

Tuesday June 28th, 2011
Room L275 11:00-12:25
Discussion Session: Biosphere Reserves: A Practitioner's Panel

Co chairs: Sharmalene Mendis-Millard, Scott Slocombe

Minutes

Sharmalene welcomes everyone to the session. Introduces herself, co chair Scott Slocombe, and members of the panel Brad Toms, Laura Loucks, Shanna Fiddler, and Liz MacCormick while other participants around the table introduce themselves.

Sharmalene lays out the session – each panelist will address the questions in 5-10 minutes, then in small groups main themes and ideas can be discussed, finally Scott will provide some closing remarks.

Sharmalene discusses biosphere reserves communities of learning and discusses the MAB committee as consisting of ‘elders’ of the biosphere reserve community. She prompts participants to visit and join the little-green-book.ca discussion forum and the biosphere-research.ca listserv.

The goal of the session is to discuss: What may be learned from biosphere reserves about what integrated environmental and resource management means, how it can be implemented, and the roles of the UNESCO BR concept and its application?

Questions:

- What needs to be integrated in environmental and resource management?*
- What are the opportunities for integrated resource management in your region?*
- What are the challenges of integrated resource management in your region?*
- What are the current and potential roles of a biosphere reserve? How do they relate to the above?*

Brad Toms: Wildlife biologist at Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute.
Discusses the history and mandate of the non-profit biosphere reserve association MTRI.

Burdens/challenges:

- There is a lot of private land ownership in Southwest Nova Scotia which limits jurisdictional control – must get community involved
- Resource dependant economy in Southwest Nova Scotia

Current and potential roles:

- Biosphere has been a reason to ‘get things done’ in a defined area
- Been able to improve sustainability initiatives at field station

Laura Loucks: Lives on a biosphere reserve

What needs to be integrated:

- Committee for biosphere reserve has created local space to ask question: what does it mean to live in a biosphere reserve? The committees need to be integrated – should be a place to have important conversations.
- Need to talk more about the boundaries of the ecosystem and reserve.

Opportunities and challenges:

- More strategic focus, on monitoring in particular. More opportunity to respond to specific needs of the ecosystem.

Shannah Fiddler: Parks Canada, discusses how childhood experiences with aboriginal communities and protected areas influenced her career path in protected areas management.

Opportunities:

- Parks Canada is moving into an interesting and diverse era –land claims have influenced the newest National Parks. Will have cooperative and collaborative boards with aboriginal communities in each National Park going forward.

Challenges:

- Collaboration and communication between government departments.
- Used to be more involved in biosphere reserves, but Environment Canada has taken the lead so the funding is no longer available.
- Integrating enjoyment and education with the need for people to participate in the landscape – needs to be used.
- How do you codify successes and progress for future national policy?

Sharmalene: UNESCO does not automatically fund or run biosphere reserves – for years biosphere reserves were run by volunteers and the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association. Funding comes from The Government of Canada, but it is not constant or guaranteed; CBRA was awarded 5 million over 5 years.

Liz MacCormick: Cape Breton University, Community Studies, Bras D’Or Institute for Ecosystem Research, Collaborative Resources Planning Initiative

Integrated:

- Making use of traditional scientific knowledge
- Ecosystem goals and objectives in mind
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---2 minute gap--- (11:55-11:57) ---I’m sorry! Refer to Powerpoint Presentation or audio recording

Challenges:

- On some maps First Nations Reserves are blocked – information not available to the public, hard to access

- Power and money not in the hands of the local community
- First Nations are spread thin for collaboration
- Jurisdictional issues
- Public misconceptions of what a biosphere reserve is

Sharmalene opens up discussion to the rest of the participants. Invites Dan Edwards and Clifford Atleo Sr. who have experience with biosphere reserves.

Clifford Atleo Sr. Discusses the idea of protected areas; we should be protecting everything. Discusses local agreement on biosphere reserve management which expired in 2010, which invited community members to participate. Unfortunately, the community is not involved as much as it could be at this point.

Dan Edwards Member of the CBT board for 6-7 years. Was asked to be part after/during the (Qualaquit) Sound dispute. The biosphere has no mandate to manage – but has a research and education mandate. It can be a place to determine indicators. And to determine how connected is biosphere to health of the community. Politics often intervenes in biosphere reserve management – conflicts between resource users, etc.

Sharmalene explains that there have been shifts in the ‘biosphere’ concept over time – since the 1970s. Initially research focused (living laboratories). The focus now is on integration, collaboration and sustainable development. BRs are reviewed by UNESCO every 10 years.

Dale Eshelby discusses Southwest Nova Scotia biosphere reserve. Challenge in this area is that it is so large. Must work with communities and extend the knowledge to cover the whole area; not just the core. There are educational programs established in the area. Starting pilot project: virtual learning from UNESCOs school – each school do research and share information across Canada.

Sharmalene draws people back to the *little-green-book.ca* discussion forum. As well as the Canadian Biosphere Research Network site: www.biosphere-research.ca. Opens the floor for comments and questions.

Questions and Comments from table:

- Tension between communities and biosphere “managers”: *are community concerns part of the biosphere reserve conversation?*
 - Lots of misconceptions about what protection means because there are so many different designations and legislation, etc.
 - MPAs in Newfoundland were completely bottom up initiatives
 - There is a lack of trust for aboriginal community and other communities
 - However, there has been a shift in National Park/Government and First Nation cooperation on harvesting in protected areas

- In Tobeatic area, communities have been very involved in management process

Scott Slocombe delivers some closing thoughts. Thought about relationship between park and surroundings is one of the strengths of biosphere reserves. BRs have been strengthened in the last 5 years, hope to continue to build on these experiences. BRs have moved from participation (limited) to partnerships (more complex).

What do we integrate in BRs? Each place presents a unique challenge. So, there needs to be a variety of models to respond to these unique locations and situations. The question of values was discussed during the session; BRs can be a place to identify and discuss values. Scott thanks everyone for attending.

Sharmalene thanks everyone for attending and the session ends.