

Appendix 1

A Cooperation Plan for the Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve

[**Note:** This Plan follows a general format adopted by the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association]

Preamble

A biosphere reserve is an area designated by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) to demonstrate innovative approaches to living and working in harmony with nature. As of April 2004, there were 440 biosphere reserves in 97 countries, each of which represents one of the world's major ecosystems.

The three major functions of a biosphere reserve are: Sustainable Development, Conservation of Biodiversity, and Logistic Support. This latter term refers to actions such as research, monitoring, education, training, or demonstration projects which various partners in a biosphere reserve provide in support of actions promoting conservation and sustainability. Biosphere reserves in Canada tend to refer to this third function as Capacity Building, the term also used here.

UNESCO encourages biosphere reserves to develop management or coordination plans to guide their work. Like other biosphere reserves in Canada, the proposed Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve has no authority over land and water use, hence everything it fosters depends on cooperation. This cooperation plan has been developed for the residents, businesses and other organizations and agencies of the proposed biosphere reserve. The Plan interprets the three functions of a biosphere reserve in terms of accomplishments, current actions and challenges that best reflect the local or regional circumstances. It is meant to encourage innovation, foster pride in local achievements, and create a desire to share experiences with others in Canada and elsewhere.

Vision of the Proposed Biosphere Reserve

In 1996, the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Foundation presented the concept and vision of the “Georgian Bay Littoral” as follows:

The simplest and most logical way to look at the Bay is as a single entity, a region we call the “Littoral” – the geographic term for an area that depends on or is related to the shore. Like a rainbow stretching for hundreds of miles, the Littoral is composed of separate but interdependent bands. From west to east they are:

- the open waters of Georgian Bay
- the outer islands and channels
- the Thirty Thousand Islands and their water-based communities
- the immediate shoreline of the mainland
- the inland lakes and rivers with no road access
- the road-accessed inland lakes and recreation areas
- the land-based permanent service centres
- the land transport corridor

Each of these bands has its own character, concerns and potential. But they are all dependent on each other for their economic and environmental health. By recognizing the natural unity of the Littoral, we can reunite the bands of the rainbow. We can transform it into a single economically prosperous area, based on ecotourism, instead of a series of fragmented and struggling communities whose needs and interrelationships are too often unrecognized.”

[“The Littoral: a new vision for Georgian Bay”, Georgian Bay Update, Summer 1996]

This vision and the biosphere reserve concept were soon recognized to be mutually compatible, to the extent that this vision for the Littoral has been adopted to guide the proposed Georgian Bay Littoral Biosphere Reserve (GBLBR). Besides the vision, local consultations about the proposed biosphere reserve revealed a “Georgian Bay feeling” – a profound feeling of attachment and sense of place which is widely shared by people in the Littoral. This cooperation plan reflects the practical expression of this feeling.

Outline of the Cooperation Plan

The GBA Foundation and the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve Inc. (GBBR Inc.) are the proponents of this Biosphere Reserve. The Foundation is the original and funding proponent. It was established in 1995 as a voluntary community response to the growing need for major capital and research funding for projects supporting the Bay’s environment and the quality of life for all residents and visitors to enjoy. The goals of the Foundation are: “to educate residents of the Georgian Bay Area and the public on issues of environmental protection, conservation, safety and preservation of the water and natural features in the Georgian Bay Area of Ontario by conducting conferences, workshops, and seminars on these issues; and to conduct

research, in conjunction with qualified educational institutes and others, into water and land quality matters to add to the public knowledge and appreciation of these matters”.

In 1998, the GBA Foundation created the GBBR Inc. to coordinate the biosphere reserve program after the nomination is approved. It had its first official Board meeting in February 2004. The new Directors and Officers of this corporation are people, who as individuals, are affiliated with the range of primary stakeholders within the proposed biosphere reserve. They include three people from aboriginal communities, three other permanent residents from the area, and two each from the cottage and boating communities. The significance of this representation is that each of what some people had perceived as four traditional “warring factions” in the biosphere reserve area are now fully involved.

While the nomination was created and funded by the Foundation, it is now obvious that the individual credibility of the GBBR Inc. Board members has broadened the base of support for the nomination across the biosphere reserve area. This in turn, made it easier for government representatives to give their full support to the nomination, and to the work of the biosphere reserve.

In addition, GBBR Inc. has begun to develop linkages to area-wide information and databases for use by various groups, help coordinate, where it can, initiatives taken by others that help fulfill the functions of a biosphere reserve, and report on conditions, trends, and issues from the larger-scale and longer-term perspective of the Littoral region.

