



Sour Gas Emissions—Everyone's Problem

by Lara Grinevitch

Whose problem are sour gas emissions? Are they an environmental issue or a health issue? Is there a difference? We are conducting an experiment. No other generation has been faced with the amount of air pollution that exists today.

There is a lot that we don't know about that, but there are some things that we do. We know that incomplete combustion from flares contain over 250 different compounds including SO₂, H₂S, benzene, polycyclic hydrocarbons, and others. We know that many of these chemicals have the potential to cause respiratory problems, hormone disruption, cancer, irreversible nerve damage, birth defects and abortions, even at low levels. We know that there is *no* requirement for companies to monitor air quality around flares, and that due to cutbacks, there has been a dramatic decrease in the amount of field inspection done by the Energy and Utilities Board.

Do we really have to wait until flares are proven to be dangerous before something can be done? Who is going to prove it? Can we expect industry representatives to admit that the chemicals are anything but "acceptable"? Who is qualified to define acceptable limits for noxious fumes? There is no scientific method in place to know that the hundreds of air pollutants are safe. Since the 1950s, the new barrage of chemicals being released into the air have been regulated under a system of risk assessment. Such a system was invented by, and works well for, industry because it assesses one substance at a time. Industry provides information about the immediate health effects of SO₂, and this defines some limits to the problem, but is that realistic? It doesn't address the possibility of long term health problems due to low level exposures. It ignores the danger from benzenes and some of the more sinister chemicals in the cocktail of emissions. It is not feasible to prove the danger of each and every chemical before something can be done. If there is potential for harm, and if there is uncertainty about the seriousness of that harm, then precautionary actions should be taken.

Dr. Kaye Killburn at the University of Southern California believes that no amount of H₂S is safe. His research indicates that people living downwind from refineries suffer from neurological impairment, including deficits in balance, reaction time and recurring ailments such as insomnia. They also reported headaches, nausea, vomiting, personality changes, and asthma.

Other researchers have made similar findings. The American government is being petitioned to add H₂S to its list of hazardous air pollutants.

Rachel Carson, the author of *Silent Spring*, warned that the only way to stop the epidemic of pollution is to declare pollution of the environment a violation of human rights. And this brings me back to the question: Whose problem are sour gas emissions? I believe that some people in this community don't speak out because they don't want to align themselves politically. But we shouldn't let whether we consider ourselves environmentalists or not stand in the face of common sense. If people know that they are sick from sour gas emissions, or that their cattle are sick from sour gas emissions, they should feel able to say something. We have the right to not be sick. We have the right for the place where we live not to be sick. Health is not a special interest.

The Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas was set up to gather information from the public. You can reach them at (403) 297-8855 or <www.publicsafetyandsourgas.org>. •

References:

- (1) "Reinhabiting Environmentalism" by Peter Sauer. Orion Magazine Summer 1999.
- (2) "Flame Out!" by Andrew Nikiforuk. Globe and Mail, February 10, 2000, pg. R5.



Gordon Petersen

Shell gas facility in the Whitney Creek area.

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Upcoming Meeting

Our next board meeting will be on Sunday, November 5 at the Lebel Mansion in Pincher Creek. The meeting will run from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., so a bag lunch is advised.

Newsletter

This newsletter welcomes comments and/or submissions from members and others. Please send submissions to the editor at the office or directly by e-mail (mmcragen@telusplanet.net). Please check with the editor for submission deadlines.

The opinions, evaluations, claims and assertions contained in articles appearing in the Castle Wilderness News are the responsibility of their authors, and may not reflect the policies of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. The editor takes responsibility for articles, notices, etc., for which an author is not identified.

Donations to CCWC are tax creditable and greatly appreciated.



Action Alert

At the Alberta Forest Service's request, we've enclosed their Castle Education Programme pamphlet/questionnaire, *You are invited to the Castle...A Land to Learn From* with this newsletter.

We encourage you to fill out the questionnaire but, before you do, please consider the following.

Firstly, the CCWC's position has always been, and continues to be, that the primary key to protecting the Castle is **legislation**, and **not simply education** as the pamphlet states.

Secondly, while the CCWC is supportive of educational programmes about the Castle, the questionnaire is worded in a way which ensures that the resulting educational programme will reinforce the multiple use policy for the Castle. In other words, the education programme will help maintain the status quo.

The CCWC's goal is to change the status quo. You can help us send a strong message to the government by simply writing "THE KEY TO PROTECTION OF THE CASTLE IS LEGISLATION, NOT EDUCATION" across the questionnaire and returning it.

The deadline is September 30—please take action today!



