



UNESCO WORLD BIOSPHERE RESERVE – A BALANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATURE  
A MODEL REGION OF RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Riding Mountain UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve

## Annual Report Year End 2014



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Riding Mountain  
Biosphere Reserve



## **2014 Board of Directors**

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Don Huisman (Town of Erickson)

Wybo Vanderschuit (Member at Large)

## **Biosphere Reserves**

Biosphere reserves are designed to deal with these central questions: how can we reconcile the conservation of biodiversity and biological resources with their sustainable use?

An effective biosphere reserve involves natural and social scientists; conservation and development groups; management authorities and local communities -all working together on this complex issue.

The biosphere reserve network was launched in 1976 and has grown to include 631 reserves in 119 countries. The network is a key component in UNESCO's Man and Biosphere's objective for achieving a sustainable balance between the sometimes conflicting goals of conserving biological diversity, promoting economic development and maintaining associated cultural values. Biosphere reserves are sites where this objective is tested, refined, demonstrated and implemented.

Biosphere reserves are "areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems, or a combination thereof, which are internationally recognized within the framework of UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB)". Reserves are nominated by national governments; each reserve must meet a minimal set of criteria and adhere to a minimal set of conditions before being admitted to the Network.

### **Vision**

Ensuring the brightest future for our communities and generations to come.

### **Mission**

Fostering sustainable communities throughout the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve

### **Mandate**

Three functions of a biosphere reserve – biodiversity conservation, economic and social development and logistical support.

Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfill three complementary functions:

1. a conservation function, to preserve genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes;
2. a development function, to foster sustainable economic and human development, and
3. a logistic support function, to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

## **Background**

We need to be reminded that we are part of a large and encompassing picture. There are many issues facing environment, agriculture, industry and society in both the rural and urban community. If we strive to create and maintain healthy ecosystems and communities, the economic side of things should then be able to take care of itself.

One of the issues facing the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve (RMBR) is that of a fairly low public profile. In the past we've worked primarily in the background on issues of concern within the Biosphere Reserve (BR). We've been involved in encouraging and supporting issues of beaver, Tb, elk movement, wolf research, species at risk, corridor establishment, invasive species, climate change and land change over time, educational outreach and eco and agri-tourism.

However many folks, who live in and around the BR, don't know what a BR is let alone that they live in or near one or what they are all about. Some people think that we are only about "tree hugging" and others believe that we are a regulatory body that will tell folks what they can or cannot do. Not true – Biosphere Reserves have no regulatory power. The RMBR is concerned about biodiversity, healthy sustainable ecosystems and healthy sustainable communities. We hope that through providing a safe and non-threatening place to speak and reliable information on both sides of the issue people will make good, informed decisions, whatever the issue.

The following is a brief background about the concept of Biosphere Reserves, how it got started and how, as we proceed into the future that while we are focused on our small part of the "biosphere"; we are part of a much broader picture.

## **Background - United Nations, UNESCO, Man and Biosphere, Biosphere Reserves, Goals, Strategies and Conventions**

### **United Nations**

The United Nations is one of the world's most important intergovernmental organizations. It includes 192 sovereign countries or Member States, representing virtually every country in the world. Founded in 1945, just after the conclusion of World War II, the goal of the United Nations was to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living standards and human rights.

### **What is UNESCO?**

Headquartered in Paris, France, UNESCO was founded in 1945, shortly after the U.N. came into existence. UNESCO is the U.N.'s lead agency on matters relating to education, the sciences, culture, and communications. UNESCO has the following functions with respect to its four areas of interest:

1. To serve as a laboratory of ideas” encouraging new thinking and continuing reappraisal of current international concerns;
2. To be a clearinghouse for information, especially by trying to identify the most successful solutions to problems;
3. To help set standards for international agreements (including treaties) and, in some cases, to act as the secretariat (executive body) for these international agreements and treaties; and
4. To provide technical expertise to the national governments that are members of the United Nations.

## **Man and Biosphere**

What is the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Program?

The UNESCO Biosphere Conference in 1968 brought together representatives of government and non-governmental organizations to consider what should be done about threats to the biosphere that were being increasingly perceived by U.N. Member States. The delegates agreed that all governments should join in a broad, research-oriented program to reverse the trend. It was emphasized that establishment of reserves was important to meet scientific, educational, cultural and recreational needs. This came to be known as the biosphere reserve project.

MAB was launched in 1970, and was formally endorsed by Member States at the U.N. Conference on the Environment (the first Earth Summit) in 1972. The original aim of MAB was to establish protected areas representing the main ecosystems of the planet in which genetic resources could be protected and research and monitoring could be carried out. These protected areas were to be called Biosphere Reserves in reference to the MAB programs name.

