

Municipal community gardening policy City Shows Support for Community Gardens

By Karen Lind

A new relationship is growing between the City of Winnipeg and Winnipeg's community gardens with the recent development of a municipal community gardening policy. The need for such a policy has been recognized at the grassroots level for a number of years, but was officially initiated by the Protection and Community Services Committee back in October. Calling upon the Community Services Department and the Planning, Property and Development Department, the Committee requested a policy that considered both the need for green space and residential development.

With less than two weeks between completing the community consultations and submitting the draft policy at the end of January, the City has been busy trying to get as much public input as possible while adhering to their timeline.

However, judging by the community consultations, gardeners are optimistic about building a stronger relationship with the City and were keen to provide feedback on issues they would like the policy to address.

Balancing the need for green space

Balancing the need for green space with residential development is the motivation for this policy, but an unfortunate incident last summer may have provided the incentive to promptly develop the policy. Last June, the City unknowingly sold a community garden on Toronto Street to be developed for infill housing. The garden was one of four community gardens operated through the St. Matthew's Maryland Community Ministry, and although they had renewed their short-term land use agreement with the City at the beginning of the season, they knew the space was not entirely secure.

As stipulated in the agreement the City retains the right to sell the lot, but are responsible for providing advance notice of the sale to the tenants. Unfortunately, there was no advance notice and therefore no reason for the community ministry not to invest a considerable donation and countless labour hours into the Toronto lot. Shortly after the garden had been double dug and new raised beds installed, they found out the lot had been sold and construction was to take place as soon as possible.



A lot of effort is often put into community gardens, as is evident with the Millenium Community Garden. Photo by Karen Lind.

Within no time, community members were placing calls to the City demanding to know why they were losing their garden with virtually no warning. What they soon discovered was the department of Real Estate sold the land without realizing a land use agreement existed between the community ministry and the City.

In the end, the City apologized for their oversight, offered alternative spaces in the neighbourhood and promised to relocate the garden at no cost. Tamela Friesen, Community Development Coordinator at St. Matthew's Maryland, reported that although the situation was not ideal, the City was exceptionally apologetic and accommodating. Eventually the community selected a lot on McGee Street as the most desirable relocation space. The unfortunate experience of the Toronto Street gardeners cannot be denied; however, it may have pressured the City to look at how they can better work with community gardens and avoid future land tenure problems.

Issues for a community garden policy to address

What issues will a community garden policy address and how does it work? At this time, the policy has yet to be drafted, but judging from two of the four community consultations, some of the issues community gardeners are hoping the policy will address relate to land tenure; specifically land acquisition and security, and operational support; specifically in terms of water access and the provision of non-contaminated soil.

Land security, especially in the wake of the Toronto Gardens experience, was a major concern and the idea of creating long-term lease agreements, such as 5 years, with the City was seen as a viable way to increase land security. It was generally agreed upon that a long-term lease, with the option for renewal, would

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Compostable bag reduces environmental impact MEC first retailer in Canada to use BioBag

By Lisa Dueck

Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) has unveiled a new shopping bag program that will further reduce the environmental impact of its store operations. The program includes the introduction of a fully biodegradable and compostable BioBag. MEC is the first national retailer in Canada to use the Norwegian-made BioBag. Manufactured mainly from non-genetically modified corn and synthetic polymers, BioBags are widely used in Europe to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and landfill volumes.

"Our stores hand out approximately 510,000 shopping bags every year, and we're a relatively small retailer" said Gary Faryon, senior manager of MEC operations. "By encouraging MEC members to use reuseable shopping bags and providing BioBags, the new program reduces the environmental footprint of our operations." The bags will be phased into MEC stores across the country over the next six months.

BioBags meet international packaging standards, including the American Society for Testing and Materials standard (D6400-99) for compostable plastic. BioBags will break down in compost in four to twelve weeks, depending on conditions.

MEC sustainability manager Denise Taschereau said "Go to a landfill, where you'll see thousands of discarded plastic shopping bags... the downside of the accepted approach to consumer convenience is evident: 'Give the customer a plastic bag and don't worry about the

environmental impact.' We disagree with that approach, and are committed to lobbying governments and industry peers to adopt sustainable solutions."

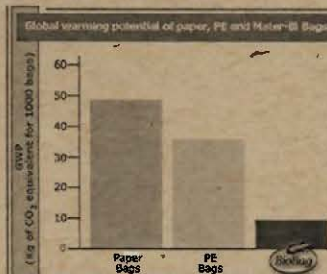
MEC also manufactures and sells reuseable organic cotton and nylon shopping bags. The reuseable bags are merchandised in prominent locations in MEC stores to provide customers with an alternative to disposable shopping bags.

The new program also includes a mechanism for MEC members to provide financial support to environmental groups working towards urban sustainability. MEC will donate five cents to a local environmental organization on behalf of each member who makes a purchase without taking a bag.

The funds will be distributed on a store-by-store basis. In Winnipeg the first recipient of the funds is the Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) Master Composters Project.

