



LAND ADVOCATE

News for Canadians living with oil and gas production

A New Advocate!

Well, here we are: A democratic voice for landowners and the land. An advocate for more 100,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. We'll separate the oil from the gas to give you the best and most informed perspective on what's right and what's wrong in the oil patch.

And we're just in time. In the next decade more than 200,000 oil and gas wells will be drilled the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin, an area that stretches from southern Saskatchewan, through Alberta, and into north eastern BC. Thousands of these wells will be drilled on private property or on public lands managed by private landowners. North America's bottomless energy appetite will affect us all: ranches in the foothills and prairie; small acreages and subdivisions outside major cities and mixed farms on the edge of the boreal. The rapid depletion of conventional natural gas supplies promises that much of this development will take place in a hurried and chaotic fashion smack in the middle of prime farmland. Much of it will also involve so-called "dirty gases" or the dregs of the energy barrel. These dirty gases, which include sour gas and coal-bed methane, come with unacceptable environmental, social and water costs.

But this unprecedented pace of development also represents an opportunity for landowners to talk and share their stories. That's where the Land Advocate comes in. Four times a year we'll document bad and good practices; we'll expose shoddy regulations; we'll fight property devaluation and we'll press for land conservation. Rural

folk can wield significant power if they are organized and unified behind common objectives. Community groups such as the Butte Action Committee, the Clearwater Coalition and the Pekisko Land Owners Association have proven what united communities can do. The Land Advocate aims to build on their success and promote greater fairness, restraint and accountability in the patch. In fact we want to help bring landowners together so their voices can be more clearly heard and acted on.

While government and industry routinely ask, "What we can get away with on the land?" The Advocate poses a different question: "What does nature require of us here?" So read on and send us your ideas and stories.

Andrew Nikiforuk
Editor

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Our Board:

Don Bester: Butte Action Committee
Gwen Johansson: Hudson Hope Landowners
Perry Nelson: Alberta Surface Rights Association
David Schindler: University of Alberta



MORE DEREGULATION FOR RECLAMATION

Alberta's reclamation program, which has kept some landowners waiting three decades for a proper clean-up, has just gotten dirtier. Changes to the Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Program, which will be effective Oct. 1st, simply mean more industry self-regulation. For starters Alberta Environment will no longer do formal on-site inspections of reclaimed sites. Instead they'll just stamp a lot of paper produced by oil companies or what the department calls "an administrative and technical review for completeness." Field audits will be conducted on only 15% per cent of all reclamation certificates. Industrial liability now increases from five to 25 years following self-supervised reclamation—on paper at least.

These changes mean companies no longer have to wait for provincial inspectors to approve their good or bad work to receive reclamation certificates. And very few companies will have to worry about anyone checking their clean-up.

Alberta Environment says the changes are necessary because the province only has 15 inspectors and more than 28,000 well sites and 18,400 pipelines awaiting reclamation. "We are not shrinking our resources. We're trying to do more and achieve more with the same level of resources," explained Peter Watson, assistant deputy minister of environmental assurance.

Landowners have called the changes a sham. Most believe that the same government that promoted oil and gas exploration should be involved in the clean-up. "I think the province should take the responsibility for reclamation," says Perry Nelson, a cow-calf operator near Provost. Nor does he think these changes will sit well with the banks when they

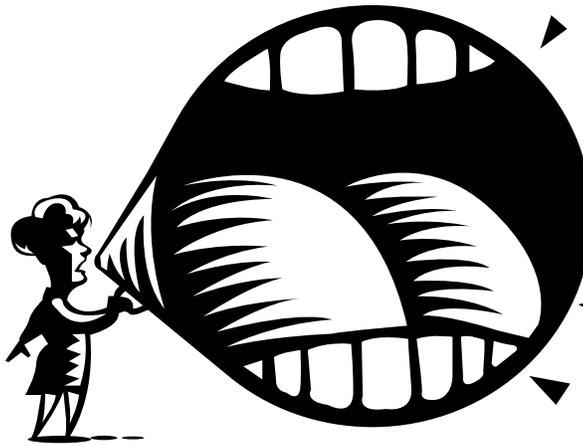
arrange mortgages for farms with reclaimed sites. In the bank's eye environmental liabilities usually sit with the landowner.

Given that no more than 75% of reclaimed sites now pass inspection, "this whole situation will only get worse," predicts Nelson. (And don't forget that companies only have to reclaim a site up to 66% of a site's former productivity according to changes made in 1995. So 100% restoration of farm land is no longer a provincial goal.) Noted Hugh Macdonald, energy critic for the Alberta's Opposition Liberals: "When you consider the Western Canadian sedimentary basin is a maturing oil and gas producing area and as more and more wells are abandoned and taken out of service, you would think we would be increasing field inspections, not decreasing field inspections." Call your MLA on this one.