Has the MAB program changed its objectives since it was formed?

Like all scientific programs, MAB has been refined over the years but still is committed to its original aims. Today, MAB is a set of related scientific research projects with three focuses:

- Minimizing the loss of biological diversity;
- Making people aware of how cultural diversity and biological diversity affect each other; and
- Promoting environmental sustainability through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

## **Biosphere Reserves**

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An effective biosphere reserve involves natural and social scientists; conservation and development groups; management authorities and local communities - all working together on this complex issue.

The biosphere reserve network was launched in 1976 and, as of November 2013, had grown to include 621 reserves in 117 countries. The network is a key component in MAB's objective for achieving a sustainable balance between the sometimes conflicting goals of conserving biological diversity, promoting economic development and maintaining associated cultural values. Biosphere reserves are sites where this objective is tested, refined, demonstrated and implemented.

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Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfill three complementary functions:

1. a conservation function, to preserve genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes;
2. a development function, to foster sustainable economic and human development, and
3. a logistic support function, to support demonstration projects, environmental education and training, and research and monitoring related to local, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development.

Physically, each biosphere reserve should contain three elements: one or more core areas, which are securely protected sites for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low-impact uses (such as education); a clearly identified buffer zone, which usually surrounds or adjoins the core areas and is used for co-operative activities compatible with sound ecological practices, including environmental education, recreation, ecotourism, and applied and basic research; and a flexible transition area, or area of co-operation, which may contain a variety of agricultural activities, settlements and other uses, and in which local communities, management agencies, scientists, non-governmental organizations (NGO), cultural groups, economic interests and other stakeholders work together to manage and sustainably develop the area's resources.

#### **Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve - overview**

- Designated in 1986 through application from three levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal – to UNESCO in Paris
- only 1 Biosphere Reserve in Manitoba, 16 Biosphere Reserves in Canada, 610 in 117 countries world-wide
- core protected area is Riding Mountain National Park (3000 sq km), zone of cooperation (12,000 sq km) includes 15 Rural Municipalities that surround the park

- 28,000 people live in Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve
- Important land feature is that it is a confluence of three ecozones – boreal forest, mixedwood forest and prairie grasslands

In light of the background just noted, Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve, while seemingly a relatively small area for our concerns regarding knowledge and research, is actually part of a much broader network of people and organizations with similar interests in many parts of the world. The research and monitoring that is done within this Biosphere Reserve feeds into a much larger body of work that is disseminated nationally and internationally and in many cases is used as a template for similar studies throughout the world.

In order to guide all Biosphere Reserves in the type of research that is imperative to reach their goals, several strategies have been put into practice over the years – In 1983, UNESCO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) convened in Minsk (Belarus). The Congress's activities gave rise in 1984 to an "Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves". In 1995 at the International Conference on Biosphere Reserve in Seville (Spain) the Seville Strategy was developed and in 2008 at the 3rd World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Madrid (Spain) came the document known as the Madrid Action Plan (MAP).

### **The Madrid Action Plan (MAP)**

The MAP aims to raise BRs to be the principal, internationally designated areas dedicated to sustainable development in the early 21st century. The focus is on developing models for global, national and local sustainability, and for BRs to serve as learning laboratories and platforms for policy professionals, research and scientific communities, management practitioners and stakeholder communities to work together to translate global principles of sustainable development into local relevant practices.

The biosphere reserve (BR) concept has proved its value beyond protected areas and is increasingly embraced by scientists, planners, policy makers and local communities to bring a variety of knowledge, scientific investigations and experiences to link biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development for human well-being.

During the years since the adoption of the Seville Strategy, global issues and problems have emerged or intensified, making it an imperative for the MAB Programme to adapt and change so as to effectively respond to these emerging challenges.

These major challenges seriously further exacerbate poverty and inequality and include:

- Accelerated climate change with consequences for societies and ecosystems;
- Accelerated loss of biological and cultural diversity with unexpected consequences that impact the ability of ecosystems to continue to provide services critical for human wellbeing;

- Rapid urbanization as a driver of environmental change.

The Madrid Action Plan (MAP) articulates actions, targets and success indicators, partnerships and other implementation strategies, and an evaluation framework for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) for the period of 2008 to 2013.

