

Lots of topics on AEN agenda

The recent meeting of the Atlantic Environmental Network in Fredericton drew about 30 people from various groups across the Atlantic provinces. Sponsored by the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, the weekend meeting centred around three workshops on hazardous waste, nature conservation and pesticides, plus discussions on everything from P.E.I.'s Conservation Strategy to the proposed Lepreau 2 nuclear plant.

The AEN is a facilitative body and doesn't take public stands on issues - its goal is to aid communication between environmental groups and between those groups and the provincial and federal governments. It is part of the Canadian Environmental Network, which has a mailing list of 1200 groups across the country.

Diane Griffin led the workshop on nature conservation and conservancy, and members from other provinces were pleased and perhaps envious of our new conservation strategy. An Atlantic Conference on Conservation Strategy is in the works, as is a proposal for getting strategies for the other three Atlantic provinces. Diane's knowledge of fundraising and the Island Nature Trust itself (still unique, although New Brunswick is in the process of starting one up) drew a lot of interest. The land acquisitions here have been quite a success story and could serve as a good model for many other areas of the country. As part of this workshop, Dan McAskill gave an update on Wildlife '87 and what P.E.I. and the rest of Canada is doing in this area. Members from other provinces gave information on what their groups were doing as part of the celebration.

The workshop on pesticides brought out concerns with the use of herbicides and insecticides in all provinces. A recent study in Kansas showed that sprayers of 2,4-D (one of the phenoxy herbicides that the Cape Breton Landowners fought against the use of) were ten times as likely as non-sprayers to contact certain types of cancer. The chemical is now under review by Agriculture Canada, but is still used along power lines, in brush control and, in what is becoming a serious problem, on lawns to control weeds.

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick has been campaigning against the spraying of herbicides on lawns (often done with no warning to neighbours and with inadequate safety equipment) and have succeeded in getting the town of St. Andrews to ban the practice. While 2,4-D is not used in forestry on P.E.I., it is still used in agriculture, weed control in lawns, and there is talk of using it along roadsides (I hope to find out more about that later). Many people at the meeting felt that manual control of brush would create more jobs, and perhaps Employment Canada would become involved. There seems to be a lot of controversy surrounding the use of herbicides in forestry - they may actually be hindering the growth of plantations. A few studies have been done on this, and I will try to get the results of these.

Although hazardous wastes are a serious problem in all provinces, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are working very hard to find solutions and identify potential hot spots. Improper waste disposal and leaking gasoline tanks have made groundwater pollution a serious problem. In New Brunswick, many people have lost the use of their wells or town water due to everything from dry cleaning solvent (which Gilbert Clements, Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs has announced that it can no longer be disposed of on P.E.I.) to nitrates from synthetic fertilizer. Some families have been unable to drink their water for fifteen years. The Conservation Council is trying to get the New Brunswick government to enact a Safe Drinking Water