Reclaim these Facts:

- Alberta has 112,000 idle wells and 450 abandoned facilities representing industrial liabilities in excess of \$6-billion.
- The EUB holds \$14-million in security. (Oops!)
- More than 343,030 wells are sitting idle in the United States.
- Approximately 57,000 are orphaned.
- Most US states don't become aware of orphan wells until they pose a threat to human health or the environment.
- The state of Texas has 115,557 idle wells.
- The state of Alaska requires a \$100,000 bond for every well and on site inspection for reclamation.

Sources: Alberta Government; 2000/01 Orphan Fund Annual Report; Produce or Plug? A Summary of Idle and Orphan Well Statistics and Regulatory Approaches.



DOING IT RIGHT

US Landowners Wake Up Alberta Officials

It all began with a visit. Last June Gwen Lachelt, a community organizer with the Oil and Gas Accountability Project in Durango, Colorado and Jill Morrison, a Wyoming rancher with the Powder River Basin Resource Council, gave talks in Strathmore, Red Deer and Camrose on the coalbed methane (CBM) experience South of the border. Information-hungry landowners turned out in force because more than 1500 CBM wells have been secretly drilled in this province.

They heard an earful. The two women calmly outlined the devastating impact of CBM development: land fragmentation (20 acre spacing on some ranch lands); water disposal in rivers, creek and land; compressor noise; contaminated water wells; webs of power lines; underground coal fires; methane leaks in basements and wells; and property devaluation. In fact, one Colorado study found that a CBM well could eat away property values by as much as 22%.

Jill Morrison showed slides of eastern Wyoming that looked like an Iraqi battlezone - scarred grasslands and hills. "The scale of disturbance can be overwhelming over time," said Morrison. Both speakers called for best drilling practices, no go areas, company bonds; adequate enforcement, and properly funded reclamation programs.

This wasn't a message that the Alberta government or Canadian Society for Unconventional Gas (CSUG) wanted landowners to hear. After refusing to discuss CBM trends with landowners Energy Minister Murray Smith demanded equal time at this public event, but was told to hold his own forum. Also, one government official tried to dismiss the presenters as "high-paid radical environmentalists," a description that

prompted hearty laughs from Lachelt and Morrison.

Free speech, however, has a way of encouraging more free speech. The government and CSUG then set up a meeting to air concerns. On July 4th more than 80 landowners met with industry and government Red Deer to discuss CBM. The Wheatland Surface Rights Action Group, which has been dealing with CBM developers for more than a year, raised some of the following key issues:

- Applications must fully disclose cumulative impacts and not just go by single project applications.
- Groundwater protection requires proper surface casing of wells as well as baseline water testing, and aquifer monitoring
- Right-of-way construction needs pre-disturbance evaluations
- Development should ensure dust control, weed control, designate traffic corridors and minimize noise.
- Reclamation should include complete and accurate documentation due to long expected well life (40 years).

For further information contact:

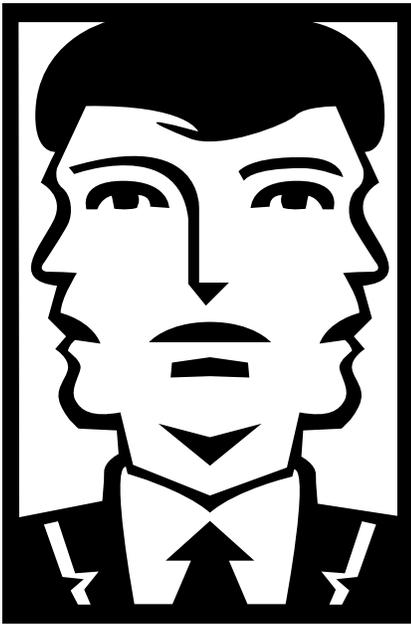
Bill Brown WSRAG chair: 403-934-2612

or lunademl@telusplanet.net or

WSRAG coordinator:

Norma Lafont: 403-934-2393





LINE IN THE SAND?

The Battle for Saskatchewan's Great Sand Hills

When is a plan not a plan?
Apparently when it's inconvenient to drilling gas wells.

Five years ago, Neil Watson, a rancher in the Great Sand Hills area thought that everyone had agreed to a pretty good plan to ensure a healthy future for the Great Sand Hills, a unique area just south of the South Saskatchewan River next to the Alberta border.

After all, ranchers, municipal leaders, industry, conservationists and others had spent years in meetings, hammering out ways in which various activities could co-exist. Then, everyone agreed to a plan to zone the area to protect certain places, restrict development in others, and allow full development elsewhere.

The sands started shifting, however, as the lure of gas money began to exert more control over governments. In 2002, one of the local municipalities proposed to rezone its protected lands to allow industrial development, and then the province initiated a review of the entire land use plan, claiming "changes to the environment, to the economy, and to societal interests."