## Goals

### MAP's overall goals are to:

- anchor the research, training, capacity building and demonstration agendas of MAB at the interface between the interlinked issues of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and socio-economic and cultural well-being of human communities;
- enable the active use of places included in the WNBR as learning sites for sustainable development, i.e. demonstrating approaches to enhance co-operation amongst epistemic (academic), political, practitioner and stakeholder communities to address and solve context specific problems to improve environmental, economic and social conditions for human and ecosystem well-being;
- collect, collate, synthesize and disseminate lessons learnt from more than 30 years of the work of the MAB Programme and the WNBR as well as their planned actions during 2008-2013 to benefit international, national and local efforts to meet global targets, significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 that are linked to mitigating and adapting to global climatic change; and contribute to the emergence of a new generation of professionals and practitioners who can serve as ambassadors and managers/ coordinators for linking global environmental agendas to national and local development aspirations.

### The major challenges tackled by MAP are:

#### **1) Ecosystem-wide pressures from global urbanization**

- Rapidly changing and spatially shifting population densities, e.g. half of the world's population today lives in urban landscapes, a proportion projected to increase to 66% over the next 50 years
- Urbanization as a most complex mosaic of land cover and multiple land uses which creates significant knowledge gaps
- Sustainable urban planning is vital

#### **2) Impacts of climate change on societies and ecosystems**

- UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and its scientific panel IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is confident that the accelerated changes to our climate are anthropogenic – caused by humans

b. A rise in mean global temperature greater than 2 degree Celsius will mean that two billion people across the globe will face water shortages and at least 40 million more people will be exposed to malaria in Africa. – who would have thought that West Nile would be an issue in Manitoba 20 years ago

c. 30% of species will be put at risk of extinction, desertification will increase, positive feedback mechanisms in the climate will further reduce tropical forests

***3) Accelerated loss of biological and cultural diversity with system shifts and unexpected consequences that impact the ability of ecosystems to provide services critical for human well-being.***

a. Support by ecosystems will become more critical, e.g. nutrient cycling, soil formation and primary production

b. Provision of ecosystem services is not guaranteed, e.g. food, fresh water, wood and fiber and fuel

c. Regulation is changing, e.g. climate, flood and disease, water purification

d. Cultural function is put at risk, e.g. aesthetics, spirituality, education and recreation

**ACTIONS**

**1. COOPERATION, MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

Biosphere reserves are the principal means for achieving the objectives of the MAB Programme and the visible instrument through which UNESCO as a whole could demonstrate its commitment to sustainability through policy-relevant site-based research, capacity enhancement and demonstration.

**2. ZONATION – LINKING FUNCTIONS TO SPACE**

While we know that biosphere reserves should contain one or more core areas, buffer zones, and a transition area (area of cooperation) to accommodate their multiple functions with new challenges, it is important to shift towards a more integrated zoning. The transition area – area of cooperation, in addition to the development function, can also consider conservation/environmental goals and elements. Equally the core area, in addition to its conservation function, contributes to a range of ecosystem services which, in terms of the development functions, can be calculated in economic terms (e.g. carbon sequestration, soil stabilization, supply of clean water and air, etc.).

**3. SCIENCE AND CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT**

Ecosystems provide goods and services to all humanity, but the sustainable use of these benefits is challenging in the face of rapid climatic, environmental, social, and political changes.

To cope with these changes, biosphere reserves play a crucial role in generating knowledge on how natural systems work and how to maintain ecosystem services and resilient ecosystems while at the same time using these systems to create income, employment and wealth.

Wide cooperation from institutions and stakeholders is needed within biosphere reserves to foster communication among scientists, policy makers, private companies and others. In order to achieve this, there is a need for a significant strengthening of both science and capacity in the WNBR also with a view to applying scientific expertise to global biodiversity management and conservation.

Both scientific as well as traditional knowledge from local and indigenous people is needed for adaptation to change and building resilience.

Biosphere reserves provide an excellent opportunity to play an active role as learning sites for sustainable development in order to implement national policies and strategies for the Decade for Education on Sustainable Development.

Relevant national, regional and global authorities should be encouraged to use biosphere reserve management issues and problems as research questions for multi-disciplinary institutes of higher learning.

#### **4. PARTNERSHIPS**

At all times, the strength and opportunity of partnerships should be drawn upon to cooperatively develop the functions of a biosphere reserve. There is a need to focus efforts on building and improving upon existing partnerships and alliances, championing new initiatives, and creating new partnerships and projects that involve many stakeholder groups. Cooperative activities range from biodiversity conservation to ecosystem management and sustainable use of environmental goods and services.

The 'added value' of partnerships is improved effectiveness of management strategies, change of attitude within the stakeholders themselves, better mutual understanding, more informed decision making, increased awareness, and technical and financial support of the management of a biosphere reserve.

