the federal government complicit in the decision remain undeterred in their efforts to fully exploit the region for shale gas and oil.



### Some Interesting Articles & Research:

#### IPCC on **Renewable Energy**

[http://www.ipcc.ch/news\\_and\\_events/docs/ipcc33/SRREN\\_FD\\_SPM\\_final.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/ipcc33/SRREN_FD_SPM_final.pdf)

#### Lethbridge Herald on **Logging the Castle**

<http://www.lethbridgeherald.com/front-page-news/foothills-group-celebrating-delay-of-logging-in-castle-area-93011.html>

### **Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)**

**A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.**

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

[sage-communications@sage-environment.org](mailto:sage-communications@sage-environment.org)



## Bowling Alone (2000)

Robert Putnam concludes his book *Bowling Alone* with the challenge: *"Let us act to ensure that by 2010 Americans will spend less time traveling and more time connecting with our neighbors than we do today, that we will live in more integrated and pedestrian-friendly areas, and that the design of our communities and the availability of public space will encourage more casual socializing with friends and neighbors."*

Why would he make such a challenge? Well, the research that he unravels through the book indicates some hard times for a society that no longer engages in politics, volunteerism, with their neighbours, and even with their own families.

He begins by defining what he calls 'social capital' as those benefits that accrue when there is mutual support, cooperation, trust, and institutional effectiveness. Putnam chronicles the steady loss of social capital since the mid-1960s: "Organizational records suggest that for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century Americans' involvement in civic associations of all sorts rose steadily, except for the parenthesis of the Great Depression. In the last third of the century, by

## (Book Review)

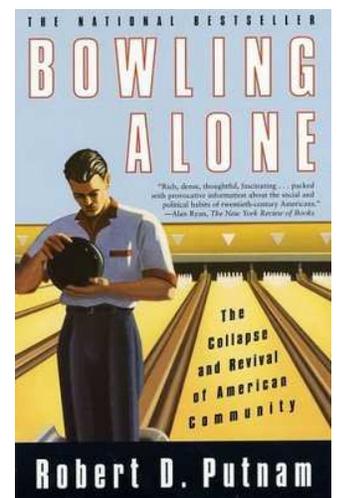
contrast, only mailing list membership has continued to expand, with the creation of an entirely new species of "tertiary" association whose members never actually meet." This trend is also true of environmental organizations. Overall, Putnam shows that this decline is largely attributable to generational changes, with each subsequent generation since WWII becoming less engaged.

Like a mystery novel, Putnam explores the reasons why this might be. He looks at the changing demographic of the workforce (with more double-income families), the pressures of time and money due to mobility and suburban sprawl, the effects of mass media and new computer technologies. Each seems to have had some impact. The result, Putnam argues is that "We remain interested and critical spectators of the public scene. We kibitz, but we don't play. We maintain a façade of formal affiliation, but we rarely show up. We have invented new ways of expressing our demands that demand less of us. ... We are less generous with our money and (with the important exception of senior citizens) with our time, and we are less likely to give strangers the benefit of the doubt."

The impacts Putnam explores include the challenges to the welfare of children, the safety of our neighbourhoods, the negative transaction costs in business, a reduction in economic prosperity, our perceptions of health and happiness, and the threat to democratic process.

By 1990, three decades of growing materialism had reduced student ratings of importance for politics and the environment from 50% to 25%, while financial well-being almost doubled to a rating of 75%. Moreover, the correlation between ideological 'extremism' increased over the last quarter of the twentieth century, "as people who characterize themselves as being 'middle of the road' ideologically have disproportionately disappeared from public meetings, local organizations, political parties, rallies, and the like."

This book is very interesting, and surprisingly compelling to read considering the depth of analysis. Four wind turbines !



\*An open letter supported by SAGE written to Albertans on **Water for Alberta's Rivers:**

Dear Albertans:

We believe you understand the value of water and the need to use water wisely. That is why so many of you have participated in Alberta's *Water for Life Strategy*, providing guidance to decision-makers about how we use and manage our water resources.

The goals of the *Water for Life Strategy* are:

- Safe, secure drinking water
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

A key to achieving these goals is the development of provincial Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Plans (CEP Plans). These plans are to be completed by major water users, including municipalities, irrigators and the oil and gas and hydropower industries, to improve their water-use efficiency by 30 per cent by 2015. In 2008, major water users agreed to draft plans with information about stressed water sources in the areas where they operate, and to provide creative ideas for environmental improvement. Unfortunately, these plans are coming up short in addressing important environmental needs.

As you strive to use less water in your home, you do so in good faith that the water you're saving (*conserved water*) will go back into our rivers to benefit river health. Yet, the plans being created by many major water users focus on directing conserved water to new uses, leaving little or no extra water to return to rivers. However, it is crucial to return some of the conserved water back to rivers, in order to augment low flows, ensure groundwater recharging, help to stabilize stream banks, and support the plant and animal life that depend on healthy rivers. Alberta's CEP Plans should reduce the risk to the most sensitive aspects of aquatic ecosystems in Alberta.