Also in 2002, TransGas, a government company, announced it would spend \$9 million to build a pipeline into the area "to allow access by producers." So, Watson and others can be forgiven for believing that government may have already decided to hand over the Great Sand Hills to industry, regardless of the review process.

Ranchers have worked parts of the Great Sand Hills for about 100 years. The area's environment is internationally significant and is made up of sand dunes, grasslands, short hills, saline lakes, pebble plains, cotton wood groves, and aspen bluffs. This makes the

area sensitive to any kind of development, a testament to the ranchers who have learned to work lightly on the land over the years.

One of the major concerns is water. Many water sources are shallow sandpoint wells or springs. Drilling could disturb water-bearing sands. Says local rancher Ian Bowie, "In the new gas field development proposed in our area, I have noticed a couple of the proposed well sites are very near two of our main water sources. Responsibility for changes in water quantity or quality is almost impossible to prove." Seismic testing left the Bowie's water quality damaged for a year, requiring appliance replacement at their own cost.

Another major concern is the impact of industry on sensitive soils, which are everywhere. Watson watched as trails built by the gas company drilling on his land began to erode. "When this land starts to erode, it just continues until large areas are devastated." When Watson complained to the company and to government, they did nothing.

The draft report of the provincial review will come out October 1st for comment. Landowners and conservationists have made multiple representations to maintain the original plan to protect the Great Sand Hills, but are aware of the political influence of the oil and gas industry. Says Watson, "What happened to the line in the sand that was never to be crossed?"

COAL GAS RUSH



HITS HUDSON'S HOPE

North American conventional gas production is now peaking, sending the industry after marginal gas supplies. Coal bed methane is one such supply, trapped in coal seams that must be dewatered to release the gas. Drilling is also more intensive, needing more rigs and roads and pipes, since the gas is more spread out.

In short, if you think that the impacts of conventional oil and gas industry are bad, wait until coal bed methane gets into full swing.

About half of the 400 square miles of the District of Hudson's Hope has already been leased to industry. Even at the maximum one well per quarter section publicly promised by local MLA and Energy Minister Richard Neufeld, this could mean about 960 wells, about 300 miles of roads, about 300 miles of pipelines, and about 5,000 acres of lost productive land. This infrastructure comes with compressor stations, drilling disruption, truck traffic, spills, and flaring.

And then there's water. By dewatering coal seams to get the gas moving, and by pumping toxic 'fracking' materials into the ground to get more gas out, the coal bed methane industry seeks to conduct massive experiments on the aquifers that ranchers and local citizens are utterly dependant on. Nobody can truly predict what will happen to local water when projects are started, but some negative experiences elsewhere include depleted aquifers, contaminated wells, and damaged fields from surface disposal of salty produced water.

Knowing that Hudson's Hope would be so radically changed, one would have thought

that government and industry would have included local citizens in planning for such impacts. Instead, without locals knowing, Louisiana-based Peace River Corporation bought its first tenures in early 2001 and received approval for an "experimental scheme," under which all information is confidential, in late 2002.

Residents began organizing in earnest in 2003, forming a surface rights group, and insisting on public meetings with the BC Oil and Gas Commission and with local MLA Neufeld, BC's bullish energy Minister. Neighbouring First Nations also joined the chorus of those concerned about impending impacts. The key message was that a moratorium was needed so that baseline studies, cumulative impact studies, and meaningful consultation could be conducted.

Instead, in June 2003 the Commission released draft conditions for development going ahead in the area, attempting to respond to community concerns by essentially re-iterating current provincial guidelines. Meanwhile, test drilling continues by several companies. Hudson's Hope residents are hoping that their town council gets behind a resolution from Comox-Strathcona Regional District calling for a provincial moratorium on coal bed methane. The current provincial government, however, shows few signs that it is listening to its citizens.

For more information contact: Gwen Johansson
gjohan@pris.ca

TAKING ON the EUB in Strathcona County.



Located just south of Edmonton Strathcona County is one of the province's biggest counties. After many tumultuous oil and gas battles that exposed disrespectful and irresponsible exploration companies, an unresponsive apathetic MLA, as well as an ineffective impotent regulator like the EUB; area residents successfully pressured Council to become a player in the Alberta oil/gas debate.

Over the past summer an independent County sanctioned Committee, solely comprised of area residents was formed to provide bylaw recommendations to Council. Although the EUB may not be particularly pleased about this development, it is clear that under the Municipal Government Act, Council may pass bylaws and/or other levies in order to protect the safety, health and welfare of people as well as property.

And although this Committee is in its infancy, its conception has already sent a few ripples across Alberta. As for the first, residents from other Counties have contacted residents here enquiring as to the possibility of forming similar Committees elsewhere. Second, members of our Committee have produced a referendum styled petition (calling for an elected Board for the EUB) to be distributed across the Province with the purpose of making the current Board more accountable to those its decisions impact.