**The Riding Mountain UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve**

**is part of a world of good people doing a world of good.**

## Looking to the Future

During the past year of 2014 the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve has moved forward despite the challenges of having very little funds. We continued to take an on the advisory role for building sustainable practices and consensus in a number of initiatives taken throughout the year.

The Riding Mountain UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve continues to make strides during the past year as we move forward with our goals for 2014 which included:

- Fund Development project to create a more sustainable organization.
- Strategic planning
- Sustainable funding
- Relationships with provincial government
- Bovine Tb Stakeholders Advisory Committee -Local Group.
- Educational programs/presentations focusing on native species, invasive species and water stewardship.
- Opportunities for local and regional residents and tourists to reach local producers, artisans and agri-tourism groups.
- Recommendations of the 2012 Periodic Review

With limited funding 2014 found the board or the RMBR struggling to continue with ongoing programs. The main priority was to work toward finding some way to gain sustainable funding for the RMBR through municipal member support and through provincial support through the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship. As a result of the limited funding the Executive Director volunteered her services for the entire year in order to continue to move the organization forward as there were no funds to pay for this position.

Our main focus in 2014 was to complete our Fund Development project in researching funding opportunities, determining and refining potential funder lists as well as updating the Case for Support and completing a feasibility survey. We also continued to work on developing strategic plan for the RMBR.

Meetings with Municipal Councils allowed for discussions of what the RMBR is doing and the needs of the municipalities. We also discussed possible funding strategies and their continued support of the Biosphere Reserve concept. We continued to work at forging new partnerships, gathering ideas and generating new projects with long-standing partners attended a number of meetings, conferences and symposiums.

We have promoted our Water Stewardship Educational Package “Living by the Water’s Edge” and supported Riding Mountain National Parks initiation process to declare the main beach at Clear Lake a Blue Flag Beach. We continue to have an RMBR representative on the Manitoba Invasive Species Council and applied for funding to support a regional Weed Spotter Program through the Council. Other

projects that funding has been applied for includes Oral History of the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve, Community Gardens pilot project in Erickson.

Other ongoing projects include continued facilitation of the Tb Stakeholders Advisory Committee, hosting GPS Events and numerous GPS education programs, presenting education programs for over 800 students and adults on topics relating to native and invasive species, cultural and geological history and pre-history of the region, water stewardship and human impact on ecosystems. We continue to promote local farmers and artisans through our "At the Farm Gate" project through workshops on "Sustainable Food Networks" and "At the Farm Gate" Markets all of which help to develop sustainable tourism opportunities. As well we continue to review different approaches to the recommendations to the 2012 Periodic Review.

## **BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS**

### Charitable Tax Status

The RMBR continues to maintain its charitable tax status and has received a number of donations in-kind and on behalf of others. While the amount received this is small the significance the ability to be able to receive these donations and be able to issue a charitable tax receipt is invaluable to this organization. The RMBR has also shared information that has helped this biosphere reserve gain its Charitable Tax Status with others in the network.

### Fund Development

In 2014 the Fund Development project received 20 K from Riding Mountain National Park to move forward on our objectives of refining and enhancing the comprehensive Case for Support for the RMBR, to provide training in prospect research methodology, major donor cultivation and solicitation and to assess the potential funding goals through a feasibility study. . The RMBR also put forward an additional 10 K toward this project.

The feasibility study was developed and implemented to determine the RMBRs potential for large scale fund raising. Documents were created for engagement and public awareness and included the refinement of the Case for Support and Summary of Proposed Projects as well a number of Fund Development Workshops were held for board members, general members and the general public. The general consensus was that while the endeavors of the RMBR were believed to be extremely valuable the general public was unaware or uncertain of the role of UNESCO, the Man and Biosphere program and that the RMBR was not well positioned at this time to implement large scale fundraising.

Funding through Membership - Engagement of our municipal partners through new approaches for financial support included contribution support based on roll numbers. Five municipalities took advantage of this strategy to commit more than the base amount of membership dues.

Fundraising Strategies - Fundraising activities undertaken raised funds as well as public awareness of the RMBR. These events included Trivia Nights, Meat Draws, Lunches and the "At the Farm Gate" markets.

Sustainable Funding and Agency Representation - Work continues in enhancing the engagement of municipal, provincial and federal government departments through meetings, discussions and other forms of communication. A representative of the provincial government Conservation and Water Stewardship now sits on the board of the RMBR. Discussions with the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship for future sustainable funding for the RMBR are ongoing and tentative commitments have been made.

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### Strategic Planning

The RMBR concentrated on board engagement, assessment and next steps in identifying priorities for the future of the RMBR. Three key areas of development identified including sustainable funding and resources, priorities and relevancy, and engagement and outreach.

