



# Community Group Fights to Keep Ridgewood Natural

By Sue Cosens and Victoria Macdonald, Citizens for Charleswood Habitat Preservation



Wetland behind Charleswood's Varsity View Arena.

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**IN JUNE 2011**, the City of Winnipeg held a public meeting to notify Charleswood residents of plans to develop 'Ridgewood South': approximately 1,000 acres of largely vacant land that contains the Harte Trail and Varsity View Sport Complex. Concerns regarding the residential development sparked the formation of Citizens for Charleswood Habitat Protection (CCHP), a community group whose mandate is to represent and promote Charleswood residents' concerns about protecting existing natural areas, and traffic and drainage issues related to the proposed development. This article describes CCHP's journey to fulfill its mandate and achieve its goals.

The Ridgewood Precinct is located between the Harte Trail and Wilkes Avenue. The City expects approximately 3,000 new homes with an influx of 5,000 to 8,000 people. Qualico, the developer, owns 60% of the area. To manage the development process, the city and Qualico created a 'Study Team,' comprised of City of Winnipeg planners and naturalists, and Qualico representatives.

The project began to take shape when a group of concerned Charleswood citizens received a presentation from Bev Sawchuk, former President of Save our Seine (SOS), who successfully led SOS's four-year campaign to raise \$2.3 million needed to purchase and protect the Boies-des-esprits, 100+ acres of riparian habitat on the Seine River in St. Vital. After meeting with Bev, CCHP solidified their group and started meeting weekly in September 2011.

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## Executive Director's Letter

**THE MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK** hosted our 3rd annual Reel Green Film Festival on February 3-4, and I am pleased to report that the event was a wonderful success. Each year we aim to show a diversity of films which bring awareness to important environmental issues. The film selection process takes place over several months by a volunteer committee who are tasked with choosing films that highlight Canadian and local issues, while also considering global and national films when the content is relevant.

The film *On the Line*, featuring the hotly debated proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, was chosen as the opening night feature. This courageous film, by Canadian Filmmaker Frank Wolf, documents a human-powered odyssey along the proposed pipeline's route from the Alberta tar sands to the rugged coastal waters off Kitimat, BC. Following the film, the Climate Change Connection along with Elizabeth Williams of Pacific Wild lead a discussion about the pipeline project, its impacts on Canada's economy, and how it is connected to climate change.

Opening night also included a celebratory reception for Manitoba Eco-Network's 2012 *Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards*. These awards, originally called the Manitoba Eco-Network Environmental Awards, were recently renamed in honour of Anne Lindsey who retired from Manitoba Eco-Network after serving for 23 years as Executive Director. Since 1990, these awards have been presented annually to individuals and groups to recognize significant achievements in the protection and stewardship of Manitoba's environment. Congratulations to our 2012 award winners: Dennis Cunningham and Gerry Dube in the Individual Category, The Landless Farmers Collective in the Group Category, and Ron Thiessen in the Special Category.

The Reel Green Film Festival continued on February 4th with eight environmental films showcased at the University of Winnipeg, as well as informative displays hosted by environmental organizations from across Manitoba. Local organizations sponsored each film, and sent representatives to introduce the content and lead follow-up discussions. This gave audience members the opportunity to connect with local groups involved in a wide range of environmental issues.

I absolutely must thank Lise Smith, past Manitoba Eco-Network Coordinator, for stepping in to help organize the film festival and bridge the gap between Beverley's departure and the hiring of a new Coordinator. Lise, whom I now refer to as "Lightning Lise," swooped in and applied her expertise in event planning to ensure that all film festival details were covered. I might add that she did all this while also planning the Food Matters Conference, hence her appropriate nickname. Lise is now travelling the globe and we wish her all the best on her great adventure.

Allow me to segue into the introduction of Manitoba Eco-Network's new Coordinator, Sean Goertzen. Sean recently graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor's of Environmental Studies. He takes an interest in the policies and politics of environmental and social issues. Sean grew up on a grain farm near Fork River, Manitoba and spends his leisure time as a hockey goaltender and a drummer for an alternative rock band. After finishing up his second week in the office, Sean said that he was "thrilled to be helping the Eco-Network serve the environmental community." Everyone at the Eco-Network is equally thrilled to welcome Sean to the team! Sean, you are an impressive addition to the Eco-Network and we are delighted to have you join us. 🐾

Kristine Koster

*Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network*



PHOTO: DYLAN HEWLETT

For more environmental event listings see our website calendar at [www.mbeconetwork.org](http://www.mbeconetwork.org).

## April

### 6 Green Drinks

All green-minded individuals are welcome to come to the Lo Pub on the first Friday of each month starting at 5 p.m. Come out to make new friends, reconnect with old acquaintances, and unwind at the end of your week. For more info, email: [greendrinkswpg@yahoo.ca](mailto:greendrinkswpg@yahoo.ca).

### 18 Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Project Update: A Bold Experiment in Four Communities

Green Action Centre and Bike to the Future invite you to join the webinar from 2 to 3 p.m. at the Eco Centre boardroom, 3rd floor, 303 Portage Ave. Short discussion to follow. RSVPs not required but welcomed. For more info: [www.biketothefuture.org](http://www.biketothefuture.org).