"We're proud to support Resource Conservation Manitoba and glad that the BioBag program will allow us to help raise the profile of RCM's work in the province. The donation is the icing on the cake," said Taschereau. "It lets us reward members for their behaviour and at the same time support good work in their community."

For more information, please visit www.mec.ca/biobag and www.biobag.ca. Write to MEC at: Mountain Equipment Co-op, 303 Portage Ave., Wpg, MB R3B 2B4 **ECO**



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New composting initiative

Composting 101 for Ag Producers

By Christine Schroeder, Resource Conservation Manitoba

Fall 2005 saw a new composting initiative in Manitoba: the Composting 101 for Ag Producers workshop series. Unique in Canada, these info-packed days aimed at providing intro-level resources for farmers considering composting, or those already composting but keen on improving their process.

Staff from Agriculture and AgriFood Canada's Brandon Research Station (AAFC), Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI), and Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) cooperated to spread the mixture of seminars, tours, demonstrations and good food across the province. The overall objective—increasing proactive, responsible nutrient management by Manitoba's ag operations—was promoted by presenting on-farm composting as a cost-effective strategy for manure and mortality management.

Come on out: Get dirty, get educated, get your questions answered—get started!

A total of three workshops were held, each covering the same basic information, allowing producers to attend the workshop closest to home. The three events were offered in Treherne (RM of South Norfolk, Oct. 4), East Selkirk (RM of St. Clements, Oct. 19) and Sifton (RM of Dauphin, Nov. 1).

Presentations were delivered by all three of the project coordinators plus the local Environment Officer for Manitoba Conservation, who discussed relevant provincial regulations. Topics presented included: The benefits of composting; The basic principles of composting that apply to every operation; System options, approaches; Manure composting in a prairie livestock production system; Mortality composting (including a video segment); Applicable regulations for on-farm composting operations; Compost maturity, how to you know when it's finished; End-use: on-farm use and other opportunities.

In addition, information was presented on the PFRA Environmental Farm Plan (with its possibilities for funding), CFIA regulations on finished compost sales, The Composting Council of Canada, and the Compost Quality Alliance. Informational websites for participating organizations were highlighted, along with Resource Conservation Manitoba's provincial toll-free Compost InfoLine (1-866-394-8880) for future inquiries.

A chance for hands-on experience

An important component of each workshop was the after-lunch tour of one or more of the area's pre-existing ag composting operations. The chance to see, touch and smell the in-progress efforts of one of their peers was identified as a highlight by many participants! The operator's own description of their learning process and current practices, along with demonstrations of how to accurately measure pile temperature and collect samples for testing, added a key dimension to the learning experience.

The operators were chosen based on their previous work with

either their local Farm Production Advisor or with the Ag Canada research station in Brandon. In total, three mortality composting sites and one manure composting project were visited.

Class size was limited to encourage participant questions and discussion. Each participant took home a significant package of printed resources, including contact information for all of the speakers. A total of sixty-nine participants attended the three workshops. Those present hailed from government of-

fices (federal and provincial), professional services, and producer industry organizations, but the bulk of the attendees were farmers.

Sessions were scheduled in the small towns nearest the targeted tour locations. Local service clubs or small businesses provided catering, giving a small economic boost to the host communities.

Planning and Partnerships

Composting 101 for Municipalities came out of discussions and planning shared by six agencies and organizations: MAFRI, AAFC, RCM, and Manitoba Conservation with input from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) and Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council (SWRC). In addition to the planning groups' own networks and websites, provincial ag industry organizations were

fantastic about circulating information advertising the events to their membership. Manitoba Pork Council, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, and the Puratone Corporation generously contributed additional funding towards catering costs.

Future Possibilities

It seems unlikely that the demand for this type of entry-level event tailored to agricultural operations has been fully satisfied by this series of three workshops. A new set of Composting 101 for Ag Producers may be planned for 2006 in Manitoba if funding and staff schedules allow.

The possibility of producing a video presenting an overview of agricultural composting on the Canadian prairies is being explored—this resource could make relevant, accurate information and visual demonstration as accessible as a producer's own DVD player.

The opportunity for these diverse agencies and organizations to work in concert for these first projects has opened up the exciting possibility of future made-on-the-Prairies solutions to the challenge of promoting responsible, sustainable on-farm nutrient management and providing the ag industry with practical solutions that can be scaled and customized to each individual farm operation.

A parallel series tailored to the needs of municipal compost operators and potential operators, Composting 101 for Municipalities, is being planned for Spring 2006—watch for it on RCM's website: www.resourceconservation.mb.ca

ECO



Dr. Katherine Buckley (AAFC) demonstrates proper sampling technique. Photo by Christine Schroeder

What's Happening

Feb 2—International World Wetland Day & Groundhog Day at Oak Hammock Marsh. Join us for a full day of wetland adventure! Discover why wetlands are so important, take in fun presentations and tours throughout the day. Find out if Manitoba Merv, Manitoba's official weather predicting groundhog, will see his shadow this year.

Feb 3—Conservation Planning for Large Landscapes: Examples of an Ecosystem Diversity Framework. Presentation by Jon Haufler. Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resource Seminar Series. Room 221 Wallace Building, University of Manitoba. 2:30 – 4:30 pm. Free event is open to the public.