Strategic Regional Community Planning - The Board of Directors has affirmed the launch of a strategic planning process for the Riding Mountain UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve (RMBR). This endeavour will bring our communities together to discuss the future potential for the RMBR and to establish our direction so we can achieve lasting sustainability.

This new planning effort follows naturally from our work during the last several years and is timely as the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve programme under UNESCO has recently released an evaluation of the Man and Biosphere Reserve Madrid Action Plan and the final draft MAB Strategy – 2015-2025. These are an important guiding documents that will help us reposition ourselves to adapt to a rapidly changing economic environment.

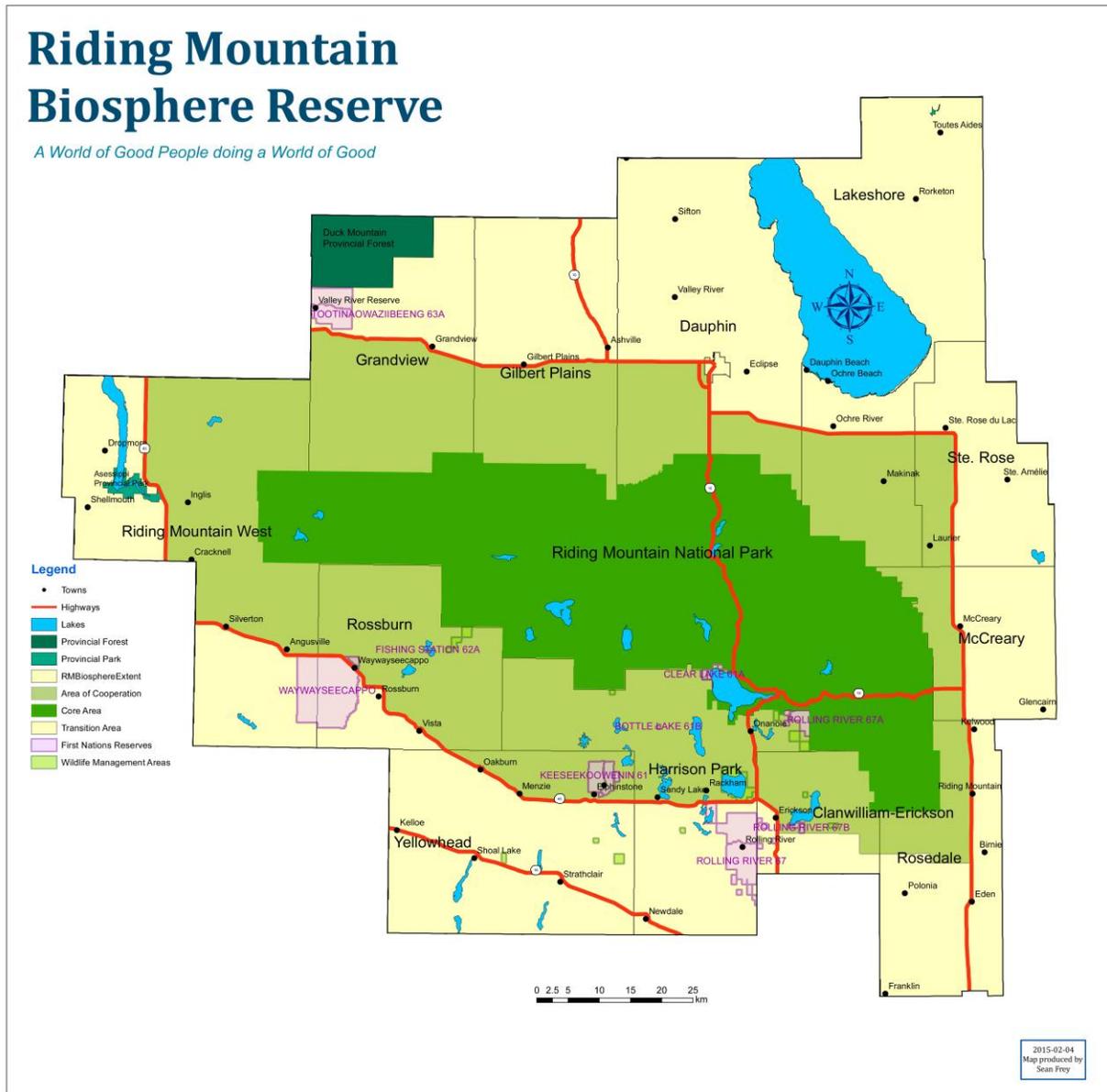
Some key themes that keep emerging and will drive our focus are: Cooperation within the Biosphere, Partnerships, Tourism and Economic Development, Science and Research, Climate Change and Rural Adaptation, Urbanization and its implications for the region.