### 19 Eco-Friendly Dinner

Project Peacemakers' annual fundraising dinner is an evening of delicious vegetarian dishes and friendly, peacemaker friends. 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Sturgeon Creek United Church. For more info, visit [www.projectpeacemakers.org](http://www.projectpeacemakers.org) or call 775-8178.

### 22 EcoAdventure Race and Earth Day Celebration

This annual paddle, run, and cycle race starts at 8:30 a.m. at FortWhyte Alive. Morning activities include crafts, storytelling, and the Family Orienteering Challenge. In the afternoon, there will be "ask a nature nut," dipnetting on the boardwalk, carnival games, face painting, visiting our Sod House pioneers and more. Free admission for the day. For more details: [www.fortwhyte.org](http://www.fortwhyte.org) or 989-8355.

### 22 Oak Hammock Marsh Earth Day Celebration

Join Oak Hammock's interpreters for guided tours of the marsh to see just how important wetlands are for the health of the planet. Participate in a compost tour or a green building tour. Learn how to keep your water healthy and take home recipes for green cleaning products. For more info: [www.oakhammockmarsh.ca](http://www.oakhammockmarsh.ca).

### 28 Transition Winnipeg Unleashing Event

Transition Winnipeg is a community-led initiative to make the local economy more resilient, to reduce the cost of living and adapt to a changing climate, more expensive oil and fewer non-renewable resources. Join a project or group (or initiate one!) at the official unleashing event, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Winnipeg's Bulman Centre. For more info: [transitionwinnipeg.ning.com](http://transitionwinnipeg.ning.com).

### 28 Protecting Eroding Shores Naturally

Did you know that you can protect a shoreline using willows? Masters student Chris Randall has been working on blending hard engineering with tree planting to save our precious shorelines. Chris will be here to take us through the whole process from the causes of erosion, to harvesting willows and how to plant to save your shoreline. This presentation and workshop is a must for river lot owners and cottagers. Bring your work gloves, rubber boots and dress for weather. 1 p.m. at FortWhyte Alive. Register at (204) 989-8355 and visit [www.fortwhyte.org](http://www.fortwhyte.org) for more information.

## May

### 1 The Weather: It's a new game out there

Help ensure your trees, shrubs and perennials will thrive despite an ever-changing climate. Whether you're a gardening newbie or a seasoned veteran, this is the workshop for you. Join instructor Charlotte Tataryn at Kelvin High School, room 31, at 7:30 p.m. Fee: \$3 - \$10. For more info: [www.naturemanitoba.ca](http://www.naturemanitoba.ca).

### 5 City Cycling for Beginners

Do you want to ride your bike more often but just don't feel safe? Can-Bike certified instructors from Bike to the Future will help you build the knowledge and confidence to start riding on the streets and trails in Winnipeg. The course is endorsed by the Manitoba Cycling Association and each participant will receive a copy of the 2012 Winnipeg Cycling Map. Register for \$43 at [www.winnipeg.ca/cms/recreation/leisureguide.stm](http://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/recreation/leisureguide.stm). 12 p.m. at Fort Rouge Leisure Centre, 625 Osborne St. For more info on this and City Cycling for Commuters: [www.biketothefuture.org](http://www.biketothefuture.org).

### 6 Ducks Unlimited: Wetland Loss in Southern Manitoba

Wetlands are important buffers during extreme weather events and a critical component of any climate change adaptation strategy. Despite all that they do, we are still losing 15 acres of wetlands each day in southern Manitoba. Join us at 2 p.m. at FortWhyte Alive and find out how you can "Take a Stand for Wetlands." Free with regular admission; register at (204) 989-8355. For more info: [www.fortwhyte.org](http://www.fortwhyte.org).

### 12 Challenges for a Sustainable Future: Project Showcase

This annual production involves the judging of investigation and innovation/invention projects at the elementary, secondary and college/university levels, on any topic connected to sustainability issues. For more info: [www.scmb.mb.ca](http://www.scmb.mb.ca).

### 12 Lake of The Woods: Water & People

Todd Sellers, Executive Director of Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation, will be presenting on the water quality issues of Lake of the Woods at FortWhyte Alive at 1 p.m. At 2 p.m., Justin Reid, the District Manager from the La Salle Redboine conservation district will tell us how conservation districts are working with communities to solve issues. Free with regular admission. For more info: [www.fortwhyte.org](http://www.fortwhyte.org).

### 17 What's in the Water: Nutrient Loading, Chemicals and the State of our Water

Many fresh water streams are sick, threatening our watersheds. Join us for a look into our wastewater and what we can do to make it safer and cleaner for the environment and us. Free with regular admission. For more info: [www.fortwhyte.org](http://www.fortwhyte.org).

### 26 Arbor Day

Trees Winnipeg (Coalition to Save the Elms) hosts the annual Arbor Day, "All Trees Tell a Story" celebration at the new Children's Nature & Adventure Playground in Assiniboine Park, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Take part in zip-line rides, self-propelled climbs, aerial bucket rides, children's crafts, storytelling, and "Ask an Arborist." Visit [www.assiniboinepark.ca](http://www.assiniboinepark.ca) in May for more info.

Please email your event notices to [info@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:info@mbeconetwork.org).

Ridgewood cont'd...