Some major water users receive provincial funding to conserve water, but intend to use this conserved water for purposes other than river health. We are concerned that the CEP Plans have become industry growth plans, rather than meeting the *Water for Life* goals that provide broader benefits to all Albertans. We are also concerned that the Government of Alberta is passing off its responsibility for healthy rivers by failing to act on the CEP Plans. Furthermore, Albertans deserve to be involved in decisions about the future of conserved water.

We believe that all Albertans have a responsibility to be stewards of our water. As a citizen, you can take a stand for the return of conserved water to our rivers, especially in water-stressed areas. You can urge major water users to implement clear CEP Plans that meet the *Water for Life* goals. Find out who supports the return of conserved water to our rivers. Ask your MLA, and other individuals seeking to be elected to the legislature in the future what they are going to do to ensure the health of our rivers for all Albertans. Let them know what you expect.

Sincerely yours,

Alberta Wilderness Association

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Southern Alberta Chapter

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Northern Alberta Chapter

Central Athabasca Stewardship Society

Keepers of the Athabasca Watershed Council

Southern Alberta Group for the Environment

Water Matters

\*An article published in the **Prairie Post** by **Susan Quinlan**, September 29th ([www.prairiepost.com](http://www.prairiepost.com)):

### **Blood Tribe members express concern over fracking on reserve**

Three Kainai band members were recently arrested, as part of a blockade intended to draw attention to and prevent Murphy Oil from continuing their fracking operation on the Blood reserve.

Lois Frank, Elle-Maija Tailfeathers and Jill Crop Eared Wolf were subsequently charged with trespassing and intimidation.

Although concerned about what she perceived as denial of her civil rights or the right to speak publicly, Frank emphasized the focus of the protesters' concern was not the arrest.

"It's not about 'poor Lois in jail' — my air has gone bad; my water has gone bad. People have got to stand up now.

Farmers and ranchers, you thought BSE was a problem ...

"We're getting calls from all over; the Northwest Territories, B.C., New Brunswick, Michigan, California, Washington, Washington DC and Ireland. This went viral," said Frank, referring to interest from environmental groups and others who became aware of the protest against drilling on the reserve.

"... it's about the environment and how that's going to affect all of us ... It's going to affect the crops, the water; it's going to affect all of us around here ... What about the wildlife and cattle?"

"The issue is we were not consulted in this deal, and other deals have been signed as well ... Nobody argued (against it) because they didn't know what it was all about ... there was no discussion as to what's in the chemicals."

Hydraulic fracturing, commonly referred to as fracking, is a method of oil and gas extraction that involves pumping diesel or water along with a combination of chemicals and sand, into a reservoir with such force that the reservoir rock is cracked, releasing any trapped oil or gas.

Kerry Guy, P.Eng., manager, Natural Gas Advocacy for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, said the process of fracking has been carried out in western Canada for 50 years with the drilling of 167,000 wells and no incidents of drinking water contamination.

Although some of the fluid injected does return to the earth's surface, it's then disposed of according to Energy Resources Conservation Board rules, said Guy.

In addition, Guy said, "there should be no reason why any of these additives or chemicals should enter the air."

When asked if he would be comfortable living on the Kainai Reserve, given the fracking operations now underway, Guy said he would.

Lethbridge College instructor Braum Barber said fracking fluids come back to the surface following initial injection, but much of the fluid remains in the ground for years.

"All have the potential for contaminating water on the surface and underground."

In addition, there's the issue of gas and chemicals continuing to escape wells decades after production operations have concluded, said Barber.

Even if retired wells are properly abandoned, the ground continues to shift and over time the concrete cracks, allowing gas and other toxic fluids to escape, added Barber.

"As time goes on we can expect more and more of these abandoned wells to leak. Fifty years down the line, what are the implications of having thousands more wells abandoned?"

"I understand these companies are responding to our demand for energy. Even at the low price of \$4/GJ, I wonder if they're exploiting the resource before there's too much public opposition."

Barber said the Kainai Earth Watch Group is requesting a "go slow" moratorium on drilling on the reserve, so more scientific information can be gathered and band members can be better informed about the effects of fracking.

Among the many reports Barber referenced for information on the environmental and health effects of fracking was that of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, published in April 2011.

In that report, the committee stated fracking had been the subject of both enthusiasm and increased environmental and health concern, given that the process, coupled with advances in horizontal drilling technology, has allowed industry to access natural gas reserves previously considered uneconomical, particularly in shale formations.

As a direct result, natural gas production in the United States in 2010 reached the highest level in decades, with the Energy Information Administration claiming the U.S. now has access to enough natural gas resources to supply that country for approximately 110 years.

The report stated as the use of hydraulic fracturing has grown, concerns about its environmental and public health impacts have as well grown, particularly regarding the content of the fluids used, as they enter drinking water supplies. Although some of the components used in fracking were common and harmless, such as salt and citric acid, some were extremely toxic, such as benzene and lead. Among the 750 chemicals and other components used in fracking was methanol, the most widely-used chemical and a known hazardous air pollutant.