Feb 4—La Salle River Walk. Join Prairie Pathfinders and the St. Norbert Heritage Trails Association for a walk on the LaSalle River. Meet at St. Norbert Arts Centre and walk to the Red River and back for lunch (from DeLuca's), presentations and a contest. Event fee, including lunch is \$12. For more information, or to register see www.prairiepathfinders.mb.ca or call 774-0190. Pay by cheque to PO Box 26074, RPO Osborne Village, Wpg, MB R3L 2V9. Deadline for registration is Jan. 25.

Feb 6—Research and Recreation in the Boreal Shield-Canada's Experimental Lakes Area. With John Shearer, Biologist, Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Learn how environmental research and wilderness recreation can co-exist in the ELA. Part of the Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program 2006. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre. \$6, \$2 for MNS members. Call 943-9029.

Feb 7 start—New Wellness Program at the Assiniboine Park Conservatory. Head, Hands, & Heart: Cultivating your Inner Garden' is a 15-week program of yoga, meditation, and writing offering a unique experience in the Conservatory setting, beginning February 7. In this safe, calm and inspirational space, learn to increase creativity, minimize stress, and energize your life. Facilitator Helen Maupin coaches both personal and organizational transformation. Visit www.writetojoy.com or phone 477-0760 for details.

Feb 8—Winnipeg Vegetarian Association Chinese New Year Event. Usher in the Year of the Rooster with a decadently vegan feast. 7 pm, Affinity Vegetarian Garden, 208 Edmonton St. \$15 WVA members, \$16 nonmembers (taxes and tip included). Purchase tickets at the restaurant or call 943-0251 to reserve.

Feb 8–22—Manitoba Naturalists Society 2006 Workshop Series. Workshops are held in Rm 31, Kelvin High School. \$10 per workshop, \$5 for MNS members. Call 943-9029 for more information or to register.

Feb 8 Creating an Ecological Corridor with Bill Dowie, ecological consultant. Learn how to design and build ecological corridors. Bill will address public participation and community involvement in this process, using principles of landscape ecology.

Feb 15 Animal Migration with James Hare, Professor in Zoology Department, U of M. An overview of migratory behaviour, drawing examples from insects, fish, reptiles, mammals and birds to illustrate the methods biologists use to study migration.

Feb 22 All About Dragonflies with Marjorie Hughes and Joë

Ackerman. Life cycles, nymph and adult identification as well as behaviour and habitat.

Feb 11—Seedy Saturday in Beausejour. Eastman's Gardening Group will be having their 2nd Annual Seedy. Our speakers are: 10 am, Dr. Eva Pip, Research scientist, will be speaking on Edible Flowers; 11 am, Mandy Botnican alpinists and heirloom tomato specialist. 1 pm, Bob Shearer, Devil's Creek Herb & Berry Farm; 2 pm, Jane Seniw, Arborist. Admission by donation. Seed, bulb, root exchange. Share and trade. Magazine & book exchange. At Beau-Head Seniors Centre, 645 Park Ave. For more information contact Armeline Bichlbauer at xara@mts.net.



Photo by Heather Laird

Feb 14—Valentine's Special "This isn't a US/Canada Love-in". A public forum hosted by the Manitoba Eco-Network on the proposed plan by North Dakota to divert Missouri water into the Red River Valley. Guest speakers include: Susan Howatt, National Water Campaigner, Council of Canadians/Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, Friends of the Earth Canada/Don Norquay, Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Water Stewardship and TBA from North Dakota. 6:45 pm - 9:30 pm at the Carol Shields Auditorium, Winnipeg Millennium Library. Call 943-0318 for more info.

Feb 18—Eating Simply for Compassion, Health & Sustainability. A one day workshop exploring simpler, more sustainable and compassionate ways to enjoy our daily bread, with author and teacher Mark Burch, food guru and vegan chef Marnie Feeleus, and food ethics advocate Syd Baume. At St. Mary's Rd United Church, 10 am to 4:30 pm. \$55 includes all materials and organic vegan luncheon. Pre-register by February 11, by contacting SPARC at 204-475-4233.

Feb 18—Seedy Saturday, 10:00 am–3:00 pm. The 6th Annual 'Seedy Saturday' at the Assiniboine Park Conservatory. See p.11 for more details.

Feb 27—The Red River Floodway Expansion Project. With Doug MacNeil, VP Hydraulics, MB Floodway Authority. Presentation will include past, current, and future risks associated with flooding in Manitoba. Part of the Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre. \$6, \$2 for MNS members. Call 943-9029.

Mar 3—The Red River Floodway Expansion Project: Integrating Engineering and Environmental Management. With Doug Peterson. Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resource Seminar Series. Room 221 Wallace Building, University of Manitoba. 2:30–4:30 pm. Free event is open to the public.

Mar 17—Green Building and Design: Fantasy Becomes Reality. With David Witty, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture. Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resource Seminar Series. Room 221 Wallace Building, University of Manitoba. 2:30–4:30 pm. Free event is open to the public.