Letter to the Editor

It was recently announced at St. Michael's School in Pincher Creek that I am to be recognized for 20 years of service as a Special Needs Assistant. Children have a common trait with nature's plants—they are beautiful no matter where God plants them—but they need our care and protection. Nature's diverse garden in the Castle and surrounding area is a treasure to experience. What is more aromatic than when the sun's rays nudge an Alberta rose to give off its scent or more magnificent than a stately striped Hellebore. Just try to capture the many different shades of green in a shaded forest and the surprises that hide under the layers of plants. I am definitely a plant person!

I experienced two years of the provincial government's lack of government when I became involved in a struggle to preserve the logging bylaws that our Pincher Creek Municipal District had adopted. Logging was booming at that time and the lobbying was intense to get rid of them. They're gone now.

I joined the CCWC because voluntary compliance is not enough to protect this area—lasting legislation and continued public support is our only hope.

Ianthe Goodfellow, Pincher Creek



Diversity—The “Representativeness” Issue

“You don’t have to go any further for me!” cried Dave, as we found our elk trail leading across a bountiful huckleberry patch on our way up to one of the headwater basins at the north end of the Castle Wilderness. But, after a short frenzy of feasting, we climbed on into the old growth surrounding the basin and settled for lunch beside the shallow lake whose shores revealed the recent tracks not just of moose, elk and deer, but of bear, cougar, wolf and, I believe, a raccoon. As some botanised around the edges with Reg, keying out an unusual water hemlock, an odd geranium and a late flowering bog orchid, the rest lazed in the sun listening as Willem recounted the massive geological forces that have given rise to this piece of the world. As he pointed to the fault lines above us, my eyes strayed to the ridge crest and a few remnant snow banks. Sixteen goats with some kids appeared at peace with their world. Later, across the lake, others in our group discovered the freshly killed, only partly gutted carcass of a cow elk, which perhaps helped explain why we had not run into much bear sign in the berry patch.

You don’t have to go hiking in the Castle to want to protect the area, but for those of us working toward that end it can help enormously. Most obviously the CCWC’s Stewardship Hikes provide the renewed connection with our own special places in the Castle, and the opportunity to share them with others, but also it gives the activists amongst us the reassurance that we need as we represent the interests of others to the wider public, to other stakeholders and to government.

This year I have been challenged a number of times by corporate and government officials on the grounds that I personally, and the Board collectively, do not represent the general interest of the organisation: that we are “extremists” and “fanatics,” words that the media loves to play up. Hiking with fellow enthusiasts for the country, with all their diverse backgrounds and interests, is a magnificent antidote to such plaguing doubts. Whoever the mythical “general public” is that the government so often likes to refer to, he or she is certainly well represented on our hikes.

It is true that on that particular hike the “academics” were disproportionately represented, with two botanists, a mathematician, an agricultural research scientist, a geography/computer undergraduate student and a research geologist, but we also had along an entrepreneur in the multi-media field, a music student/teacher, a specialist consultant in learning disabilities, a retired youth and career training consultant, and a plumber and his wife who had only just recently discovered the CCWC through one of our summer displays.

And as I look at our Board membership I am equally reassured, and I’ll take this opportunity to give some brief introductions. Staying on from 1999 are Kathy Sheppard as (nominal) Vice-President, Ianthe Goodfellow as Treasurer, Michelle Spencer as Secretary, and as Board members: Gary Parkstrom, Lara Grinevitch, Gail Holland and Dave Poulton. Volunteering for the next two-year term we welcome Bob Campbell, Ken Poulson,

Mike Judd, and we are also delighted by the return to the board of our past president Gord Petersen and our founding father Dave Sheppard. A formidable team.

Kathy, with a B.Sc in Geography and Biology, is currently a research assistant at the Medicine River Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre and is well known to many of us as the author of CCWC’s discussion paper on “The Impacts of Off-road Vehicles on Wildlands.” She is presently on temporary leave/reprieve from the Board while she completes work for us on the Crown of the Continent State of the Ecosystem report.

Dave Poulton, our “Director in absentia” is a lawyer who serves as the conservation director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society’s (CPAWS) Calgary-Banff chapter.

New to the Board is Ken Poulson. Ken is the third-generation Poulson to farm and ranch along the Oldman River north of Cowley. He has an Arts and Science degree from the University of Lethbridge in geography and economics and has worked on meteorological and engineering studies for roads and pipelines in the arctic and subarctic. He is an avid canoeist, despite the fact that the Oldman Dam replaced his river runs, and, as he puts it simply “I like songbirds, waterfowl, owls and trees.”

Gary Parkstrom, a grad student in geology at University of Calgary, is active with the U of C’s Sierra Youth Coalition and made the Westcastle watershed the focus for his undergraduate thesis.

