

Water: Source of Life, Source of Death

Trying to protect our water sources ...

Maybe not this year, when the snow pack in the mountains measures 190% of normal, but 2011's abundance of fresh water is not always expected to be supplied by the South Alberta foothills.

Climate change has already claimed the majority of the glaciers, summer rains cannot regularly replace glacier melt, and hotter weather will evaporate more groundwater. It is predicted that, within a couple of decades, the Eastern slopes of the Rockies will brown off.

Meanwhile people from the West are most aware that they are the primary source of water for three prairie provinces with rivers that run from west to east. Measures are constantly being developed to ensure the quantity and quality of this essential resource. The education of and involvement of government, industry and the public must continue.

The Old Man River Regional Planning Commission – in our region the OMRRPC actively involves municipalities and water user groups along the entire river system, and links with the South Saskatchewan River users. It carefully monitors water quality, water usage and water control.

The Cows and Fish Program – is a Riparian Habitat Management Society. Rather than having livestock trample lake and stream beds and defecate in them, they provide drinking sources away from the banks, and restore the creek beds with shade bushes. Streams that had become sluggish, muddy bogs, again provide suitable fish habitat.

Water Storage – Countless dams across the Prairies help store water and help manage run-off. Also, an ambitious program of plugging abandoned well sites in southwestern Alberta to protect the aquifer has garnered local and provincial support.

The Management of Wetlands – is encouraged to help farmers and developers see how many benefits can be realized (which are not always measured in terms of dollars).

Community Building – The most natural way to determine political boundaries should be determined by the lay-out of river-systems. That way people up-stream and down-stream would have responsibility for each other. When the aquifer is threatened with fracking, when water may be contaminated with run-off or toilet and industrial effluent, neighbours would be called on to recognize the ways they are keepers for each-other.

Water is essential to life. The quantity and quality of it is the responsibility of all of us.

Someone has written “If water has no value of its own, except for my use, I can dam it up, drain it off, drown it in oil and waste and tin cans until it chokes the fish and poisons the children.” But water is God’s gift to all of us and to all of creation. We have to consider seriously our responsibility as agents of the Almighty.

(written by Joyce Sasse)

Printed in CRCN/CiRCLe M Newsletter May 2011