Mar 30–Apr 20—Creative Retirement Lecture Series on Lake Winnipeg. 1:30 to 3:00 pm University of Manitoba Downtown Campus 11 Promenade (behind Portage Place). Costs: \$40.00 for all four events. Contact: Ingrid at Creative Retirement 949-2565 or iwedlake@crm.mb.ca. March 30—Dr. Ken Stewart; April 6—Francis Russell; April 13—Dr. Lyle Lockhart; April 20—Honourable Ed Schreyer.

True stewardship through regional initiatives and actions

Prairie Permaculture Revolution

By Charlene Rowland

Permaculture is nothing new. Small-scale, indigenous agriculture systems that provide food, fibre & shelter for humans while maintaining a healthy ecosystem and preventing soil erosion have been practiced for thousands of years. They can still be found in some isolated parts of the world today. The word Permaculture was created in the 1970s by two Australian ecologists, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. It is a combination of words used to describe permanent sustainable agriculture and permanent sustainable culture. Without balanced agricultural practices it is very difficult to maintain a truly sustainable culture.

Permaculture Design relies on a series of principles that are used to both understand, and interact with, land, ecosystems, buildings or communities that are being developed. They mimic the natural principles and patterns that maintained a biological balance within pre-industrial societies. Permaculture is both spiritual and scientific. The spiritual aspect relates to a kind of reverent understanding and connection to the planet as one whole entity. The scientific aspect relates more to its foundation in the ecological study of what is known as 'Systems Ecology'.

Permaculture Design principles can be used in both rural and urban areas. The principles provide much more than simply how to grow healthy organic food, they can be used to design community economic barter systems, homes and other shelters, as well as methods of structuring policy for networks or governments. Furthermore, Permaculture is not only about the actual elements that are being designed, it is also about creating beneficial inter-relationships between the elements.

Permaculture Defined

A precise definition of what Permaculture is can be difficult because it is always evolving. However, the ethical foundation of it is appropriately simple and basic.

- Care of the Earth: Provision for all life systems to continue and multiply.
- Care of the People: Provision for all people to access resources necessary for their existence.
- Care of Community: Sharing surplus, whether it be ideas, skills, food or goods.

The ethical basis of Permaculture is about being a part of the solution rather than part of the problem. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world".

Prairie Permaculture

Although the preliminary concepts of Permaculture Design were gathered and compiled in Australia, Permaculture systems can be developed for any climate and on any scale. The core ethics and principles are completely relevant in addressing the current devastating situation prevalent across the Canadian prairies. Over a century of industrial agriculture has caused

a severe ecological collapse of natural habitats while rural communities are witnessing the tragic out-migration of their most valuable resource, the future generation of farmers.

How can Permaculture Design systems address these complex dilemmas? One of the many useful aspects of Permaculture is that it doesn't just offer possible solutions, it provokes us to

ask questions and look deeper into the problem. The post-industrial agricultural society of the prairies has become very dependent on large amounts of non-renewable resources to grow, transport and market crops. This dependence causes massive damage to the environment that farmers rely on.

A closer examination of this problem, while applying basic permaculture principles and ethics would create a prairie society where farmers raise bioregional, appropriate crops through agricultural practices that increase diversity, habitat and water quality while preventing soil erosion, de-forestation and energy waste.

The result would be an economically and environmentally stable system that provides food, natural energy-efficient housing, many different employment possibilities and hope for the future generation.

Permaculture Initiatives

True stewardship recognizes global predicaments and seeks to affect them through regional initiatives and actions. There are numerous local programs and organizations working to create models of more ecologically sustainable systems within Manitoba.

The St. Norbert Arts Centre (SNAC) is a non-profit learning centre that promotes sustainable living through educational programs and workshops. SNAC is dedicated to cultural expression, education and environmental stewardship. The Harvest Moon Centre strengthens and builds linkages between urban and rural areas, and empowers communities through sustainable grassroots initiatives. The Harvest Moon Festival in Clearwater, Manitoba is the annual fundraiser.

The Prairie's Edge Eco-Village works to create a village of food and energy self-reliance in harmony with the natural world. They are actively engaged in teaching the skills necessary for small-scale organic agriculture, ecological building techniques, alternative healing arts, and appropriate technology systems.

The Manitoba Food Charter is a group of farmers, policy makers, activists and community organizers. They are working to create a publicly owned document that will help to guide developing healthy provincial food systems. This document will bring together a diversity of voices to identify priorities for action in order to create food security in Manitoba.



Permaculture Design Course students building mulch garden at Guilford farm, Clearwater, Manitoba. May 2005. Photo by Charlene Rowland

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Community Gardens

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allow the gardens to focus on increasing participation from the community, incorporate perennial plants and secure funding for garden projects or programs. People were also very supportive of having a point person within the City to address community gardeners' questions and concerns. Furthermore, creating a transparent process to ease the confusion of trying to start a community garden or locate available gardening space was recommended.