Last and most significantly, the creation of this Committee has sent a clear message to the EUB and Ministry of Energy that if they will not regulate this industry in populated "urban areas" the electorate and Municipal Governments will. --Oscar Steiner (Steiner is currently preparing his graduate thesis on the EUB and public consultation and is a member of the aforementioned Strathcona County Committee.)

For more information contact: asteiner@interbaun.com

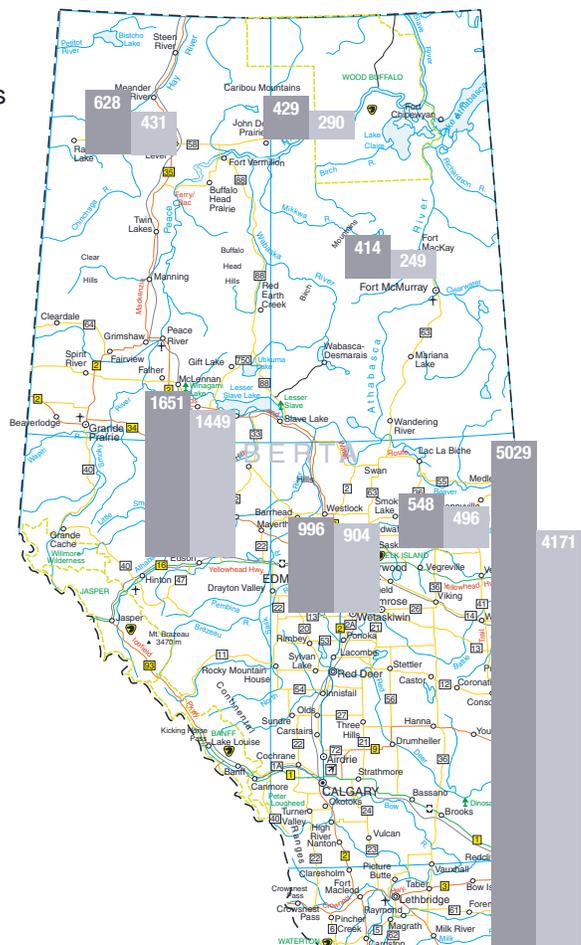
Natural Gas Woes

If you are wondering why gas and coal bed methane developers are scouring your neighborhood, wonder no more. We are running out of natural gas just like our southern neighbors. Natural gas production in this country has peaked and is now in decline.

In its latest energy forecast the National Energy Board warns that as gas supply and demand balance tightens consumers will feel "higher and volatile natural gas prices." Adds the NEB report: "Without rapid improvements in technology to increase supply or reduce demand, increasingly large adjustments will be required in the marketplace. Developers of oil sands and electric power generators may also be pressured to reconsider their reliance on natural gas."

And consider this disturbing fact: the oil sands now consume 4-billion cubic metres of gas a year to heat up the black tarry stuff. One billion is enough to heat 180,000 homes. Four billion would keep Calgary snug. By 2012 the oil sands will use nearly 12-billion cubic meters or the equivalent of three Calgaries. By 2025 the oil sands could consume the entire supply of gas from the Mackenzie Delta.

Source: Canada's Energy Future: Scenarios for Supply and Demand to 2025.



WHERE THE ACTION IS:

■ 2001 wells drilled = 9750

■ 2002 wells drilled = 8064

**2003 projected wells drilled
15,000 +**

Fescue Champions

A new group of landowners is now riding the range: the Pekisko Landowner's Association. The Association which represents more than 20 families in the Municipal District of Ranchlands and growing, was formed to fight a gas well proposed by Vermillion Resources two years ago. The company wanted to drill six wells on range land where fescue had been unceremoniously ripped up for another wellsite in 1980. The ranchers pointed out that fescue hadn't grown back. In fact once you tear up fescue, one of the world's hardiest grasses, it doesn't come back. Kentucky blue grass and awnless brome, two European opportunists of limited character, simply took over. Presented with such hard core realities and a posse of angry cowboys, Vermillion withdrew its application.

To document how oil and gas developments could fragment the fescue economy the group then commissioned a study by the University of Calgary Miistakis Institute for the Rockies. It concluded that wellsite pads, pipelines, seismic lines and access roads could eat up as



much as 4,000 hectares of fescue grassland in just one 30,000 hectare area along the foothills. That's 13% of the rarest grasslands in the world. Francis Gardner, owner of Mt Sentinel Ranch calls it death by attrition. "You end up in a spiral and each succeeding generation settles for less and doesn't realize what's been degraded."