Much of the fall was spent gathering information to develop their mandate and goals, understand the development approval process, councillor's role, and the community role in advocating natural area preservation. Information and support was requested from numerous sources, including the Charleswood Historical Society, Nature Manitoba, Charleswood Rotary Club and FortWhyte Alive. Members reviewed city policies impacting the development, i.e. Plan Winnipeg, New Communities, Ecologically Significant Natural Lands Strategy (ESNL), City of Winnipeg Charter. To facilitate communication with Charleswood residents on the group's activities, a website and email account was created.

CCHP met with area councillor Paula Havixbeck and the Study Team during October and November 2011 to exchange and discuss information, and to establish a working relationship. CCHP identified early in the process that it wanted a minimum of 25% green space for natural areas and corridor, an archaeological survey, traffic studies and a commitment to extend the William Clement Parkway.

CCHP held two community meetings to introduce the group, provide updates, and to solicit members and volunteers. Between 300- 350 people attended each meeting.

In November 2011, the City released the Ridgewood South Natural Area Assessment (NAA) that was conducted in the fall of 2011. The NAA is the first step in identifying natural areas that may be considered for protection for development under the ESNL Strategy.

CCHP members analyzed the NAA and the main concerns were:

- The NAA did not survey a single site in the spring or early summer to identify the early-blooming species.
- The NAA did not assess the presence of birds, mammals, invertebrates or amphibians which increase the significance of the natural areas. For example, the area contains Bobolinks (Threatened), Yellow rails (Special Concern), Common Nighthawks (Threatened), and Leopard Frogs (Special Concern).

In response to the NAA, CCHP wrote to the Study Team and councillor, outlining their concerns and made the following recommendations:

1. Conduct an assessment that includes breeding birds, mammals, insects and amphibians as required by ESNL (bioblitz)
2. The assessment must be done in spring and early summer 2012 to address current gaps on the presence of early flowering plants
3. Conduct an archaeological survey to identify areas of significant cultural and heritage importance.
4. The planning process cannot proceed to the secondary stage until these comprehensive surveys are conducted.



Aspens on Ridgewood near Haney St.

PHOTO: CCHP

CCHP has offered to meet with the City regarding these recommendations and address NAA shortcomings. In a recent CCHP community meeting held in February 2012, Councillor Havixbeck stated she acknowledges CCHP concerns regarding the NAA, has authorized a traffic study, and contract to hire a consultant to look at extending the William Clement Parkway to Wilkes. She also stated she supports an archaeological survey, however, she has not officially endorsed our request for 25% green space in the plan.

The CCHP believes it is time for the City of Winnipeg to join other urban centres in conserving natural areas and biodiversity as part of its development approach. Ridgewood precinct is a golden opportunity to create a 21st century community reflecting these values and keep as much of our biodiversity as possible.

*If you have expertise in plant, bird, mammal, amphibian and invertebrates, such as dragonflies and butterflies identification we would like to hear from you! We can be reached at [chsrd.habitat@gmail.com](mailto:chsrd.habitat@gmail.com). Please visit our website at <http://www.charleswoodhabitat.com/Welcom.html>.*

*Look for a follow-up article on this issue in the next edition of the Eco-Journal, June 1.*

# Peat Rush Threatens Park

Mine in Hecla/Grindstone counter to 2011 policy, would release stored carbon

By Eric Reder

**IN THE LAST HOURS** of work before the Christmas break, a new development proposal was posted to the Public Registry. Just before any holiday is often referred to by policy-makers as taking-out-the-trash time, and this idea itself really is rubbish: Sun Gro Horticulture is proposing to strip mine for peat in Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park.

The Wilderness Committee has a campaign to end mining in provincial parks, but this new proposal, known as the Hay Point development, was the first peat mine application we examined. After a little research, we discovered that three other peat mines had been licensed in the last year, with one more proposal coming. We are having a 'peat rush' in Manitoba, and not enough environmentalists have been paying attention.

Few people can easily describe what peat actually is: the decomposing remnants of sphagnum mosses. It is formed under water, in wetlands that have a very high acidity, which inhibits the decay of the mosses and creates layers of carbon-rich dead vegetation. Peat accumulates very slowly — about one millimeter a year — meaning that the mining of peat cannot be considered sustainable. Peat mining is actually strip mining, in that the water table is lowered, and all of the vegetation and peat is stripped off.

The greatest value of peat is its storage of carbon. It is a unique product, unlike any other natural resource. Peatlands store more carbon than any other terrestrial ecosystem on earth. Peat is essentially pickled plant matter, sitting suspended in an acidic bath. As soon as peat is exposed to the air, though, it immediately starts to decompose ... and release carbon. In this regard, peat is far closer to a fossil fuel, which has huge carbon emissions only if it is mined and burnt. In reality, the only meaningful mitigation to lower the greenhouse gas emissions from peat mine operations is to leave peat in the ground.

Pitcher plants are carnivores that thrive in peatland soil conditions.



PHOTO: ERIC REDER

Another factor to consider with peat is that, unlike a specific metal such as nickel or copper, peat is not an essential product that is required in our modern society. It is just a soil amendment used in gardening, and can be replaced in virtually 99% of uses by another product with far less environmental impact. An internet search will turn up thousands of horticultural discussions on eliminating peat from their gardening because of environmental concerns. At a recent workshop in Winnipeg, the head of the peat mine lobby in Canada, Paul Short, stated it best when he responded to a question on whether peat was an essential product with: "Peat is an essential product ... to the peat industry."