One of the key questions the City was interested in addressing was how to balance residential development with green space, especially in high-density neighbourhoods. Some people suggested the need to establish a set ratio of green space to population density to help guide green space development. Another suggestion, inspired by the process the Spence Neighbourhood Association used to create their Green Plan, was to encourage the community to collectively decide what land they would like to see developed as green space and housing. Ultimately, having a community decide for itself what development should take place and where is ideal, but there are concerns this process may be too demanding for communities that don't have a developed neighbourhood association to facilitate such a process.

The recently established Winnipeg Community Garden Network is anxious to have an official policy in place that outlines the City's support commitment. The goal of the Network is to



Community Garden Celebration Tour— Spirit Park

connect gardeners from around the City—keeping everyone up to date on garden events and issues, as well as acting as a resource and information centre. The policy will be presented to council in early March, and if it is not adopted, there will surely be many disappointed citizens. However, the network admits that community gardening is not going to disappear without a policy, but it may encourage them to focus their energy on increasing public support for a policy. **ECO**

Prairie Permaculture

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The University of Manitoba Permaculture Society is dedicated to establishing a Permaculture demonstration garden on the University of Manitoba campus. This educational garden will be used to conduct research about alternative land use and stewardship techniques for the prairies while raising awareness about basic Permaculture principles and ethics.

These are just a few of the countless inspiring projects that are actively transforming the industrial agriculture system on the prairies.

Permaculture Design Course

The St. Norbert Arts Centre will host a Permaculture Design Course May 8–20, 2006.

A Permaculture Design Course is a focused, intensive study of the principles and ethics that form the foundation of Permaculture. The Design Course combines theory and hands-on activities. The curriculum includes lectures, discussions, slide shows, field trips and projects. The participants learn and develop the practical skills to design and implement Permaculture systems and receive a Permaculture Design Course Certificate.

Plan for the future

Permaculture is an intricate design system that combines concepts of health, abundance and ecological balance into a powerful, nurturing blueprint for true earth stewardship. Through close observation, minimal interference, and thoughtful action, humans can supply all their needs and work with,



Permaculture Design Course students at David Neufeld and Maggie Andres's farm near Boissevain, Manitoba. May 2005.
Photo by Charlene Rowland

rather than against, nature. Permaculture Design provides the hope to facilitate this integral change in the future.

Further Info:

St. Norbert Arts Centre: www.snac.mb.ca
Harvest Moon Centre: <http://www.clearwatermb.ca/>
Prairie's Edge Eco-Village: www.prairiesedge.tk
Manitoba Food Charter: mbfoodcharter@yahoo.ca
The University of Manitoba Permaculture Society:
umpermaculture@googlegroups.com

Charlene Rowland has worked with Y.A.A.M (Youth in Alternative Agriculture Movement), the Organic Farm Mentorship Program and the Youth and Food Security Project. Email: prairiepermaculture@yahoo.ca **ECO**

Conservation, human equity, and ecological economics

Soft Paths for Water

By David Epp

A person could be forgiven for thinking that water seems like an inexhaustible resource. After all, the oceans are full of it, the North and South Poles are capped by it, and hardly a week goes by without the report of catastrophic flooding somewhere in the world. In addition, unlike fossil fuels, most water applications leave the basic chemical structure intact, so this resource is never really used up, just recirculated. With all the abundance, why should anyone really care about water management? Couldn't we all just carry on with the same practices of the last 100 years? What does it really matter if we all go through water like a drunken sailor going through a windfall?

New strategies required

It's true that, from a global perspective, there is a lot of water out there, but this doesn't come close to telling the whole story. For example, knowing that somewhere there exist vast bodies of water is cold comfort to an isolated community with an aquifer that's depleted. Access to a contaminated water source probably wouldn't be much help, either. Therefore, this essentially is the mandate of any water management organization: to ensure availability of water in sufficient quantity and quality. This mandate has for the most part been satisfied through the traditional approaches of supply and demand management. For the 21st century, though, new strategies will be required.

While water is still being supplied fairly economically to many Canadian localities, demand is sure to increase in coming years and decades, while accessible supplies remain basi-

cally finite. Society is also becoming more aware of ecological considerations. These issues are where the philosophy of Soft Paths for Water comes in.

The times, they are a-changing.

With ever-increasing water demands and infrastructure costs, it's become much more difficult to develop new sources of supply. Most practical sources are already heavily utilized. Therefore, to ensure that society's water needs will continue to be met through the 21st century, it's become imperative that we seriously consider alternatives to the traditional approaches.

Dr. David B. Brooks, Director of Research for Friends of the Earth-Canada, recently conducted several presentations in Winnipeg on Soft Paths for Water. According to Dr. Brooks, the philosophy is based upon conservation, human equity, and ecological economics, and differs from traditional demand management by advocating "detailed attention to end uses, small, distributed sources of supply, and waste

treated nearby or on-site with bio-mimicry". These can be achieved through what Dr. Brooks refers to as the four principles for soft path analysis.

