
BACKGROUND

CANADIAN BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Biosphere reserves are areas designated and recognized internationally by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, for demonstrating practical approaches to balancing conservation and development. They include one or more core protected areas such as a National Park or a National Wildlife Area, for the conservation of ecosystems and native biodiversity, a buffer area in which activities compatible with the conservation area occur, and a large area of co-operation where sustainable resource management practices are promoted and developed. Canada has 15 biosphere reserves which span eight provinces and cover a total area of 102,237 sq km.

The Program began in 1970 with 553 sites currently recognized in 107 countries. People in a reserve demonstrate various ways to sustain local economies and resource use while also conserving the biological diversity.

Governance mechanisms are established to utilize scientific knowledge in order to:

- Reduce biodiversity loss
- Improve livelihoods
- Enhance social, economic and cultural conditions for environmental sustainability

Biosphere reserves are volunteer-driven organizations that sometimes receive project-based funding depending on individual circumstances, history and in-kind support from sources such as government programs and private foundations.

Most biosphere reserves in Canada are incorporated as non-profit organizations, and some have charitable status. The others are administered through an existing organization in their area. Biosphere reserve program activities are decided locally, but some can be linked to national or international programs. The biosphere reserve initiates projects that are implemented in partnership with interested business, non-government or government organizations. They also facilitate projects and activities of other organizations that fit with the goals of the biosphere reserve. Examples of these projects include establishing Forest Biodiversity Monitoring Plots (The Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve also trains students at these plots in partnership with the University of Waterloo), developing a national model for the promotion and identification of sustainable tourism opportunities like at the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, working with the University of Toronto to develop local-scale climate models for climate change adaptation activities, and building demonstration plots for ecological restoration.

THE CANADIAN BIOSPHERE RESERVES ASSOCIATION (CBRA)

The Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (CBRA) is an Ottawa-based non-profit charitable organization created in 1998 to provide support and facilitate communication and collaboration among Canada's biosphere reserves.

CBRA also provides a unified voice for national-scale endeavours, and promotes biosphere reserves as a model for community-based sustainable development. CBRA develops and directs national projects for the collective benefit of its member biosphere reserves, such as biodiversity monitoring, ecotourism development, mapping of landscape change, climate change adaptation, ecological restoration, development of cooperation plans and social monitoring. It also engages in fundraising, communications activities, and publication of educational materials.

CBRA is governed by a Board of Directors which consists of one representative director from each of the 15 biosphere reserves, plus one from Parks Canada and one from Environment Canada. The Board provides advice on CBRA project proposals and strategic directions, including fundraising and partnership strategies. During its annual general meeting held in June, CBRA started developing a strategic plan, which defines the roadmap for the Association for the next 5 years.

FUNDING

Following Budget 2008, the Government of Canada provided \$5 million over five years to support Canadian Biospheres and the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association.

Of the 15 Canadian Biosphere Reserves 14 will be receiving funding; Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve was excluded since it was established with a federal endowment fund.