The Manitoba government has known it needed to protect peat for years now. On his way to the Copenhagen climate change talks in 2009, Premier Selinger announced Manitoba would become a world leader in peatlands preservation. In 2011, his government passed the Save Lake Winnipeg Act, which put a moratorium on new peat leases in Manitoba. Unfortunately, all pre-existing leases — totalling in the hundreds — are not affected by the moratorium, and thousands of hectares of peatlands remain threatened.

We must act locally as we think globally. In this case, Manitobans can say that our peat is not going to be mined, and not allow it to contribute to a warming world. It is up to our Premier and Conservation Minister to demonstrate leadership by denying the license for Sun Gro's Hay Point peat mine, rescinding the two licenses under appeal, and introducing legislation that will ban all new peat mines in Manitoba.

Eric Reder is Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee, Canada's and Manitoba's largest member-based and citizen-funded wilderness preservation organization.

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# Permaculture in Manitoba

## Harvest Moon Society's Design Certificate

By Lydia Carpenter, Public Education & Outreach Assistant, Climate Change Connection

**PERMACULTURE TEACHINGS**, including the 72-hour Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) are being offered here in Manitoba. This is a wonderful learning and networking opportunity for all who are interested in creating healthy, resilient and regenerative systems on the farm, in the garden, at home, and in the community.

### What is permaculture?

Permaculture is difficult to define. While the term permaculture, coined in 1978 by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, was originally a contraction of "permanent agriculture" it is more generally understood as a "design system" or a "design science."

Permaculture is an integrative design science that focuses on resilient and regenerative systems. Permaculture design is meant to (re) teach us how to work with natural systems and integrate ecological services in an effort to create resilient and sustainable agricultural systems. As part of permaculture thinking, emphasis is placed on 12 principles of permaculture design and three areas of permaculture ethics (care of Earth, care of people, and fair share). These ethics and design principles can be applied to many projects including, but not limited to: natural home construction, growing food, restoring diminished landscape and ecosystems, capturing and storing sunlight and water, and building stronger communities.

### What are the 12 Principles?

The 12 permaculture design principles are tools that allow us to creatively re-design our environment and our behaviour in a world of less energy and resources. Used together, the 12 principles help us to work with nature rather than against it.

1. Observe and interact: take time to engage with nature. Appreciate the world around you by taking time and making space to observe natural system.
2. Catch and store energy: collect renewable resources when they are abundant so they can be used in times of need.
3. Obtain a yield: when you design a house, garden, or green spaces, include elements that will provide tangible yields. These yields might include food, fiber, medicine, knowledge or enjoyment.



PHOTO: COLIN ANDERSON

4. Apply self-regulation and accept feedback: recognize feedback controls of larger systems. The climate system is characterized by strong positive and negative feedback loops between processes that affect the state of the atmosphere, ocean, and land.
5. Use and value renewable resources and services: make the best use of nature's abundance so we can reduce our consumptive behaviour and dependence on non-renewable resources.
6. Produce no waste: by valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us within a system, nothing goes to waste.
7. Design from patterns to details: If we step back to see the larger picture we can observe patterns in the both nature and society.
8. Integrate rather than segregate: use diversity to create symbiotic relationships.
9. Use small and slow solutions: small, slow and localized systems are easier to maintain.
10. Use and value diversity: diversity reduces vulnerability.
11. Use edges and value the marginal: edges are often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in a system.

12. Creatively use and respond to change: we can have a positive impact on inevitable change.

### What is a 72-hour Permaculture Design Certificate?

The Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) is a two-week, 72-hour intensive that provides a very solid foundation for further Permaculture work and study. The course is offered in Clearwater, MB through the Harvest Moon Society's Prairie Culture education program.

I took the course last year in hopes of meeting like-minded individuals and learning how to apply permaculture design principles to my own farm. It was fantastic! As much as I appreciated the practical application of the design principles for hands on projects including housing design, waste management, water harvesting and water management, organic food production, earthworks, and livestock integration (to name only a few), I was completely overwhelmed with the camaraderie and community I felt with the group of individuals that participated, organized, and taught the PDC. The group of 2011 PDC graduates was diverse: individuals from both rural and urban communities with a



PHOTO: MONIKA THIESSEN



PHOTO: MONIKA THIESSEN

Clockwise from top left:  
Jesse Lemieux of Pacific Permaculture demonstrates earth works on a small scale

Permaculture design students preparing to set up a hoop house at the Harvest Moon learning centre in Clearwater, Manitoba.

Digging swales for a large backyard garden.

A Permaculture project design from the PDC class of 2011.



PHOTO: MONIKA THIESSEN

range of skills, talents and interests so long that I couldn't possibly list them here.

I am very excited for this season! I have several projects planned including water catchment and mandala gardens. I will focus on biodiversity, companion planting (integration) and microclimates as much as possible. I am also designing animal housing for water catchment, passive heating and cooling, and multi-species integration. Permaculture allows for creativity in problem solving. By suggesting that "the problem is the solution," permaculture design challenges our fixed attitudes to particular natural and social features and encourages us to think outside of the box.