Another aspect of strategic planning that will be covered is a new and revitalized governance structure that will review the mandate of the RMBR

### Zonation

With the amalgamation of municipalities in the biosphere reserve the RMBR now has twelve municipalities therefore names have been revised and boundaries have been shifted. Since inception the extent of area included in the RMBR has been identified via Riding Mountain National Park (RMNP)

(core) and municipal boundaries (area of cooperation). UNESCO MAB has indicated that they would like to see three areas of zonation including core, buffer and transition. Three options have been researched and three maps generated. All utilize RMNP as the core protected area. The variations include incorporating different land types for buffer (known as "area of cooperation") and the remaining area as "transition" zone. Scenario 1 would have the area of cooperation lying within the boundaries of RMNP, Scenario 2 would include lands provincially or municipally protected and Scenario 3 incorporates an area of intense research of wildlife and other biological and geological indicators known as the Riding Mountain Eradication Area (RMEA).



Scenario 3 – possible zonation for the RMBR

## **CONSERVE NATURAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

### RMBR and the Manitoba Invasive Species Council

Wybo Vanderschuit, newly elected director for the RMBR, was appointed to represent the RMBR on the Manitoba Invasive Species Council. An application for funding to move forward with the RMBR Invasive Species Network Weed Spotter program was submitted to the Manitoba Invasive Species Council however the Council decided that they would like to run the program themselves. The RMBR is grateful that the project was determined to be significant enough to be broadened in this capacity.

### At the Farm Gate

The RMBR created and further developed and facilitated "At the Farm Gate", a project that highlights local sustainably managed producers, and local artisans and promotes locally made products, organic and non-organic, to both visitors to the RMBR and locals alike.

Three "At the Farm Gate" markets were organized this year bringing over 1200 people to view and purchase these local products. The "At the Farm Gate" web page continues to be updated on our website to help promote the participants to the program, highlight their products and allow for easier connections between the vendors and potential customers. This project also helps to highlight the RMBR as an area that promotes the "buy local" concept and especially buy "Made in the Biosphere" concept.

The end result is the formation of a group of local entrepreneurial producers and artisans from around the RMBR who are in closer contact with each other and are more knowledgeable about each other's product. These people have become ambassadors for the Biosphere Reserve concept as well as for the region in which they live and work. The people who are their customers have come to learn about the RMBR and biosphere concept and are making the choice to purchase their goods locally from sustainably managed producers and local artisans time and again. The "At the Farm Gate" project helps to support and encourage environmentally sustainable local farm entrepreneurs which in turn helps to create economically sustainable communities within the RMBR.

### Sustainable Food Networks

RMBR has also begun dialog in the northern portion of the Biosphere Reserve regarding sustainable food networks on a larger scale but still supporting direct marketing. Local food initiatives are the food organizations, activities and businesses that support the creation of local food systems in which food is grown, processed and sold within the same geographical region. The ultimate goal of the local food movement is to develop self-sufficiency through complete local food systems that include all the pieces of the food chain (production, processing, packaging and distribution). As agriculture is no longer paying off for many small farmers there is some evidence that farmers can increase their share of the food dollar through local food initiatives by marketing through farmer's markets.

## **LAND MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### TbSAC – Local Group

The RMBR Chairs, facilitates and organizes the Bovine Tuberculosis Stakeholders Advisory Committee (TbSAC), a group of local stakeholders from within the RMBR, who are committed to finding workable, sustainable and environmentally conscious solutions to the issue of Bovine Tb in elk and cattle within the Riding Mountain Eradication Area (RMEA). The group discusses the issue from a user standpoint, be it cattle producer, hunter, guide, or tourism operator. The results and recommendations of the TbSAC go directly to the Superintendent of Riding Mountain National Park. As Chair of this group the RMBR hosts informational workshops and open house meetings disseminate information regarding work being done by Parks Canada and other organizations in regard to Bovine Tb in the RMEA. The end result of this endeavor is more feedback from local stakeholders who are being impacted by Bovine Tb.

This year the TbSAC – Local Group met in July. Meeting with representatives of MAFRI, CFIA, Manitoba Conservation and RMNP has given the group valuable information as to how the Tb program is going in each of these agencies. The Tb Task Group has indicated that they would welcome a representative of the group to attend their meetings to make presentation or recommendations as they do value the advice of the group.