Twenty-nine other chemicals listed were known or possible human carcinogens regulated under the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act or listed as hazardous air pollutants under the U.S. Clean Air Act.

The information gathered by the committee showed between 2005 and 2009, the 14 leading hydraulic fracturing companies in the United States used more than 2,500 hydraulic fracturing products containing 750 compounds of which more than 650 contained chemicals that are known or possible human carcinogens regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act or listed as hazardous air pollutants.

Overall, these 14 oil and gas companies used 780 million gallons of hydraulic fracturing products, not including water added at the well site, between 2005 and 2009.

The committee noted their report represented the most comprehensive national assessment to date of the types and volumes of chemicals used in fracking.

They also noted although fracking had opened access to vast domestic reserves of natural gas, questions about the process persisted and were compounded by the secrecy surrounding the chemicals used in fracking fluids.

Meanwhile, Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board recently loosened regulatory requirements regarding how many wells can be drilled in this province, and given the vast amount of shale in southern Alberta, Barber expressed concern that the environmental integrity of the region may be compromised given the likely increase in fracking operations.

With the expected demand for energy doubling by 2035, not even the extremely low current price of gas mentioned previously is preventing fracking operations from slowing, said Barber.

"I dread what will happen here."

Meanwhile, explained Frank, the agreement signed with Murphy Oil by Blood Chief Charlie Weasel Head and council have brought fracking to the reserve.

"Two thirds of the land is leased out; they're coming up everywhere. There's one on the way to Cardston; it looks like a little city."

Frank said she and other concerned band members had been trying to educate fellow band members over the past year, regarding the extent of the extraction operation and the damage it will cause the environment.

They've also expressed their concerns to the Energy Resources Conservation Board and Indian and Northern Affairs; levels of government that subsequently recommended the group take their concerns back to the Chief Weasel Head and council.

An attempt was made to contact Chief Weasel Head and Kainai Public Relations Officer Rick Tail Feathers, for comment regarding Frank's concern, but a response was not received by press time.

"Indigenous groups are the most vulnerable; they're all living in poverty. There's no jobs in this; they're only using us as security guards and grunts to haul away the toxic stuff ... We have enough social problems; now we're going to add cancer and other illnesses?"

"The earth has rights. We think we have dominion over the world ... when they started fracking I thought, 'the earth has rights. What are we doing? We're going to pay for it, as human beings'."

\*Letter sent to Premier Redford by the Stop Castle Logging Group with the support of SAGE

October 5, 2011

Dear Mrs. Premier Designate -

We would like to extend our heart-felt congratulations on your recent victory in the Progressive Conservative leadership contest, and for becoming Alberta's 14<sup>th</sup> Premier. We would also like to extend our condolences on the passing of your mother, who by all accounts was an inspiration for you and many others.

We are writing on behalf of many concerned citizens, businesses and organizations working in the Castle Special Place north of Waterton National Peace Park. Collectively, we have been working to stop logging in the Castle Special Place and advance a proposal for legislated and permanent protection of the Castle Special Place as a combination Wildland and Provincial Park. This recommendation grew out of a locally based multi stakeholder process. Our group has already met with the Ministers of Sustainable Resource Development, Environment, and Parks, Recreation, and Tourism to discuss our concerns regarding the scheduled logging and our proposal for protection.

As the next Premier of Alberta you face many challenges and have many opportunities, and we look forward to the chance to provide you with input on how to advance an agenda that benefits all Albertans. Long term protection for the Castle provides you with one such opportunity.

We believe that one of your first occasions to advance the long term environmental health of Alberta will be the permanent protection of the Castle region as a combination Wildland and Provincial Park, as advocated for by local stakeholders. Fully 74% of residents in the region support this designation. As noted in our briefing package provided during the election campaign at the Connecting Environmental Professionals forum, we feel that many of the barriers to long term protection have been addressed through the patient and dedicated work of the local citizens of the region over the past years.

We would like to meet with you to exchange ideas about how legislating protection for the Castle can be done in a manner consistent with the needs of the province of Alberta, and outline what we think would be an expedient and timely way to ensure a major environmental victory for your new government. We have worked diligently to consider any remaining concerns – principally logging, which could begin as early as this fall – to the creation of the park and stand ready to work with your government to address those concerns effectively and fairly. There will be many opportunities for your government to advance environmental protection over the next months and years; we believe that permanent legislated protection for the Castle is “shovel ready.”

We therefore request a meeting with you to discuss this at your earliest convenience. Although we represent a multitude of organizations and stakeholders, please contact Sarah Elmeligi at the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society ([selmeligi@cpaws.org](mailto:selmeligi@cpaws.org); 403-232-6686 x6) to set up a meeting.

As a collaborative of Albertans, we are heartened by your commitment to change. Please consider us as partners in your effort to ensure a prosperous, healthy and environmentally sound future.

Respectfully,

The Stop Castle Logging Group