### This year's course

The 72-hour Permaculture Design Certificate course is being offered again this summer. As with last year, Jesse Lemieux from Pacific Permaculture will be teaching the course <http://pacificpermaculture.ca>

The PDC is the capstone course in a Harvest Moon Society education program called Prairie Culture that includes a range of workshops on

topics that relate to permaculture, including: greywater design and build, rainwater design and build, wilderness survival skills, soil food web principles, forest gardening, root cellar building, strawbale construction and more! For this year's course date and details you can check out the Harvest Moon Society webpage: <http://www.harvestmoonsociety.org/workshops/prairie-culture>



# Partnership Sees Donations Climb

Local chapter of Alpine Club joins MEN, gives event proceeds

**THE BANFF MOUNTAIN** Film Festival World Tour has been stopping in Winnipeg since the early 1990s and thrilling audiences all along. This year we decided that the event needed to go big. The festival was always popular among the climbing community, but we wanted everyone to enjoy these great mountain films. Who wouldn't want to be part of an event like that? So we took a risk and booked Burton Cummings Theatre.

The show has changed venues a few times, steadily growing its audience from a couple of hundred to 450 to 900 and finally to 1,500 this year — the gamble paid off with a sell out. Not bad for a prairie town! Every year I stand at the door and greet people as they rush in to get a good seat. It always brings a smile to my face when I recognize people from the previous year, hear great comments and see new faces.

With the great success and momentum of the event our volunteer group of climbers cannot say enough about the resounding support from the community, not only the audience but the ticket vendors and sponsors. Yes, the festival does make money. It is our main source of income for the year, which enables us to run events, workshops and support our community, but the real value is sharing our passion with others.

Now one might be wondering what the Alpine Club of Canada, Manitoba Section (ACC-MB) is, and who put the alpine in Manitoba? We are a group of climbers, one section of 21 across Canada. Ironically, the Alpine Club of Canada was formed in Winnipeg, in 1906. In those days (as it is today), Winnipeg was a prosperous prairie town with a love for the mountains.

The club is now headquartered in Canmore, and while there have been advances in gear (we

no longer use hemp rope and hob nail boots), we still climb and enjoy mountain adventures. We also enjoy the excellent quality granite rock climbing that the local Canadian Shield has to offer, and host guest speakers, workshops, films and training events. Even though the club is over 100 years old, we have kept up to date and sport a website, [www.alpine-club.mb.ca](http://www.alpine-club.mb.ca).

— *Simon Statkewich, President, Alpine Club of Canada, Manitoba Section*

**I HAVE BEEN HELPING TO ORGANIZE** the Winnipeg stop of the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour since 2005. Each year, the event has been very successful at entertaining people, raising awareness of (and excitement about) mountain culture, and raising money for ACC-MB.

The idea for using this event to support other worthwhile causes came up last year. It was my partner Liisa's idea: "Are you guys going to keep all the money for yourselves? Do you need it all? Couldn't you give some to a worthwhile charity?"

Each year, the sponsors have been so generous that we have had too many prizes. The Banff Centre wants to ensure we put on the best possible show for the audience, and too many giveaways can take a long time! To be able to give away all the prizes and still acknowledge the sponsors that donated them, we decided to have a separate raffle at intermission and in the lobby. Last year, we gave the raffle proceeds to the Central Asia Institute for their "Stones Into Schools" program in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This year we again wanted to donate the proceeds to a worthwhile project or organization. To me, the Manitoba Eco Network (MEN) was a perfect choice: MEN was in financial difficulties

after the termination of Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) funding. ACC-MB was in the process of becoming a member of MEN. ACC has always been concerned with the environment, especially as it affects the areas members climb in.

Eager MEN volunteers showed up at the event to organize and run the raffle. It was a great success! I have received very favourable comments from audience members and sponsors on how it all turned out. So there you are: win-win-win-win: sponsors happy, audience happy, prize problem solved, a nice donation to MEN, and ACC showing support for the community.

— *Curtis Hull, Climate Change Connection*

**THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFIT** of partnerships cannot be overstated. The intricate connections which cultivate a new partnership always make for an interesting story. In the case of ACC-MB and Manitoba Eco-Network, I must thank Curt Hull for initiating and fostering the development of our relationship.

MEN is tremendously grateful for the generous support of the Alpine Club. We give wholehearted thanks for their donation of raffle proceeds, in turn, helping us advance our mission to facilitate environmental awareness and expand community connections.

On the note of expanding community connections, Manitoba Eco-Network is happy to welcome Alpine Club of Canada, Manitoba Section as a member group and to provide our boardroom for their meetings. As our relationship grows, we will develop new creative partnership opportunities with mutual benefits.

— *Kristine Koster, Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network*



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For more information, visit [www.eco-centre.ca](http://www.eco-centre.ca).



# Invasive Species Under Control

Boar population has decreased in Manitoba

By *Steve McCullough*

**WILD BOARS** have become a notorious ecological nuisance across North America. They are an introduced, invasive species with few natural predators, and their intelligence, reproductive capacity and feeding habits make them both destructive and hard to control. Manitoba has mounted an aggressive defence against boar incursion, and the strategy so far appears to be a success.

Boars are large, powerful omnivores that can eat almost anything within reach, above or below ground. They will happily feed on roots, plants, birds' eggs, and small animals. Their voracious appetites cause significant damage to local flora and fauna, as does their tendency to root up large areas of ground in pursuit of food. Biologist Peter White describes rooting as a "clearcut of the understory" that can devastate local plant and animal life. In addition, these large and aggressive animals compete with native species such as whitetail deer and wild turkeys for acorns and other necessary foods.