For more information contact:
Mac Blades: 403.546.5753
rockingp@telusplanet.net

FESCUE'S GOOD WORK

- 1) High quality winter feed for cattle and wildlife.
- 2) Drought resistant.
- 3) Grasshopper resistant.
- 4) Roots store more carbon than a forest.
- 5) Soil maker.
- 6) Watershed protector.
- 7) Makes ranching in the foothills economical **forever**.

BOARD WATCH

NEWS ON THE REGULATORS

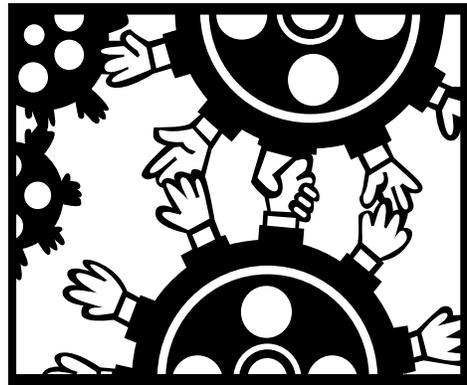
Alberta

From this year's annual Alberta Field Surveillance Provincial Summary:

- Only 70% of 8,255 inspected wells got a satisfactory rating.
- 128 facilities were shut down for non-compliance, but the names and locations of the violators are not disclosed
- 869 Albertans complained about odours, property/lease management, flaring/smoke and noise, but only 64% of these citizens say their concerns were satisfactorily resolved
- Gas plants and gas batteries have respective compliance levels of 70% and 64%
- Nearly a third of all oil facilities inspected were found to be "unsatisfactory," and 53% of all major or serious inspection items for oil production facilities remain equipment failure resulting in H2S pollution off lease
- Industry spilled nearly 6,000 cubic metres of hydrocarbons and 20,000 cubic metres of produced water in 1,445 incidents
- The number of pipeline failures due to corrosion increased from 425 in 2001 to 447 in 2002

In 2000 the EUB agreed to act on the 87 recommendations of the Public Safety and Sour Gas Report. But the latest status report Advisory Committee is highly critical of EUB foot dragging. No target dates or performance measures have been adopted.

There is still no comprehensive health effects chart, no research programs on human health effects of sour gas, no H2S registry of people exposed to or disabled by sour gas, and no mechanism for improving coordination between subsurface and surface planning. A report on sour gas and real estate values was completed six months ago but is still not available for public reading. For more, see www.eub.gov.ab.ca.



Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Industry and Resources is working on a new License Liability Rating for oil and gas operators to try to address the problem of abandoned wells and sites. All operators will be assessed on their asset side, including production and financial health, and on their liability side, including potential clean up cost of current operations and past environmental performance. If the liability side is bigger than the asset side, the operator will be required to post an appropriate bond. It is unclear at present what role landowners will play in providing information for these assessments, but there will be a public comment period on the initiative. For more information contact Brian Mattheson at 306-787-2593.

British Columbia

In June 2003, changes to the BC Petroleum and Natural Gas Act came into force. Not surprisingly they make it easier to get permission to space wells closer which is what coal bed methane needs. The overall intent of the changes was to provide so-called "clients" (oil and gas companies as opposed to the citizens of BC) increased flexibility and reduced administration.

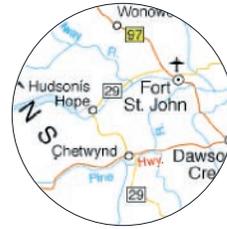
For more see

<http://www.wcel.org/deregulation/bill36.pdf>



SOUR NEWS

Fort St. John, BC: Residents of Charlie Lake near Fort St. John BC are fighting a sour gas well by Samson Canada. Their concerns include long-term health effects. In addition it seems that neither Samson nor the BC government is willing to build an emergency escape route for the residents. Under current BC law there appears to be no requirement to protect citizens in this manner. About 25% of the gas in northeastern BC is sour.



Edmonton, Alberta: An orphaned sour gas well next to Lewis Estates, a major Edmonton housing development, has been leaking sour gas for more than a year. Local homeowner Neil Lukion told the EUB about the problem six months ago and calls the situation “an explosion waiting to happen.” It might cost \$2-million to clean up the site--a property formerly owned by the bankrupt Legal Oil and Gas company.



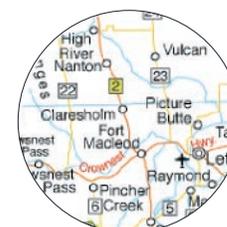
Rimbey, Alberta: ConocoPhillips has applied to construct and operate a 5.56 kilometre length of sour pipeline just 600 metres east of Rimbey town limits. How neighborly! A public hearing will be held on Oct. 29th at the Rimbey Recreational Centre.