The GBBR Inc. works in close partnerships with key stakeholder groups, as noted below. This cooperation plan first summarizes what has been undertaken so far to lay the basis for a biosphere reserve. It then identifies strategic directions and some immediate priorities for the next few years under the three headings of sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and capacity building. It also notes the roles of partner organizations, and identifies tools and resources for priority actions to implement this cooperation plan. The provisions of this Plan will be reviewed and updated by the GBBR Inc. from time-to-time.

Sustainable Development

The future economic success of the Littoral area depends largely on sustainable “smart growth” tourism. This in turn depends upon preserving the unique ecosystems and environmental quality of the area, and assuring the sustainable use of water and land resources by different user groups. To this end, the GBA Foundation has:

- supported the provincial government’s concept of the Great Lakes Heritage Coast while promoting the importance of local participation and partnerships with coastal communities to implement it (Please see Appendix 3)
- funded a “smart growth” tourism study that promotes the concept of destination nodes with service facilities, road access, and associated “loop tours” that can be taken from these locations
- endorsed the campaign to “bring the Port back to Port Severn” as part of the gateway to the coast component of the heritage coast concept
- worked closely with cottagers, boaters, marina operators and others to develop a Georgian Bay Boaters and Cottagers Code of Conduct and other agreed practices which help reconcile some divergent interests in recreational use of the Bay while also protecting environmental quality
- initiated extensive volunteer-based environmental quality monitoring for nearshore areas subject to degradation from waste disposal or eutrophication
- launched initiatives with provincial and federal ministries and industry to assure that open net cage aquaculture is truly sustainable in the shared public waters in Georgian Bay
- worked with the provincial government and other stakeholders to change the fishing regulations to protect and begin to restore the local sport fishery
- promoted monitoring of ozone levels and particulate matter by the Ministry of the Environment, and the provision of air quality reports for the area
- launched Georgian Baykeeper in 2003, as a member of the North American Waterkeeper Alliance, and based on several years experience with community marine patrols to promote public safety, water quality monitoring, and education about water-based recreation and environmental issues
- cooperated with the Muskoka Heritage Foundation to extend the “Dark Skies” project.

- continue to foster sustainable tourism in ways that demonstrate how a biosphere reserve can promote community economic sustainability as well as conservation of ecological values
- continue to monitor problem areas and work with other partners and stakeholders to restore and maintain environmental quality

Immediate Priorities

- starting with Port Severn as a demonstration model, promote “smart growth” tourism in cooperation with “gateway” communities and coastal hamlets to demonstrate effective ways for the Great Lakes Heritage Coast concept to be implemented through involvement of local coastal communities
- work as a partner with First Nations to help develop their spiritual tourism opportunities as a distinctive component of sustainable tourism
- continue to work with different water-based user or recreation groups and regulatory agencies to help develop user-guided “management regimes” to reconcile potential conflicts of interest among different groups on Georgian Bay
- equip the Georgian Baykeeper operation.

Conservation of Biodiversity

Conservation of biodiversity in the proposed biosphere reserve has been secured largely by the national and provincial parks and conservation reserves which serve as the core areas and buffer zones. These are also an important base for the provincial Great Lakes Heritage Coast designation. However, more field information about the occurrences of plant and animal associations was sought, especially for some of the new conservation reserves, a number of the outer islands, and in some of the more inaccessible sites on the mainland away from the coast. This additional information can help develop priorities for conservation actions. To this end, the GBA Foundation has:

- strongly supported the joint venture between the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Georgian Bay Land Trust (MNR/NCC/

- GBLTF) to develop biological inventories for over 70 priority sites undertaken in varying degrees of detail by staff from the Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre and other agencies during the summers of 2001 and 2002
- funded the purchase of the IKONOS high resolution satellite imagery of the proposed biosphere reserve area for use in wetland, forest and other research
 - strongly supported the work of the Georgian Bay Land Trust Foundation and their conservation acquisitions through purchases of properties, easements, or arranging for donations
 - funded studies by a consulting firm to undertake landscape spatial (GIS) analyses for conservation purposes for the entire area of the proposed biosphere reserve
 - established 22 biodiversity monitoring plots using protocols adopted by the Ecosystem Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN) of Environment Canada
 - established a ~5 km transect to record lichen growth on trees as an indicator of cumulative effects of air quality on forest ecosystem health
 - participated in public education and awareness programs for wildlife, e.g. nuisance bears, massasauga rattlesnakes, zebra mussels, transmission of West Nile virus
 - encouraged individuals in membership organizations to participate in volunteer monitoring programs, e.g. marsh monitoring, occurrences of reptiles, breeding birds
 - begun the development of youth programs to help monitor some indicator species.