Four principles of soft paths analysis

The first principle is to "Resolve supply-demand gaps as much as possible from the demand side." Are there ways to achieve the same results using water of lesser quantity or quality? Do lawns really have to be watered at high noon of the hottest days, when half the water will just evaporate? How about incorporating drought-resistant plants, or rock gardens? How about incentives? Amazingly, the entire city of Montreal has no residential water metering system; everyone pays a flat rate. How many people really care if the toilet latch sticks and ends up flushing all night long?

The second principle is to "Match quality of resource supplied to quality required by end use." Does agriculture require irrigation with high quality water? Don't many crops thrive on the nutrients present in human and animal wastes? One of the most obvious current mismatches is using drinking water to flush toilets. A partial solution has been found in later models of low-flow toilets, many of which offer considerable improvements in performance over first generations. Could water treatment facilities distribute lesser quality water throughout urban centres, with small individual treatment / filtration systems in each household to 'polish' just the water required for consumption?

The third principle is to "Start from some water-efficient future and work backwards ('backcast') to find a feasible way ('a soft path') to get there." With the goals of efficiency, eq-

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Illustration by David Henry

Manitoba's Lands & Waters

ManitobaWildlands.org

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MANITOBA WILDLANDS

Soft Paths for Water

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uity, and sustainability in mind, Dr. Brooks advocates creating several future models; one based upon current policies and another on proposed policies, with several climate change variations thrown in. With continuous research, testing and adjustments, it is believed that feasible paths can be determined and adhered to.

The fourth and final principle is to "Ensure ecological sustainability and human equity at every step." This is probably one of the most significant components of the Soft Paths philosophy. Can we really achieve viable solutions without ecological implications factored in? A water management solution that devastates a regional fishing industry can hardly be seen as desirable.

What about transboundary considerations? Where water resources are shared by more than one jurisdiction, solutions become even more complicated and difficult to achieve. According to Don Norquay, Assistant Deputy Minister Manitoba Water Stewardship (Ecological Services Division) there is precedent for transboundary water-sharing agreements. The Prairie Provinces Water Board administers an equitable sharing agreement for water flowing across the boundaries between Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. At the international level, apportioning of both the Souris River, and Alberta's St. Mary's River, has been successfully negotiated, although Montana considers it unfair and plans to renegotiate the agreement. There

is a proposal to develop a long-term drought preparedness plan for the Red River basin that will include the Province of Manitoba and the states of North Dakota and Minnesota. As the ongoing Devils Lake debacle illustrates, though, transboundary water issues can be quite contentious.

Various approaches to water management have been, or are currently being implemented, not all with success. In 1999, Bolivia's government granted a 40-year contract to Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of Bechtel Corporation, to manage the city of Cochabamba's water supply. Residents drove the company out within months, due to draconian policies it had tried to implement.

As water issues continue to come to the fore, many opportunities for implementation of the Soft Paths approach are appearing. Glen Koroluk, Water Caucus Coordinator for the Manitoba Eco Network, suggests that the Pembina Valley Water Cooperative (PVWC) Supplemental Ground Water Supply Pipeline would be a good candidate for application of the Soft Paths approach. The proposal is to "move groundwater approximately 100 kilometers by pipeline from the Sandilands Provincial Forest to the municipality of Morris and then through the PVWS network, which supplies 45,000 customers in the south central area of Manitoba."

Although Soft Paths for Water is a relatively new philosophy, by being forward-looking, and factoring in both ecological and human equity considerations, it appears to represent a basically sound way to urge society toward a sustainable future.

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Growing with the Community Since 1985

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal, 2005

History in the Making

By Rachel Horwat, Youth Summit participant

Before the United Nations Conference on Climate Change even took place, it was hailed to be a historic event. After all, with some 10,000 people planning to attend from all over the world, it was to be the largest attended climate change conference ever. Even more, it was two conferences in one—COP11, the 11th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, was to take place along with MOP1, the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Seeing that the conference would be the first to take place after the Kyoto Protocol had been signed, it was expected that delegates would begin the talk on what should happen after 2012, when the period for the Kyoto Protocol ends.

Marrakesh Accord signed

As it turned out, the conference was indeed historic. Within the first few days, the Marrakesh Accord was signed. The Marrakesh Accord acts as the "rule book" for the Kyoto Protocol, and makes it operational.

With Marrakesh matters out of the way, countries that are signatories to the Kyoto Protocol had to decide whether they were ready to begin post-2012 discussions. With large support to begin the talks, several working groups were organized to begin that process over the next year.



Youth present the declaration to world leaders at the UN conference. Photo from www.beyondkyoto.org

Unprecedented youth presence and involvement

What also contributed to the making of this historic event was the unprecedented youth presence and involvement at the conference. In the past, the youth presence has been quite erratic, as it is largely dependent on whether or not the host country provides funding for youth to attend.

This year, the Canadian government made a great effort to engage youth by hosting an International Youth Summit on Climate

Change just before the United Nations conference took place. It brought 100 youth together from around Canada and the world to discuss climate change—after all, it is the youth of today that will deal with the brunt of climate change impacts. The product of the youth summit was a declaration on climate change which highlighted commitments youth have made to fight climate change, their demands from delegates, and their vision for the future. The declaration was then presented to the delegates at a high-level segment at the UN conference.