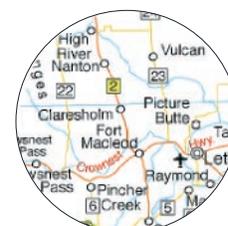
Calgary, Alberta: Compton Petroleum has applied to drill six Level Four Critical sour gas wells on outskirts of Calgary. The emergency response zone includes 40 communities--about 300,000 people--a North American first. Compton’s existing well has been a chronic source of trouble for local homeowners. According to one report the air monitoring station for Calgary East has routinely reported H₂S exceedances since 1996. A public hearing is expected January or February. The EUB held information meetings during August when half the city was on holiday. The Calgary Health Region and Conoco-Phillips (it claims the wells are too close to homeowners and will drain its leases), and hundreds of residents are objecting. To follow this battle check out www.eub.gov.ab.ca



Maycroft, Alberta: On September 9th ranchers and environmentalists took on against Polaris Resources, a small Calgary firm that wants to drill a \$10-million Level 3 critical sour gas well (28% sour) in the Whaleback, a fescue heritage site for the province. Polaris has no Alberta assets and no employees. If approved the well could turn the Nature Conservancy, a nationally renowned conservation organization, into a sour gas developer. NC owns mineral leases in the area as part of conservation agreement to preserve the Whaleback from oil and gas development. Polaris has applied for forced pooling. The public hearing runs to the 21st in Maycroft. Click on www.saboteur.sandbigoil.com for details and submissions.



Brockett: El Paso, a US firm with an appallingly poor safety record, is considering a sour gas well in the south east part of the Porcupine Hills. Local landowners and the Peigan are organizing. For more information contact David or Heidi Glass at 403-627-2081.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

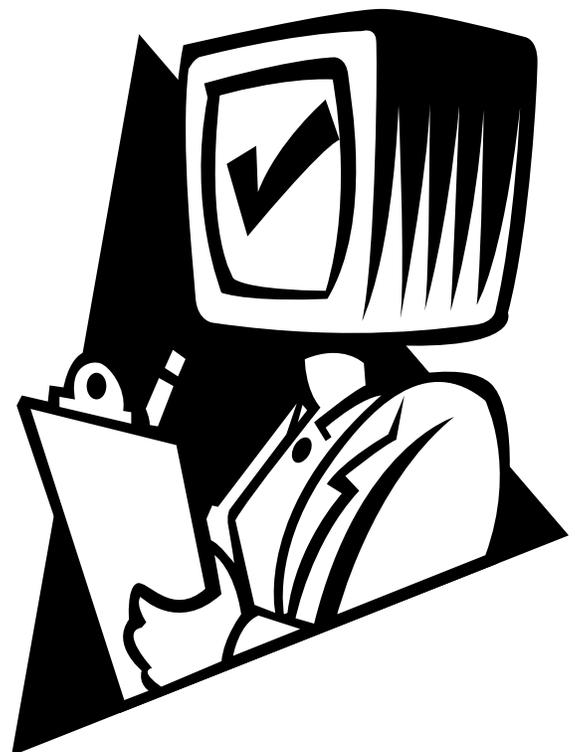
Oil and Gas Conference, Dawson Creek, BC, September 29-October 2. Includes an October 1st session on the “Landowner and the Oil and Gas Industry” including an evening workshop. For more information visit <http://oilgas.dawsoncreek.ca> or call Elaine Petersen at 250-784-3655.

Human Rights and Resource Development in Alberta, Lethbridge, Alberta, Oct 4-5th.

A workshop to examine how to advance human rights-based claims in the resource development process. To register contact: Monique Ross, Research Associate Canadian Institute of Resources Law Tel (403) 220-3973; Fax (403) 282-6182 Email: mmross@ucalgary.ca Website: www.cirl.ca

Synergy Meeting, Red Deer, Alberta, Oct 26-28th. The EUB and industry bill this gathering as “an opportunity to shape the future of synergy”. Be prepared for lots of roundtables and opportunity to form a provincial organization for community groups on oil and gas concerns. Contact: synergy@eventplan.net

SEPTEMBER 2003						
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WATER CURRENTS

After two years of steady protests from rural Albertans and water experts, the Alberta government now wants the oil and gas industry to cut its fresh water addiction. About half of the province's oil production now comes from enhanced oil recovery - a process that pumps water into old reserves to force out more oil. The industry currently uses about seven barrels of fresh water to produce one barrel of oil.

Environment Minister Lorne Taylor will strike a committee to figure out how much fresh water is now being removed from the hydrologic cycle and to examine alternatives such as saline water, carbon dioxide and produced water. **Butte Action Committee** (BAC), which made this issue a national concern, should be on this committee but at press time had not yet been invited. According to the Grande Prairie Herald Brock Smith, a deputy reeve who's been a critic of the EUB and provincial water flood policies in Lymburn area, sees the announcement as a complete turnaround for the government. Its policy, he says "has long been to get the oil out of the ground anyway they can, as quick as they can, to get the royalties to Edmonton."