Strategic Directions

- participate in the preparation and/or review of management plans for federal and provincial parks and for conservation reserves that constitute the core areas and buffer zones for the proposed biosphere reserve
- maintain and extend, where warranted, volunteer-based biodiversity monitoring in cooperation with EMAN and other organizations
- foster environmentally sensitive, harmonized planning for land and water use in local municipalities
- explore opportunities for productive cooperation with forest stewardship organizations

Immediate Priorities

- set up long-term arrangements to maintain biodiversity monitoring plots and transects to monitor ecosystem health
- help ensure that the results from the OMNR/NCC/GBLTF inventories of priority sites are taken into account properly in the development of management plans for parks and conservation reserves, and in local municipal planning
- continue to collaborate with Parks Canada in the “greater ecosystem” concept of the Georgian Bay Islands National Park

Capacity Building

The key for developing the biosphere reserve and extending community and public support for it lies in communication strategies and in consolidating data and information from multiple sources. These can be used to provide a “Littoral” scale interpretation of conditions, trends, and issues associated with sustainable development and biodiversity conservation which is one of the distinctive contributions of a biosphere reserve. To this end, the GBA Foundation has:

- created the GBBR Inc. that is acquiring, maintaining and disseminating information from different sources to different constituencies in a fair, unbiased manner
- maintained a website with links to different information sources (<http://www.georgianbay.ca>)
- continued to raise funds that are used as seed money or matching funds to carry out pilot projects on various subjects that also relate to the functions of a biosphere reserve
- sponsored workshops and community meetings on a range of topics of public interest

Strategic Directions

- identify information and databases that would be useful for the purposes of a biosphere reserve and negotiate terms for access and the use of them

- involve a growing variety of stakeholders in reviewing, revising, and updating this cooperation plan from time to time and have components of the cooperation plan become recognized formally as part of the operational plans of other agencies and organizations
- develop the reporting capacity and information linkages for users of the biosphere reserve

Immediate Priorities

- make additional appointments to the Board of GBBR Inc., and engage them in a process to develop the organization's major roles and priorities in fostering the biosphere reserve
- develop a "world-class" website with links to all partner organizations
- develop a communications and fund-raising strategy

Roles of Biosphere Reserve Partners

Major Partners

The Georgian Bay Association

The GBA is a not-for-profit umbrella group founded in 1916. It now represents 20 resident associations and 4,200 families on the eastern and northern shores of Georgian Bay and the adjacent inland lakes and water bodies. GBA's mission "is to work with water-based communities and other stakeholders to ensure the careful stewardship of the greater Georgian Bay environment and to promote the quiet enjoyment of its diverse and finite spaces".

The Georgian Bay Land Trust Foundation

The Trust was formed in 1991 "to preserve the unique archipelago and its adjacent water bodies which lie along the eastern shore and North Channel of Georgian Bay that are of ecological, geological and historical importance, and to promote the appreciation of this special

area". The Trust works in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance, and the US Land Trust Alliance.

Georgian Bay Islands National Park

This is a key core area for the proposed biosphere reserve. National park staff have provided information and data from landscape analyses for use by the proponents of the biosphere reserve. There will also be informal cooperation on matters relating to the "greater ecosystem" concept based on the national park.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

The proponents of the biosphere reserve have worked closely with staff of the Ministry on matters relating to sports fishing in Georgian Bay, the biological inventories of priority sites carried out in 2001-2002, and on aspects of the Great Lakes Heritage Coast concept. They will also keep in touch with matters relating to conservation reserves which serve as the buffer zone for the proposed biosphere reserve.

Ontario Parks (within OMNR)

It manages five of the core areas in the proposed biosphere reserve. The proponents of the proposed biosphere reserve have participated in consultations or other activities associated with at least three of the areas, and will continue to do so as may be appropriate.

Township of The Archipelago and Township of Georgian Bay

These townships have municipal planning and other local responsibilities for most of the littoral zone in the proposed biosphere reserve.

Other Partners

Canadian Coast Guard

With support from members of the Alliance for Boaters and Cottagers, the GBA Foundation provided funding for the Coast Guard to install and maintain a Cognashene By-Pass Channel and the Outside Channel (in the open waters of the Bay) over a five-year period, 1996-2001.