Call for a permanent youth constituency

In the declaration, the Youth Summit delegates called for a permanent, funded youth constituency to be included in the international climate change negotiation process. This would give youth a greater and more consistent voice in the negotiations that directly affect their future.

They also called for a 30% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, and 80% by 2050 for developed countries. To the youth's pleasure, the World Mayors and Municipal Leaders Association, made up of 485 cities, towns, and counties around the world, committed themselves to the emissions reduction targets set forth by the youth declaration.

All these occurrences contributed to the conference being regarded by many as one of the most progressive climate change conferences yet. Hopefully that record is broken at next year's conference.



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For more information

The outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference can be obtained from www.unfccc.int

The Youth declaration "Our Climate, Our Challenge Our Future" can be found at www.beyondkyoto.org and at www.climatechangeconnection.org



A refuge for more than students and biologists

Goldeneye Field Station

by Lindy Clubb, Mixedwood Forest Society Coordinator

The Mixedwood Forest Society (formerly the Mixedwood Forest Research and Advisory Committee) owns and operates a modest summer season field station on the shores of Wellman Lake in Manitoba's Duck Mountain Provincial Park. We're a small, volunteer-based group, and it's been a struggle to keep the station going. However, we've hosted researchers from the Universities of Victoria, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Regina, Brandon, Winnipeg and Manitoba in our six years of operation.

Graduate students, the station's most frequent users, have collected data on several aspects of biology with what we like to call the three main B's—bugs, bogs and birds. And we have plenty of those in the park.

The station was formed when three of our members approached the rest of the group with a proposal to purchase the former Living Word Bible camp when it came up for sale in 1999. Through hard work, we raised the funds to acquire the facilities. We've continued to make long term plans for the property—holding interpretive events and housing researchers while maintaining a soft footprint on our five acres of woods with an intact shoreline.

A refuge for more than students and biologists

The field station is a refuge for more than students and biologists. We have loons in our little bay, and plenty of goldeneye ducks raising babies in the immediate area. Ospreys and eagles cruise the skies over the water, diving for fish like pickerel from the spring fed lake. Spruce grouse stand defiantly on our little gravel lane, deer take their fawns safely across our meadow, and one botanist found all the plants he needed for book illustrations within the borders of our leased land. It's a lovely location. We dream of designing eco-sound buildings

to replace the existing dormitory trailers and to attract more local people and cottagers in for our public events.

Surrounded by a prosperous cottage community, we've come to believe that just bringing people to a location that's kept wild is a positive way of introducing them to nature. When-

ever we have guests for a day of biology presentations (or to accompany researchers making trips to the woods and wetlands so close to us) new connections happen—people engage with the environment.

Although we're primarily a research, education and advocacy group we've risked a tangible investment on the ground—going green on our communally owned field station, using volunteer and often local labor for innovative small repairs and renovations. The research projects we support at the station inform policy for forestry practises, reform land management, and help the public to understand scientific is-

ssues. Our interpretive events have introduced people to the secret life of insects and invertebrates, the need for protection of habitat for predators and prey, plus the virtues and healing properties of wetland plants.

Environmentally sound ethics

Our closest urban centre, the town of Swan River, is three quarters of an hour away—but the cottagers have been loyal supporters, donations trickle in, and the researchers still manage to find us and celebrate what we have to offer. Of course, they appreciate our principles being put into place and it's a reciprocal relationship. Our users have helped guide our visions and they add environmentally sound ethics to our day to day operations. The opportunities to swim, canoe, read eco-based literature, solve the puzzle of putting the teeth back into a wolf's skull, monitor dragonflies and pick wild strawberries help to make anyone's day there a delight.

We offer inexpensive accommodation to as many as 10 visitors, at \$12.00 per person per night. To book a place with us call or email Lindy at 204 475-9608, lindy@frozen.ca. We have toilets and showers on site. A few miles across the lake laundry machines, a restaurant and a public sand beach are provided by Wellman Lake lodge. We're a five and a half-hour drive from Winnipeg, and a four-hour drive from Brandon. The Mixedwood Forest Society is a registered charity, and provides tax receipts for all donations. The Goldeneye Field Station is open in the months of June, July and August.

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Editor's note: In the October 2005 issue we mistakenly referred to Goldeneye Field Station as belonging to Brandon University. We apologize for the error.



The main cabin is home to the volunteer manager and a favourite meeting place for visitors. Photo by Heather Hinam.

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The 6th Annual 'Seedy Saturday' at the Assiniboine Park Conservatory

Seedy Saturday

February 18, 2006, 10:00 am–3:00 pm

Seedy Saturday has quickly become a much-anticipated event on the Manitoba gardening calendar. In the warm friendly atmosphere of the Conservatory, join with other gardeners to find inspiration for your garden, learn about local and global food and farming issues, and take part in the community seed exchange. This event is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Assiniboine Park Conservatory and Seeds of Diversity Canada. Admission is by donation.