According to BAC the latest figures provided by Alberta Environment on industry's consumption of surface and groundwater for oil recovery is ever-rising:

2000: 45.5 billion gallons
2001: 62.5 billion gallons
2002: 90.5 billion gallons

That's more than the annual consumption of water by the citizens of Edmonton and Calgary combined.

Capstone Energy Ltd. has applied to remove 220,000 gallons per day from the Red Deer River for oil recovery in a 22-year-old field. The Red Deer River is currently over allocated, with population growth stressing the system further. The Butte Action Committee, the city of Red Deer, the town of Innisfail and the Mountainview Water Co-op have all objected to this proposal. Out of 38 objectors Alberta Environment only granted five full

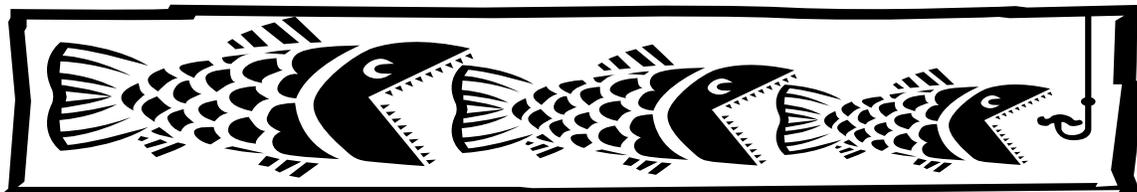
standing. Don Bester, a director with BAC, believes this case will reach the Environmental Appeal Board sometime this fall. Three ranchers, who live on the project's boundaries, have refused pipeline surface access to Capstone.

ARC Resources of Calgary has applied for a licence to withdraw groundwater for oil recovery in the Valleyview area. Alberta Environment won't reveal the size of the proposed withdrawal. Detlef Rottmerhusen, a local rancher, and 24 other landowners have objected.

It's currently illegal to pump fresh water from a coal seam into a creek or onto the land. A 2001 report by mHeath and Associates on CBM potential in Alberta labelled these sound water-protecting regulations as "significant obstacles" and "project breakers."

For the first time the government now admits that pro-industry paper "does not represent government policy." According to a new CBM paper that popped up on Alberta Energy's website CBM will proceed "carefully" in Alberta. It even promises to solicit stakeholder concerns this fall. It also states that Alberta's coal seams may contain saline water, fresh water or no water at all. Of the province's 1500 experimental coal bed wells, several have produced fresh water north of Edmonton. Saline water production is common in central Alberta.

Although industry has persistently denied that fresh water production will be an issue, an article in Oilweek indicates that's not the truth. Notes the CEO for **MGV Energy**, a big CBM player in Alberta: "We have encountered some fresh water aquifers in shallow coalbeds, but we drill right through those zones and seal them off, because as of today, there aren't any provincial regulations for producing methane along with fresh water, and that means you can't produce the methane if there is fresh water there." **MGV Energy Inc.** is actively drilling in Gaylord and Beisker.



MERCURY ALERT

Industry is loathe to admit it but mercury is a major contaminant of gas well sites. A 2001 study by the US Environmental Protection Agency estimated that natural gas facilities in the US emit 10,000 kilograms of mercury a year.

The typical concentration of mercury in natural gas is between 1 and 300 ng/1. In condensate, mercury concentrations vary from 10 to 3,000 parts per billion. While that may sound insignificant, mercury is a potent neurotoxin even in small doses. In BC, soils or sediments with mercury concentration between 2 and 10 parts per million require remediation if the ground is to be used for residential or recreation purposes.



Landowners have reported mercury contamination at abandoned sour gas wells along the foothills. At one time, Shell's Caroline plant had a very high mercury content. The old Turner Valley gas plant – called by many "Hell's Half Acre" – is so contaminated with mercury, benzenes and other toxins that Travel Alberta now advises that "the area is not accessible to the public." Between 1924 and 1938, Hell's Half Acre burned off 28 billion cubic metres of gas. Turner Valley has the highest incidence of MS in the world. MS patients tend to have seven times more mercury in their systems than healthy folks.

The Lighter Side: WHAT MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

My mother taught me RELIGION: "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL: "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"

My mother taught me LOGIC: "Because I said so, that's why."

My mother taught me FORESIGHT: "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper!"

My mother taught me about STAMINA: "You'll sit there 'till all that spinach is finished."

My mother taught me about WEATHER: "It looks as if a tornado swept through your room."

My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY: "If I've told you once, I've told you a million times - Don't Exaggerate!!!"

My mother taught me about ENVY: "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do!"

My Mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: "Just wait until we get home."