Also joining the Board is Mike Judd, who is no stranger to many of our members as a wilderness guide and outfitter who has offered horse-assisted pack trips to the CCWC for the last five years. Ever the opponent of oil and gas exploration in wilderness areas, and using the Castle as an example of what can happen, Mike played a key role in convincing Gloria Flora, then Superintendent of the Lewis and Clark State Forest in Montana, to keep the area free of exploration activities.

We also count among us Ianthe Goodfellow, who has dedicated two decades to helping special needs students; Lara Grinevitch, a Pincher naturopath; Gail Holland, who teaches in Lethbridge; Michelle Spencer, a freelance radio journalist and program producer; and Bob Campbell, who works in the health field. More on these stalwarts in the next issue.

Faced with the failure of the Alberta government to deliver a significant core protected area in the Castle, the CCWC has taken a public stand of “zero tolerance” for new developments. In doing so it is worth remembering that only three years ago nearly 6,000 people either signed our Wilderness Charter or wrote post-cards to the Premier supporting our proposal for a Wilderness Area for the Castle. We have yet to deliver on our promise to “Keep the Castle Wild.” •



The Travails of South Drywood

On July 4, 2000 I hiked into South Drywood, my first visit this year. I soon noticed that machines had been at work since my last visit in July of the previous year. Difficult gully crossings had been smoothed over, making the road more accessible to offroad vehicles. Such work was noted in several places along the route. The road can now be driven by a two wheel drive truck, if not cars. What is the point? Are we short of visitors to Blue Lake? Fill for each of these crossings was obtained by tearing into the side of the road, a slight additional loss of habitat. In most cases the crossings are not rock, but rock and dirt mixed. And of course the whole route is pounded to dust by vehicles. The next heavy runoff will wash this dirt into South Drywood Creek. No new water bars were constructed and some of the old ones have broken down under steady traffic. I thought silt was supposed to be bad for fish?

I noted two places along the route where ORVs had gone off trail, damaging vegetation. However, this paled to insignificance when I reached the end of the road and saw the damage done by the ongoing war between the Alberta Forest Service (AFS) and the army of ORV users. Ever since the Access Management Plan (AMP) was implemented in 1995, ORV users have insisted on their right to drive onto the shores of Blue Lake and up into the alpine at South Drywood Pass, two of the few places the AMP puts off limits to motorized use. The AFS takes in heavy-duty machinery and tries to block the trails, doing heavy-duty damage in the process. The ORV users counter by cutting a new route, compounding the damage. This latest episode is the worst yet.

Last fall, it seems, the Alberta Forest Service tried yet again to close off the last kilometre of road to Blue Lake. They took in a backhoe or some such machine, scooped up buckets of earth and beargrass and trees, and dropped them on the road, needless to say a crude and cruel way to treat this beautiful scenic valley, and one that would not be tolerated by the public in any national park or wilderness area. To a lesser degree, the Forest Service repeated this travesty by doing more rip and fill on the South Drywood Pass trail, a route previously much abused. AFS also enlarged the parking area at the end of the open part of the road (under the Castle AMP, the road into South Drywood is open to public motor vehicles from June first to September first and closed in fall and winter).

This spring, or possibly on the July weekend, the quadders once again ignored the closure and cleared a new trail to Blue Lake by

following a cow path and cutting any trees that happened to be in the way. Thus we have yet another trail into the area, another trail for AFS to block with more destruction and loss of habitat. ORV users have been driving around the lake shore, causing further damage to the already highly disturbed shoreline vegetation. The new ORV trail into the lake is about 900 metres long and crushes glacier lilies, western anemones, beargrass, and everything else. A wet spring crossing at the start of this route was violated two years ago by both AFS and the off-roaders with the destruction of red and yellow monkeyflower and other moisture-loving species. It was a clear clean spring with mossy banks and ice-cold water. It is now an unsightly mud hole.

If there is one outstanding example of the abject failure of the Castle Access Management Plan, South Drywood is it. Damage to this lovely valley has multiplied many fold since the AMP was introduced. I guess I must be dumb because I just don't get it. Why is this travesty allowed to continue? Why does the Forest Service persist in ripping up this wild area with heavy

machinery? I hate to acknowledge it, but the Forest Service has done far more damage in South Drywood than the ORV users, although the latter have done damage enough.

How does what AFS is doing, not only in this instance, but in its logging programs too, engender anything but contempt for the land, for wilderness? This is an education program?