Boar activity can also have dramatic effects on water systems. Swine cannot sweat to regulate their body temperature and so rely on bathing in water and wallowing in mud to keep cool in summer. This draws them to fragile riparian areas that are easily damaged by digging and wallowing, which can accelerate erosion as well as change the shape and course of channels and ponds.

Introduced to the continent by early European colonists (and, more recently, imported by hunters), millions of boars now live in the wild, with the largest populations in the southern United States. They tolerate a wide range of climates, however, and have been spreading northward worldwide. A study by the government of Norway concludes that they can tolerate harsh winter

“These large and aggressive animals compete with native species...”

temperatures: thriving boar populations are found above 60°N in Russia.

Established populations are very hard to remove. Boars are the fastest-reproducing ungulates: sows mature at several months of age and can bear up to two litters, each averaging four to six young, per year. (Deer, in contrast, typically have only two foals per year.) Boars have, moreover, demonstrated considerable cunning at evading hunters and trappers. As a result, many U.S. states find themselves fighting a losing battle with these invaders.

Just over ten years ago Manitoba was declared a wild boar control zone, meaning that boars found running wild can be freely killed. Before 2001, boars were considered animals at large, which protected them on the assumption that they were escapees from local farms, and therefore private property. The provincial declaration took over from a patchwork of municipal controls that had been enacted in Armstrong, Grahamdale, Roblin, and Shell River. The province-wide response was galvanized by the discovery of a large boar population living wild in the Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area. This WMA is immediately adjacent to the Libau Bog Ecological Reserve, a fragile wetland habitat that would be extremely vulnerable to boar activity.

The Mars Hill boars were aggressively hunted and trapped until none remained. Declaring open season appears to have been a successful strategy



Boars damage flora and fauna by tearing up ground and eating voraciously.

for Manitoba province-wide, despite some studies that suggest hunting can be an inefficient method of controlling boars. John Livingstone, chief administrative officer of the RM of Armstrong, says that there are few or no boars to be found there any longer, due to the willingness of locals to "shoot them on sight."

Manitoba's boar population has been sharply reduced from a high of perhaps 500 ten years ago to what Barry Verbiwski, head of Furbearer and Problem Wildlife, estimates to be only small, scattered groups today. Verbiwski reports that there are small populations along Manitoba's borders with Saskatchewan (which does not have a similar control strategy) and North Dakota (which does). There are also intermittent reports of boars in Spruce Woods park, the northern Interlake, and elsewhere, although few have been confirmed.

Conservation intends to keep Manitoba free of wild boars, but relies heavily on citizen reporting to determine their numbers and locations. Should you come across wild pigs or evidence of pig activity, please contact your local conservation officer. And then your local hunter: unlike many invasive species, wild pig is also delicious.

## Featured Book Review

By Sig Laser

## Wet Prairie – People, Land, and Water in Agricultural Manitoba

By Shannon Stunden Bower, UBC Press, 2011

**SINCE APPROXIMATELY THE MID 1990S**, Manitoba has experienced the effects of a wet cycle that has resulted in severe summer rainfall events and major flooding, including the extensive 1997 and 2010 Red River floods and the unprecedented spring 2011 flooding in western Manitoba. Whether the unusually warm weather and low precipitation of the winter of 2011-12 signalled a break in the wet cycle remains to be seen.

Shannon Stunden Bower's book *Wet Prairie*, recently released in trade paperback format, couldn't be better timed as Manitoba continues to deal with the aftermath of the 2011 flooding of the Assiniboine and Souris rivers, and the ongoing effects on Lake Manitoba communities. The book, originally Stunden Bower's PhD thesis, is published by the University of British Columbia Press in its "Nature History Society" series.

The book frames surface water management efforts of early settlement as often contradictory interactions between settlers' deeply ingrained individualism and the drainage works of a liberal state in support of capital accumulation, and places these conflicts in the context of an environmental reality — poorly drained land subject to frequent flooding.

The grid-based land management system established under the *Dominion Lands Act* in 1872 and the Dominion Land Survey township division of lands (to facilitate homesteading), was at odds with a wet and variable landscape, the reality of which often didn't become evident until the passing of the many years inherent in weather cycles. It was sometimes little more than luck of the draw whether a particular parcel claimed by an individual settler offered hope of prosperity, or a future of struggle and disappointment.

Manitoba's first drainage legislation, *The Drainage Act* of 1880, facilitated the drainage of some major wetlands, the list of which rings like a sad elegy to time past: St. Andrews Marsh, Seine River Marsh, Springfield Marsh, Boyne River Marsh, Westbourne Marsh, Big Grass Marsh, Woodlands Marsh, Tobacco Creek Marsh, and the marshes of the Rat River.

Whereas wetland preservation seemed to contradict the imperatives of agricultural settlement, aboriginal peoples had previously shifted their residential and food requirements partly according to environmental factors, and early European settlers had joined aboriginal and Métis people in using the many resources provided by wetlands.