■ **10:00am Seed Swap begins. Vendors and displays open all day until 3:00 pm**

■ **11:00am "Honey Bees & Growing Seeds" Ron Rudiak, Sunnybrook Bee Farm**

In addition to gathering nectar to produce honey, honey bees perform another vital function, pollination of agricultural crops, home gardens, orchards and wildlife habitat. Beekeeper Ron Rudiak shares some fascinating stories about honey bees, the challenges of honey production on the Canadian prairies, and the importance of insects in seed, vegetable and fruit production. About a third of the food items that we eat have been

produced as a result of insect pollination.

Ron and his wife Shirley, of Steinbach, have operated Sunnybrook Bee Farm as a family business for 31 years. Their bees gather an assortment of flavorful honey from surrounding fields of clover, alfalfa, sunflowers, canola, dandelions and wildflowers. While honey is their main product, they also raise queen bees for their own use and some for sale. During the summer, when the Rudiaks aren't working with their colonies of honeybees, Ron and Shirley are busy extracting and packing honey for sale at the Steinbach Farmers' Market.

■ **12:00noon "Let's Talk About Food!" Kreesta Doucette, Manitoba Food Charter**

If you eat, you might be interested in a new initiative that is gaining roots and wings throughout all of Manitoba. Join us for a snack and add your voice to those from across the province including northern and Aboriginal people, rural and urban farmers, politicians, community gardeners, processors and retailers, fishers, civil servants, activists, and academics who are talking about food and working on a Manitoba Food Charter. In a fun, interactive and dynamic environment we will discuss the trendy new term "food security", present some innovative food projects, and hear your views on ways to ensure that there is good food for all Manitobans.

Kreesta Doucette is the project coordinator for the Manitoba Food Charter. She grew up in the North and her food-security related work in Canada and overseas includes community development, inner-city food security with a focus on urban agriculture, people living with HIV, and direct food assistance. She has an undergraduate degree in Agriculture and as part of her graduate studies in Rural Planning her thesis focused on Manitoba farmers markets and Community Shared Agriculture. She is an avid inner city community gardener and loves crooked-neck squash.

■ **1:00pm "Gardening Without Boundaries," Mary Popien**

Many gardeners, neighbours and students have been inspired by the beautiful landscape evolving around Montrose School and Montrose Park. Here is your chance to meet the dynamic volunteer behind this award winning garden. Mary has wonderful photos, boundless stories, and a wealth of experience. Expect tips on what plants excel in a public garden; how to discover, motivate and organize volunteers in the community; and how to create a nurturing habitat for butterflies, kids, birds and neighbours!

■ **2:00pm Seed-Saving How-To Videos from Underwood Gardens, Illinois**

Saving seeds is easy! is the message proclaimed in these videos. The chances are good you will agree—and want to start right away. Mayo Underwood brings warmth and simplicity to the screen with clear and simple instructions on how to find the seeds on different plants. Whatever your reasons are for saving seeds—connecting with the past, preserving unique varieties, better flavour and nutrition or cost advantages—the time you invest can reap great rewards. These informative videos can help you achieve even more success.

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This isn't a US/Canada Love-in

February 14, 2006 Valentine's Day Special

A public forum hosted by the Manitoba Eco-Network on the proposed plan by North Dakota to divert Missouri water into the Red River Valley. Guest speakers include: Susan Howatt, National Water Campaigner, Council of Canadians/Beatrice Olivastri, CEO, Friends of the Earth Canada/Don Norquay, Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Water Stewardship and TBA from North Dakota.

6:45 pm-9:30 pm at the Carol Shields Auditorium, Winnipeg Millennium Library. Call 943-0318 for more info.

Organic Planet Gets Biodegradable

Organic Planet Worker Co-op is excited to announce the introduction of fully biodegradable packaging! We are phasing in "cornainers" which can be composted at home. Cups for juices, smoothies and coffees as well as shopping bags at the check-out will be switched as old stocks run out. Take-out tubs, utensils & straws are on the horizon.

Please note the co-op still encourages customers to bring in their own re-usable cups & bags.

For more info contact: OPWC 772-8771.

Now accepting applications MEC Grant Programs

MEC is committed to sustainability in everything we do. In addition to reducing the ecological footprint of our business, we provide financial support to Canadian conservation and outdoor recreation groups. Our grant programs are designed to help not-for-profit groups and organizations:

- Conserve our rapidly diminishing wild spaces
- Educate Canadians about areas of significant ecological or outdoor recreational value
- Inspire Canadians to become active participants in responsible, self-propelled outdoor activity

Learn more about MEC Grant Programs and Community Involvement at www.mec.ca/community.

Want to get involved? MEC is looking for an MEC Member to serve on our Grant Review Committee. We are looking for Members with experience in conservation advocacy and education and the protection and enhancement of self-propelled outdoor recreation opportunities. Contact Lisa Dueck—Winnipeg's Social & Environmental Responsibility Coordinator at ldueck@mec.ca for information.



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Telephone # () _____ E-Mail _____

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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.

A supporting membership includes a subscription to **Eco-Journal** as well as notice of events and regular updates on issues and is open to any individual.