If all goes well and no further Tb positive animals are detected in wildlife and domestic cattle we will be coming to the end of rigorous testing in the RMEA within the next five years. Some monitoring will continue in the areas known as the core areas of Tb in the Municipalities of Rosburn and Grandview. Further surveillance and monitoring will be ongoing through government inspected facilities at slaughter for domestic animals and limited monitoring and testing of wildlife in RMNP.

### Wolf Management

The RMBR organized and hosted a meeting with a multitude of agencies both governmental and non-governmental to get an update on the issue of wolves in RMNP and the broader region of the RMBR. The intention was to share the best and most recent information on predators in the area with each other and so that this information could be better communicated to the public as well. The core protected area of the RMBR is home to a genetically isolated species of wolf, true grey wolves (*Canis lupus L*) otherwise known as old world wolves once common across Eurasia and North America. There is an estimated population of approximately 69 wolves in the core protected area making up approximately 14 packs. The RMBR's area of cooperation has both new world and eastern (*Canis lupus lycaon*) and North American native coyote (*Canis latrans*) and a hybrid of both these types.

In the 2014 hunting season the hunting of wolves in the area surrounding Riding Mountain National Park was reinstated after nearly 20 years because of a perceived increase of wolves on the landscape in the agricultural areas. At the time of disallowing hunting of wolves in GHA 23/23A the wolf population in RMNP was estimated to be less than 50 animals. The impact on the remaining population of this genetically isolated population as a result of the reinstatement was key to the discussion.

## **RESEARCH, MONITORING, EDUCATION, OUTREACH AND TRAINING**

### Native Species Garden

The native species gardens project that was implemented a number of years ago as a research project to determine the viability and encourage the utilization of native plant species in both rural and urban home landscaping rather than more exotic species.

This project continues to be a success and this year satellite native species gardens will be planted in the core protected area of the RMBR in the town site of Wasagaming in Riding Mountain National Park. This project will not only help to encourage local cottagers and cabin owners the importance of utilizing native plant species in their landscape within the national park but will continue to build awareness of the RMBR and its projects through signage regarding the RMBR and its mandated concept at these gardens. Furthermore, education programs will be designed to be delivered inside the national park along this theme.

### Community Gardens

Working in partnership with a local seniors community group the RMBR will be turning the green space adjacent to the RMBR Erickson Office into a community garden. Funding was applied for to build, easy to access, raised bed garden boxes for seniors and those that may have mobility issues as well as lower income families. Ten of these garden boxes will be ready for the 2015 garden season.

The intent is to utilize otherwise unproductive green space in a way that will benefit the local senior community in regards to connecting with each other and with the young people of the community. This project will encourage workshops and events that will inspire both young and old to transfer information regarding food production and to support other local food growers in the RMBR.

Local high school students will be involved in growing transplants for the gardens, getting the beds ready for planting and helping in the harvest activities. The gardeners will be encouraged to purchase their transplants from the local high school or local green houses as well as transfer their knowledge to those who may not be as knowledgeable about gardening or growing their own food in this region. The gardeners are also requested to give 10% of their harvest to local food banks. This pilot project has gained interest from a number of other communities throughout the RMBR to help with similar projects.

### Parkwest School Division

The RMBR maintained its involvement with a 2.5-day outdoor classroom experience with the Parkwest School Division, ongoing since 2008. RMBR along with Friends of RMNP staff offered RMBR, GPS, Archaeology programs to the 140 Grade 6 students that take part from the Parkwest School Division. Intakes took place Camp Wannakumbac – May 26th to 29<sup>th</sup>.

### Other Partnerships

The Lake Group - Along with other stakeholder groups, the RMBR is a member of the Clear Lake Watershed Working Group (*Lake Group*). The Lake Group was formed to be an ongoing forum for

discussion specific to Clear Lake in Riding Mountain National Park, the core protected area of the RMBR, and its watershed and to develop broad commitments towards actions which will assist in attaining a vision for the Lake.

The RMBR promoted its Water Stewardship Educational Package “Living by the Water’s Edge” and supported Riding Mountain National Parks initiation process to declare the main beach at Clear Lake a Blue Flag Beach.

## 2015/2016 Projects

### 1. Conserve Biodiversity, Maintain Ecosystem Services and Foster the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Native Species Garden in RMNP - The native species gardens project that was implemented a number of years ago as a research project to determine the viability and encourage the utilization of native plant species in both rural and urban home landscaping rather than more exotic species. This project continues to be a success and this year satellite native species gardens will be planted in the core protected area of the RMBR in the town site of Wasagaming in Riding Mountain National Park. This project will not only help to encourage local cottagers and cabin owners the importance of utilizing native plant species in their landscape within the national park but will continue to build awareness of the RMBR and its projects through signage regarding the RMBR and its mandated concept at these gardens. Furthermore, education programs will be designed to be delivered inside the national park along this theme.