Say what you will about the management of our national parks, at least the visitors there are (most of them) imbued with a respect for the land and its wild inhabitants, and the few visitors that aren't are strictly controlled. I don't see that kind of respect ever coming to the Castle unless it is formally protected as a park of some kind, and the Alberta Forest Service is kept entirely out of the picture.

*Dave Sheppard,
Pincher Creek*



Road up the South Drywood.

Gordon Petersen



President's Report

by James Tweedie

My main focus in this year's report is to thank and acknowledge the support that the CCWC has received from many sources. Above all has been the support of the membership, through volunteer activities, stewardship work, participation in CCWC events, letter writing, informal lobbying and direct financial donations. This remains the core of the organization. Thanks to you all, and thank you to the Board Members who have seen us through another year.

More formally, I'd like to thank the organizations who have kept us afloat financially: the **Kendall Foundation**, the **World Wildlife Fund**, the **Fanwood Foundation**. They have provided grants to support our core office administration and monitoring and education programs. Campaign support has come from **Tom Camplon**, the **EJLB Foundation** and the **Wilburforce Foundation**. Support for specific project activities has come from **Alberta Ecotrust Foundation**, **Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Fund**, the **Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative**, and **Alberta Sports, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife**.

Within a month of taking over from Gord Petersen last year, Dave Poulton and I met with Environment Minister Gary Mar. It was clear to me that the Minister's focus was to see the consolidated protected areas legislation, the Natural Heritage Act (Bill 15), through the Legislature and that any changes to the management of the Castle that might come from the present Government would come in the context of, firstly, the Integrated Resource Plan Review and secondly the appropriate designations of the Natural Heritage Act, whenever it might surface.

Therefore, our key focus early last year was on funding a wider campaign and engaging a Campaign Director. We were successful, and had Mike Sawyer in place in late fall. This resulted in a particularly tricky dynamic for those of us on the Board in terms of communications with the membership, and I appreciate that this may have been a difficult year for a number of our loyal supporters who were used to more transparency and frequent meeting opportunities. As President, I have failed to keep the collective team spirit of the organization nurtured as we have pursued the work that we put on Mike Sawyer's plate. I apologize for that. But, after meeting with the new Environment Minister, Halvar Johnson, last week, I have no regrets about our decision to commit to the Campaign. In terms of Government processes I'd say that today we are now several steps back from where we might have been with Gary Mar. Mr. Mar's failure to get Bill 15 past Steve West and the industry lobby removes any illusions about what this government can deliver; at the end of the day there might be a few acres of wilderness left in the Castle.

The on-going threats to the Castle have not changed this year, they have simply escalated. Whether we look at the logging practices at Snowshoe and Gorge Creeks, the development scenario and sewage treatment lagoon at the ski hill or Shell's proposals for a major new expansion into the north end of the area, the

prospect is grim, and this is without any reference to the expansion of the snowmobiling trails and facilities and the increasing summer use by trucks, bikes and quads.

Fortunately this year I have had the good fortune to meet several groups of young activists who give me reason to believe that we are not engaged in some futile dream. It has been our tradition each year to try to employ some of these folks, which is great for us. I am amazed that we can get highly educated, motivated and self-reliant young people to work for an organization such as ours for no better reason than their love for the wilderness, because it certainly can't be the wages that attract them.

I'd like to thank and acknowledge Mari Decker and Matt Sparrow who worked with us last summer. Mari worked closely with the Miistakis Institute to establish ground-truthing reference plots for the GIS mapping work that Miistakis is doing. Matt worked in partnership with the Napi Friendship Association to "build bridges across cultures" by providing environmental awareness activities to a mixed group of late teens whose exposure to wilderness and wilderness values was fairly limited. Matt is back with us this year trying to coordinate outreach opportunities for our slide presentation and display materials.

We have also this summer taken on a rare treasure indeed: a student who is committed to the vision but is prepared to tackle the dogwork of putting our library and office files into order and has already been putting in volunteer time towards that end. Thank you, Colleen Furlong.

The year saw several public events where we had some visibility: Elizabeth May's presentation in Lethbridge; Phil Knight's presentations in Lethbridge, the Crowsnest Pass and Pincher; display opportunities like the Lethbridge Kids Festival, the Wildlands Rendezvous in Missoula, the Festival of the Eagles in Canmore, the Banff Mountain Books Festival as well as a number of occasions in Calgary including the Folk Festival. But much of the work that members and volunteers are engaged in goes on behind the scenes. Of particular note here would be:

- ✓ interventions by several members to Brian Chinery, the lead planning coordinator for the IRP Review process;
- ✓ our participation in the consultation process regarding the cumulative effects of the Screwdriver Creek wells;
- ✓ the ongoing monitoring of the Sewage Lagoon application and construction where Klaus Jericho, particularly, took the lead to make sure that Alan Pentney, the Regional Enforcement Director with Alberta Environment, was always aware that CCWC was looking over his shoulder;
- ✓ continuing, if erratic, involvement in the State of the Ecosystem Report for the Crown of the Continent, working with Miistakis, the East Kootenay Environmental Society, and the Montana Wilderness Association;

continued on page 6 ...