Stunden Bower describes the development of divergent interests between "highland" settlers and those "lowland" residents more prone to flooding. As agricultural settlement proceeded and drainage and transportation infrastruc-

ture spread, drainage projects that benefited certain farmers (and municipalities) often caused damage to others. Those who had favourably located lands often couldn't see the logic of public expenditure to mitigate the challenges experienced by others. Those others, lowlanders, were more apt to see commonality of interests and the benefits of community action.

One thing uniting both highland and lowland farmers, however, was a level of distrust and cynicism towards the conduct of government in its efforts to manage the landscape. These conflicts and competing interests shaped, and continue to shape, the modern Manitoba state. Eventually it was another environmental factor that brought home the shared interests of the two groups, namely soil erosion by surface water runoff or wind action. This provided the catalyst and agreement around the need for large-scale land management, including effective watershed management.

The Red River Floodway protects Winnipeg, but today, as a result of the flooding of the Assiniboine River Basin and damage suffered by Lake Manitoba communities, attention moves to the necessary prevention and mitigation efforts to protect that western watershed. *Wet Prairie* makes it abundantly clear, however, that watershed management and flood mitigation are not subject to a "silver bullet" or any once-and-for-all solution.

We have inherited a settlement pattern that is significantly at odds with the underlying environmental reality. We live on a flood plain subject to seasonal and cyclical variability, and now climate change to an unknown extent. The history described by Stunden Bower in *Wet Prairie* elegantly shows us how we got to where we are, and we need to bring that understanding to the work that will seize us for the next decade, if not longer.

Wetland restoration will be an urgent and unavoidable piece of the puzzle; the work of Ducks Unlimited and the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation on this issue is exemplary, and the agricultural community and corporate sector will need to step up as well. Close cooperation and consultation are the order of the day for Manitobans as we continue with the dramatic and sometimes contradictory adventure of securing our habitation in this wet prairie.

*Sig Laser is a policy analyst working in government. He believes it's important to be aware of the history of current issues and is an enthusiast of the expanding field of Environmental History. Opinions expressed are his own.*



## Alice Chambers Memorial Library

## New In the Library

All of the materials in the Alice Chambers Memorial Library may be loaned out free of charge. There is no-charge postal delivery outside Winnipeg. Please contact Erica Young, Resource Assistant, at 947-6511 for more information. [www.mbeconetwork.org/library.php](http://www.mbeconetwork.org/library.php)

Summaries by Wynne Haaksma

New DVDs  
(films screened at the 2012  
Reel Green Film Festival):

## On the Line

68 mins (Canada)

Filmmaker Frank Wolf and his friend Todd McGowan bike, hike, raft and kayak the potential route of the Northern Gateway Pipeline Project, an 1170 km oil pipeline proposed by Enbridge Corporation to deliver tar sands bitumen to Asian markets. This beautiful film reveals the potential ramifications to pristine Canadian wilderness, to hundreds of waterways the pipeline would cross and to many regular Canadians who live along the route.



## Chemical

75 mins (Canada)

An exploration of the toxicity of everyday household cleaners and hygiene products, *Chemical* follows the Goode family as they try to turn over a new leaf and create a toxic free home. The film tackles "the toxic debate" in an informative and entertaining way by raising awareness and providing the tools and inspiration to live toxic free.



## Bag It

78 mins (USA)

Is your life too plastic? In this touching and funny film, we follow a regular person, Jeb Berrier, as his exploration of plastic bags evolves into a wholesale investigation of plastic and its effect on our waterways, oceans and even our own bodies. See how our crazy-for-plastic world has caught up to us and decide for yourself how plastic your life will be.



## A Simple Question

36 mins (USA)

It all began in Laurette Rogers' 4th grade class when a child asked what they could do to save endangered species. With the enthusiastic leadership of Rogers, the class embarked on a project to save the California freshwater shrimp. Their inspiring project morphed into STRAW, a regional science learning program combining habitat restoration work and community service that has since restored 21 miles of habitat for the shrimp.

## Harvesting Hope

37 mins (Canada)

*Harvesting Hope* tells the stories of Aboriginal people struggling to access healthy food in Northern Manitoba communities. In spite of restrictive policies and a lack of meaningful government support, the resilience and wisdom of indigenous people is apparent as community members reintroduce traditional practices around food.

## Burning Water

43 mins (Canada)

In the Rosebud River valley, an hour east of Calgary, the water in many homes can be lit on fire. Many residents don't want to talk about it, but everyone agrees there's gas in the water. This film follows one family's struggle to stay together and remain in their community, while facing the truth of what may be happening beneath the surface.

## Caribou: Ghost of the North

25 mins (Canada)

From the tiny Peary caribou in the High Arctic to the secretive woodland caribou of the boreal forest, caribou are on the move to their wintering grounds. What they all share is the need for wild, undisturbed spaces.

## Waste Land

98 mins (Brazil/UK)

Filmed over three years, *Waste Land* follows artist Vik Muniz as he journeys to his native Brazil and the world's largest garbage dump. After photographing an eclectic band of "catadores" — self-designated pickers of recyclable materials, Muniz collaborates with them to recreate the photographs, revealing both the dignity and despair of the catadores as they begin to re-imagine their lives.



## Mentorship Builds Momentum

By Jonathan Ventura, Coordinator, Manitoba Environmental Youth Network

**WE HAVE ALL HAD MENTORS** in our lives: parents, siblings, or our peers. Some of them taught us proper table manners and others taught us how to get into schoolyard trouble, but who will teach Manitoban youth how to overcome the environmental troubles they will inherit?