ALUS project - Working with the Little Saskatchewan River Conservation District on highlighting Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) projects in the RMBR

Tb Stakeholders Advisory Committee - the RMBR will continue to work with local stakeholders to find finding workable, sustainable and environmentally conscious solutions to the issue of Bovine Tb in elk and cattle within the Riding Mountain Eradication Area (RMEA) through meetings and the dissemination of information.

Interagency Wolf Management – The RMBR will continue to organize and host meetings with a multitude of agencies both governmental and non-governmental and needed regarding the issue of wolves in RMNP and the broader region of the RMBR. Research on how the genetically isolated wolf population will adapt to environmental changes on the landscape.

### 2. Support Mitigation and Adaptation to Global Environmental Change, including Climate Change

### 3. Facilitate Sustainability Science and Education for Sustainable Development

Dissemination of Scientific Research - Over the next year the RMBR will be making available the scientific research that has been conducted within the core protected area of the RMBR in conjunction with Riding Mountain National Park. This information which is not accessible to the general public in any fashion at this time will be made available. TbSAC, water stewardship, Invasive species, wolf management meetings, making the science accessible to the general public on the RMBR website.

Public Awareness - working in collaboration with Assiniboine Community College Media Arts Program the RMBR will be producing a number of short videos that promote the environmentally sustainable projects of and in the RMBR such as the At the Farm Gate project, Community Gardens and ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) and the RMBR in general. These short videos will help to convey the concept of what the biosphere is, why it is important and what it is doing. Continuing along the vein of public awareness the RMBR will continue to update the website and its social media sites to move toward becoming more of a hub of information for the entire region.

### 4. Contribute to Building Thriving Societies, Economies, and Human Settlements

Strategic Regional Community Planning - The Board of Directors has affirmed the launch of a strategic planning process for the Riding Mountain UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve (RMBR). This endeavour will bring our communities together to discuss the future potential for the RMBR and to establish our direction so we can achieve lasting sustainability.

This new planning effort follows naturally from our work during the last several years and is timely as the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve programme under UNESCO has recently released an evaluation of the Man and Biosphere Reserve Madrid Action Plan and the final draft MAB Strategy – 2015-2025. These are an important guiding documents that will help us reposition ourselves to adapt to a rapidly changing economic environment.

Some key themes that keep emerging and will drive our focus are: Cooperation within the Biosphere, Partnerships, Tourism and Economic Development, Science and Research, Climate Change and Rural Adaptation, Urbanization and its implications for the region.

Another aspect of strategic planning that will be covered is a new and revitalized governance structure that will review the mandate of the RMBR

At the Farm Gate - a buy local initiative highlighting local producers and artisans and supporting important sustainable food system networks. The RMBR will continue to host these events in the upcoming year. Two markets are held in the spring and fall of the year and the website will be updated to include a video of the market to promote a higher awareness of the projects of the RMBR.

Community Gardens - working in partnership with a local seniors community group the RMBR will be turning the green space adjacent to the RMBR Erickson Office into a community garden. Funding has been received to build, easy to access, raised bed garden boxes for seniors and those that may have mobility issues as well as lower income families. Ten of these garden boxes will be ready for the 2015 garden season.

The intent is to utilize otherwise unproductive green space in a way that will benefit the local senior community in regards to connecting with each other and with the young people of the community. This project will encourage workshops and events that will inspire both young and old to transfer information regarding food production and to support other local food growers in the RMBR.

Local high school students will be involved in growing transplants for the gardens, getting the beds ready for planting and helping in the harvest activities. The gardeners will be encouraged to purchase their transplants from the local high school or local green houses as well as transfer their knowledge to those who may not be as knowledgeable about gardening or growing their own food in this region. The gardeners are also requested to give 10% of their harvest to local food banks. This pilot project has gained interest from a number of other communities throughout the RMBR to help with similar projects.

Developing further relationships with Provincial Government, other agencies, non-governmental agencies and organizations - over the last year members of the Board have met with the Minister of the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship in regards to receiving sustainable funding as well as continuing to work with various environmental and agricultural agencies to collaborate on projects, workshops and events. We will also concentrate our efforts to partner with other groups and agencies such as conservation districts, Nature Conservancy of Canada as well as local groups such as Friends of RMNP, educational institutions and seniors organizations. Connecting with First Nations of the RMBR is also a priority to determine where we can collaborate on issues or projects.