- ✓ continuing monitoring of CMR's activities at the ski hill, especially where they have formally interconnected with the MD's planning process, such as it is;
- ✓ on again, off again meetings with Shell;
- ✓ meetings with Alberta Forestry re: logging and snowmobile activities;
- ✓ pursuing the judicial review of the rebuilding of the Sartoris road;
- ✓ participating in the Screwdriver Creek hearing.

These are the items that come immediately to mind, but I am sure I have missed others that many of our membership may have pursued on our behalf. I hope you will bring them to my attention so that they will be properly acknowledged.

And then there is the tireless work of people like Dave Sheppard who, despite all the hassles of the Junction J and Screwdriver Creek hearings and having to deal with Shell and Canadian 88 on a near-daily basis, found time to lead hikes, share wisdom, support the Board, formalize proposals for a possible Rare Plants Study and a Grizzly Bear Habitat Assessment Study, and fire off drafts of funding proposals for input, and then has to handle the disappointment of the refusals when they come. Thank you, Dave, and Jean. You are an inspiration for us all.

Finally I'd like to thank Gord Petersen, Michelle Spencer, and Kathy Sheppard who have done wonderful work behind the scenes to pick up the loose ends when I was behaving like an irresponsible teenager, and to Louise Brodersen, our Executive Director, who has hung in during a particularly difficult time. •



Funding Needed

From the beginning, when land in this corner of the country was first being fought over and argued for, the Castle was in the thick of things. And where, you may be saying, have we come? Currently the Castle sits unprotected, waiting like some uncut gem for those who are stumbling on it to realize its true worth. Despite the marks from those heavy feet, the Castle still retains nearly all of its ecological value. It retains all of its large carnivores and has an amazing degree of floral biodiversity. It is important that we remember these things. Looking back, they can become lost in the acronyms and processes, yet they are the fabric that holds our organization together.

We are at a crucial point in what will become the history of the Castle and we need the support of you, our members, to ensure that we can continue to work towards its protection. We are committed to funding our campaign, but at this time operating funds are dangerously low. Without additional funding, we may not be able to continue running the office and monitoring events as closely as we would like. The strength of our organization has always been in our volunteers and our membership. Please consider sending a donation or adopting an Endangered Species in the Castle. All donations are tax deductible. •

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Office Notes

by Louise Brodersen

We were very fortunate to have Jeffrey Emmett and Colleen Furlong working with us this summer. Colleen wrote the 1999 State of the Castle Wilderness report, organized the Lundbreck Weed Pull, and is getting our library resources catalogued. We have a lot of good information in our library and it is becoming more important to access it quickly.

Jeff is our public relations officer and was busy setting up slide shows and displays around Alberta and B.C. He made a couple of slide presentations in Lethbridge at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre and at Ecotopia, an environmental camp near Edmonton. Some of the places Jeff arranged for the display to be shown include the Mountain Equipment Coop in Calgary, the South Country Fair in Fort Macleod, at the Gathering in Fernie, Heritage Acres near Pincher Creek and at the Huckleberry Festival at Castle Mountain Resort. It was a busy two months for Jeff so if you saw someone wandering around at a festival in a bear suit this summer, it was likely Jeff getting the message out there.

Also thanks to Jeff Gilmar for stepping in at short notice to present the slide show in Waterton and to Matthew Sparrow for doing a display at the Federal Building in Calgary in June and a display for Environment Week in Lethbridge.

Vegetation Ground Truthing of Non Forested Lands in the Castle Wilderness.

Mari Decker completed this report for us in the summer of 1999, and it can be viewed in the office. There was a wealth of information on different tree communities in the Castle, but not a lot on the other types of vegetation.

To be sure that the satellite image of the vegetation types in the Castle were identified properly, Mari did what is known as ground truthing. She went to 90 sites representing sixteen vegetation community types representing grasslands, herbaceous land, shrub land, and wetland, and recorded the vegetation species found there. It is a valuable resource for the CCWC. There are twelve main carnivore species in the Rocky Mountains. The results of the Vegetation Study are part of a larger World Wildlife Fund project to gauge the current habitat availability in the Castle Wilderness for those carnivores.

Thank you to Mari and all the volunteers who helped make this project successful. •



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