We have entered an era where an increasing number of youth look up mainly to the advertisements on billboards, and are idle when it comes to pressing environmental issues and solutions. We are in drastic need of positive leaders who can connect to the everyday lives of youth, spark their interest in the environment, and be spokespeople for a more responsible and sustainable world.

The Manitoba Environmental Youth Network has created five mentorship opportunities with support from the Winnipeg Foundation, Assiniboine Credit Union and Environment Canada's ecoAction program. The mentorship opportunities will attempt to fill the void, while initiating youth lead projects.

We are proud to announce Ameena Bajer-Koulack, Natalie Baird, Teagen Markin, Cristy Smith and Melanie Rose as our 2012 Mentors. Ameena and Teagen will be working on initiating two composting programs with different youth groups. Natalie and a group of youth will be working with local Manitoban artists on creating and distributing a series of visual representations of environmental issues and solutions. Cristy Smith will be working on a water conservation project at Sisler High School, and Melanie Rose will be initiating a hands-on field habitat assessment with youth in the Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area near Beausejour, Manitoba.

The mentorship program hopes to have tangible results right out of the gate, but most importantly it aims to create a movement of empowered and educated youth who can share skills and knowledge and create a more sustainable community right now and for future generations.

OF SPECIAL  
NOTE

The third annual Reel Green Film Festival, held over two days in February, was again a tremendous success and wouldn't have been possible without the support of our many sponsors and volunteers.

## Event Sponsors:

Assiniboine Credit Union, Winnipeg Free Press, Kendrick Quality Printing, Tire Stewardship Manitoba, Prairie Architects, CUPE Local 500, Emterra Environmental, Green Manitoba, Vita Health, Red River College, and the University of Winnipeg Campus Sustainability Office.

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## Film Sponsors:

Green Action Centre, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Manitoba Nature Summit, Natural Resources Institute, FortWhyte Alive, Green Please!, and Uniquely Manitoba.

**We look forward to seeing you at Reel Green 2013!**



# Proposed Pipeline Invites Disaster

Northern Gateway project makes no environmental or economic sense

By Josh Brandon

**THE NORTHWEST COAST** of British Columbia is among the most breathtaking regions on earth. From its deep fiords, mountain cliffs rise up thousands of metres, till they are lost in the mist and clouds that water its vast rainforests. Humpback whales, orcas, sea lions, beach wolves, and the unique and elusive white spirit bear all call this region home. It is the traditional territory of several First Nations including the Gitksan, Tahltan, Haisla and Nisga'a. For over one hundred years, it has also been home for thousands of Canadians who have come to the region from all over the world. Central to this eco-system and the people that inhabit it is the annual salmon migration, when millions of fish return from their trans-pacific journey to spawn.

Now this entire world is under threat. A project proposed by the giant energy corporation Enbridge called the Northern Gateway Pipeline would carry half a million barrels of unprocessed tar sands bitumen every day across more than a thousand kilometres of mountains, rivers and wilderness to a terminus at the coastal community of Kitimat. Two hundred super-tankers, each with the capacity of ten Exxon Valdez-sized ships, would carry the crude tar through the twisting channels and out to sea for processing and refining in Asia.

Although proponents argue that the project will have important benefits including jobs and economic growth, analysis of Enbridge's own economic assumptions show these benefits to be dubious. A report by the Alberta Federation of Labour citing research by prominent BC economist Robyn Allan, found that the pipeline could harm manufacturing production across Canada by simultaneously raising the Canadian dollar and increasing the price of oil. With processing destined to be completed overseas, the project would tie Canada to a continuous role as primarily a purveyor of raw resources. Even when environmental externalities



PHOTO: LORETTA LIME, CREATIVE COMMONS

Protests against Enbridge and federal government ties to the oil industry, such as this January action in Toronto, have been occurring across Canada.

are excluded, the economic case for Northern Gateway is at best unclear.

The project is currently before the National Energy Board, which began hearings into the project in January. Over 4,000 people are registered to speak at the hearings — the vast majority of them local people who are concerned how the impacts of this project could affect their way of life, the environment and their communities. Despite attempts by Enbridge to create wedges between aboriginal communities by offering equity stakes and other benefits in exchange for supporting the project, so far all First Nations along the route have been united in their opposition.

The federal government, meanwhile, has put its full weight behind the project to push for its

approval. It has gone so far as to label those with concerns about the project “radicals” who are opposed to all development. Stephen Harper has made the project the centrepiece of trade negotiations with China. In an open letter published in the *Globe and Mail*, Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver accused those who are opposed to the pipeline as acting at the behest of foreign interests. In his letter, he argued that “Canada is on the edge of an historic choice.”

On this final point, all participants are in agreement. There is still time to have your voice heard on this important national issue. The National Energy Board's Joint Review Panel will accept letters until August 31, 2012. In February, Green Action Centre along with the Manitoba Eco-Network and several other groups organized an informational forum at the University of Winnipeg that offered perspectives on the environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed pipeline.



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Video of the event can be downloaded at:  
[www.greenactioncentre.ca/2012/hundreds-fill-hall-for-pipeline-forum/](http://www.greenactioncentre.ca/2012/hundreds-fill-hall-for-pipeline-forum/)