

LEVEL OF DESCRIPTION:

Fonds

No.:

AU006

TITLE:

Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association fonds

CREATOR:

Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association
Sherman, Joan
Holmberg, Robert
Opryshko, Peter

DATE RANGE:

1988-2009, predominant 1988-1997

EXTENT:

0.95 m of textual records and other materials

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY:

Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association (FOTA) was formed in the fall of 1988 in Athabasca, Alberta as a reaction to the rumors, and later announcement of a bleached kraft pulp mill being built in the Athabasca River Basin region. Concerned citizens of the Athabasca area felt that there was little public input in the process of locating another mill on the Athabasca River and joined together to form a non-profit chartered society. Founded by Louis Schmittroth, the association was active in criticizing massive pulp, paper, and industrial forestry expansion in the boreal forest, and called for a more measured approach to development that would protect the ecosystem in the Athabasca area.

The association held regular meetings and sponsored forums and speakers on various environmental issues. As a public service, in October 1991, FOTA organized the first ever Boreal Forest Conference. The purpose of the conference was to inform the public about the beauty and ecology of the forest around Athabasca and to the north. In the latter half of the 1990s, FOTA developed a series of participatory workshops based on their experiences in a major environmental controversy in Canada entitled *Pulp Mills, Fish Contamination, and Fish Eaters: A Participatory Workshop on the Politics of Expert Knowledge*. These workshops were to serve as a challenge to the assumption that the expertise of environmental specialists and the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process in developed countries was objective and applicable to all parts of the world. The participatory workshop method was employed as a way to assist local groups in preparing for working with experts, and the expert techniques of environmental assessment.

Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association was dedicated to working toward ensuring that all uses of the natural resources of the Athabasca River Basin were governed by the principle of sustainable development. Because of this, FOTA became actively involved in the Northern River Basins Study. Initiated in 1992 by the Governments of Canada, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, the study represented an attempt to address the ecological concerns about pulp mill expansion, and to increase scientific knowledge about conditions in the Peace, Athabasca and Slave rivers. In early 1999, a representative of FOTA attended the public hearing of Suncor's Project Millennium Development, which consisted of expansion to the mining area and the addition of new processing units near Fort McMurray, Alberta. Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association condemned the application believing that Suncor's EIA was incomplete because it did not assess alternative technologies in adequate detail. They were also concerned with the potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions, the water consumption in the extraction of the tailing process, the water toxicity of the tailing ponds, and the potential developmental effects of minute doses of toxicants on wildlife. Shortly after this application was approved in 1999, FOTA was disbanded.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

Fonds consists of documents related to the environmental implications and construction of the Alberta-Pacific Forestries Inc. (Al-Pac) pulp mill in the Athabasca – Lac La Biche region. These records include: correspondence, publications, photocopied publication articles, studies, reports, individual postcards and a book of postcards regarding clear cutting and the environmentally damaging effects, newspapers and newspaper articles, papers pertaining to the Canada-Asia Partnership in Athabasca and its programs, periodicals, material related to the Northern River Basins Study, FOTA newsletters, papers from FOTA general meetings, presentations, press/news releases, Silva Forest Foundation and Forestry Stewardship Council membership applications, papers regarding the Special Places 2000 Campaign, Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy Steering Committee reports, and papers related to the environmental harmonization initiative proposed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Also included in the textual records is an enlarged photocopy of a photograph of Alberta Environment Minister Ralph Klein at the press conference to announce the approval of the Al-Pac pulp mill.

The audio cassettes include recordings taken during FOTA's annual general meetings with the majority featuring either David Schindler or Al Wong.

The video cassettes include recordings related to Alberta-Pacific Forestries Inc., *The Alberta Pacific Story*, Dr. Robert Dykes' presentation on the medical effects of the pulp mill, and Woodlot Program for WCB Woodlot Managers.

The DVDs included contain clips of news broadcasts pertaining to the Al-Pac pulp mill in the Athabasca region and environmental issues.

Also include are site plans, maps and posters pertaining the Al-Pac pulp mill in Athabasca and its environmental issues and operations.

SOURCE OF TITLE:

Title taken from the contents of the fonds.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Fonds also includes 3 DVDs. - 2 posters. - 9 site plans. – 6 maps. - 4 audio cassettes. – 3 video cassettes.

PHYSICAL CONDITION:

Some of the newspaper clippings are torn and fragile.

CONSERVATION:

Conservation copies were made of newspaper clippings, sticky notes and fax paper.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE:

Items were not received in any discernible order. The fonds has been arranged following the creator's arrangement, with the exception of records that were received in a disorganized manner which were arranged according to topic.

The records of the Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association fonds and the Prosperity Environmental Association fonds in accession 2012.009 are intermixed as they were both created by Peter Opryshko, who was a member of both organizations.

LANGUAGE NOTE:

The material is in English.

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION: Accession 2009.002, was donated in 2008 by Joan Sherman, a member of FOTA. Accession 2011.012 was donated in 2011 by Robert Holmberg, a member of FOTA. Accession 2012.009 was donated in 2012 by Peter Opryshko, a member of FOTA.

ACCESS CONDITIONS:

None.

USE CONDITIONS:

Permission for use required. Subject to *The Copyright Act*.

FINDING AIDS:

A file list and some digitized material is available

INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ACCESSIONS:

2009.002, 2011.012, 2012.009

Further accruals are not expected.

ASSOCIATED MATERIAL:

Other material related to the Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association can be found in the Friends of the Athabasca Environmental Association fonds at the Athabasca Archives in Athabasca, Alberta.

GENERAL NOTE:

Information for the administrative history was obtained from the records.

The fonds level description and finding aids were created by Dayna Kwasney (summer student) in 2009, updated by Joan Chrusch in 2011 and updated by Marissa Fraser in 2016 and 2017.

SUBJECT HEADINGS:

Cabinet ministers

Environmental impact analysis

Forest products industry - - environmental aspects

Forums (discussion and debate)

Governmental investigations

Wood-pulp industry - - Athabasca region