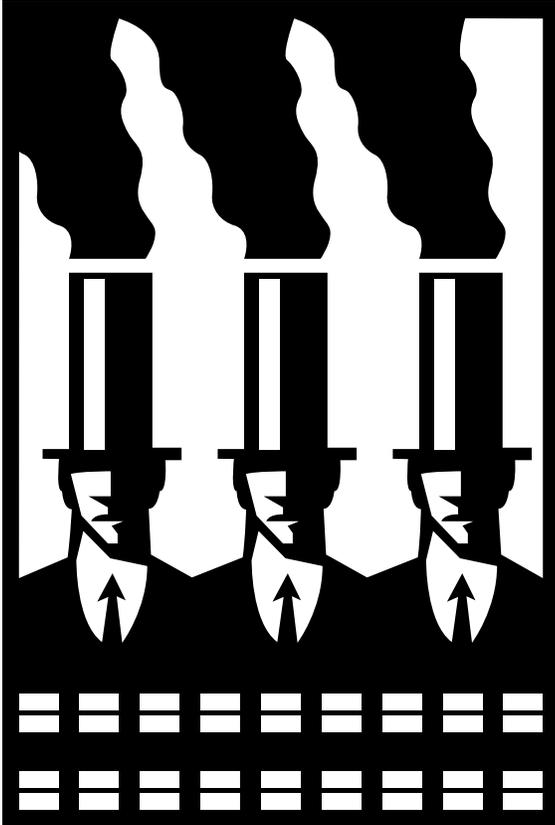
My Mother taught me about RECEIVING: "You are going to get it when we get home!"

My Mother taught me to THINK AHEAD: "If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job."

And my all time favorite... JUSTICE: "One day you'll have kids ... and I hope they turn out just like you!"

CLOSING THE GATE

POOR NEIGHBORS



Prime West Energy, a Calgary firm, recently pleaded guilty to releasing hazardous material near Carstairs. It paid a \$100,000 fine.

KeySpan Energy, which operates the Nordegg River sour gas plant and the Brazeau River sour gas plant, was recently issued three warning letters for not coughing up its Manual Stack Survey report on time.

OPTI Canada, which operates the Burnt Lake oil sands processing plant in Lakeland County, was fined \$1500 for not submitting a monthly air emissions summary report.

Source: Alberta Environment: Enforcement Acts, 1 April 2003 to 30 June 2003.

Novel Sealant

As many in the Provost area know, thousands of old wells are leaking gas on a regular basis, killing surrounding vegetation. A concrete well casing just isn't the safeguard industry said it would be. So Dr. Marcel Polikar at the University of Alberta is now studying the effectiveness of a novel sealant to close these leaky orphan gas wells. For more info contact Dr. Polikar at marcel.polikar@ualberta.ca

FHOA

The Freehold Owners Association (FHOA) represents some 2,000 landowners who own their subsurface rights. Their latest newsletter contains this gem: "In an Ipsos-Reid survey released on January 22, 2003, Canadians were asked to rank the trustworthiness of various professions and industries. Amongst industries, the oil and gas industry scored 17% and ranked 27th out of 28, just slightly ahead of the last-placed tobacco industry. Had this poll been conducted amongst freehold owners rather than the general Canadian public, it is probable that the oil and gas industry would have scored much lower." Check out FHOA's excellent website at www.fhoa.ca

Urban Sprawl

Statistics Canada confirms what we've all driven by: the highest population growth in Canada was in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. Since 1996 it's increased by 12.3%. The corridor includes Leduc, Red Deer, and Wetaskiwin and now consists of 72% of Alberta's population.

Some Old Advice: "Before we plow an unfamiliar path/ It is well to be informed about the winds./About the variations in the sky,/The native traits and habits of the place,/What each locale permits, and what denies." Virgil, Roman landowner

LAST WORD



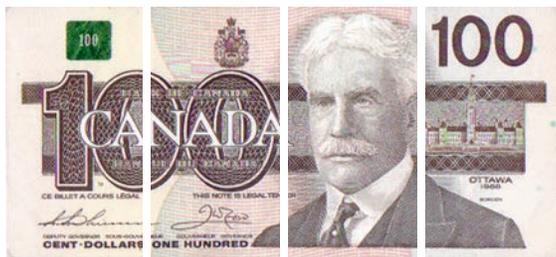
“One thing at least should be obvious to us all: the whole human population of the world cannot live on imported food. Some people somewhere are going to have to grow the food. And wherever food is grown the growing of it will raise the same two questions: How do you preserve the land in use? And how do you preserve the people who use the land?”

Wendell Berry, American farmer

Blue Skies!

The Land Advocate is a non-profit organization. We provide this newsletter to landowners and local citizens free of charge as a public service. We are dedicated to reaching as many people as we can across Western Canada, but we need your help to do so. Please consider making a donation to help us do our work. Those who donate ensure that they are on our regular mailing list.

\$25 \$50 \$100 Other



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