Canadian Power & Sail Squadrons

The Parry Sound Unit of the Squadrons provides instruction on boating safety on all phases of seamanship and navigation. It works closely with other partners on this and related matters.

Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN), Environment Canada

As stated by EMAN, the network is made up of linked organizations and individuals involved in ecological monitoring in Canada to better detect, describe, and report on ecosystem changes in order to ensure informed decision-making and to create environmental awareness among Canadians. It includes federal, provincial and municipal governments, academic institutions, aboriginal communities and organizations, industry, environmental non-government organizations, volunteer community groups, elementary and secondary schools and other groups/individuals involved in ecological monitoring. Coordination and support is provided by the EMAN Coordinating Office in Environment Canada. EMAN staff have worked with volunteers associated with the Georgian Bay Association to establish biodiversity monitoring plots, transects to assess forest health, and help with the training of volunteers.

Georgian Baykeeper

This was formed by the GBA Foundation in 2003, and one boat (as a start) has been equipped to conduct marine patrols to promote public safety, water quality monitoring and public education about water-based recreation and environmental issues.

G'Nadjiwon Ki, *beautiful land*, Aboriginal Tourism Association

The association was established in 1998 in response to the growing need for an official associative body to promote Aboriginal Tourism and help aboriginal people in the Georgian Bay - Lake Simcoe region to benefit from the increasing popularity of aboriginal Tourism. The Vision of the Association is to “be a **leader** in promoting aboriginal tourism; and will **help** aboriginal people in the region to benefit from a **unique** and **viable** aboriginal tourism industry which will be an economic cornerstone for aboriginal communities and which **presents**, **protects**, and **respects** aboriginal culture and **preserves** our Mother Earth”. The Association encourages and supports the development of aboriginal tourism through provision of a range of services and products to Aboriginal communities, organizations, and liaison with non-aboriginal groups.

Severn Sound Environmental Association

The mission of the Association is to restore and maintain environmental quality and to ensure continued protection through a legacy of wise stewardship of Severn Sound and its tributaries. Severn Sound was one of 43 “areas of concern” designated under the Canada-United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Through the efforts of the Association and others, it was “de-listed” as an area of concern in October 2002. The Association continues to monitor the ecological recovery of the area.

Potential Partners

Parry-Sound-Muskoka Stewardship Network

The stated mission of the network is “advancing and influencing the responsible care and use of our natural resources in the Parry Sound-Muskoka Area, for this and future generations”. Its goals are to: “strive to ensure landowners are aware of and have access to relevant management information; work together with landowners, agencies and associations to deliver resource management programs and services; provide educational opportunities that promote responsible resource stewardship; initiate and support stewardship projects that address locally identified resource concerns and recognizing stewardship practices of landowners and associations”.

Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc.

Since 1997, Westwind has been responsible for the 880,000 ha French/Severn Forest which encompasses the proposed biosphere reserve and applies to all Crown (publicly-owned) lands in it. These are managed under the terms of the Ontario Crown Forests Sustainability Act, as well as standards endorsed by the international Forest Stewardship Council, and contribute substantially towards the sustainable development ideal of a biosphere reserve.

Tools and Resources for Coordination

The GBBR Inc.

(as noted previously)

The website

The website of the Georgian Bay Association will serve this function initially. The GBA newsletter ("GBA UPDATE"), posted also on its website, disseminates information and has links to other organizations and information sources. The website will be further developed as the GBBR Inc. and its activities take shape. A listserv is also being considered.

Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association

The CBRA was incorporated in 1997 to work with, through and alongside biosphere reserves in Canada to actively support and advise on how they might fulfill the UNESCO requirements in various ways. This includes fund-raising and the development of collaborative projects. Individual biosphere reserves are the members of the Association, and as new biosphere reserves are designated they are invited to join. At the time of this nomination submission, the Association had 12 member biosphere reserves, a part-time Executive-Secretary, two representatives from federal agencies that have helped fund the organization (Environment Canada and Parks Canada) and five honorary (non-voting) members appointed because of the experience with biosphere reserves they could bring to the organization.

Resources

The GBA Foundation has funded background studies, pilot projects and education/awareness programs that contribute directly to the functions of a biosphere reserve. Funding has been in the order of \$80-100k annually. The proposed biosphere reserve does not have a fixed budget at this time. Most of the activities will be undertaken by partnership organizations using their own staff, volunteers, and resources.

Faculty members from several Ontario universities have conducted research in the proposed biosphere reserve and others have assisted with the nomination submission process. These connections will be strengthened in the future, and they are expected to provide links to a number of research networks.