

A Guidepost for Building Community Support and Organizational Capacity
A Work-in-Progress Cooperation Plan for the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve



The Medway River off Highway 8, near Caledonia

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I Introduction

The role of a Biosphere Reserve and the Need for Cooperation:

A Biosphere Reserve is an area selected by a national committee, proposed by its country and designated by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) to demonstrate innovative approaches to living and working in harmony with nature. There are more than 400 biosphere reserves in 91 countries, and each of them is typical of one of the world's major ecosystems.

The word "Biosphere" means: "sphere of life" and represents all the living parts of planet Earth. The word "Reserve" means that it is an important area of the world that has been recognized for its special qualities. UNESCO uses a word that can be translated and understood in different countries. Use of this term does not mean that these places are set aside from human use and development - human activity and the health of people and communities are part of the biosphere reserve program. Taken together, the words "Biosphere Reserve" indicate a special area within the biosphere where people demonstrate better approaches to conservation and sustainable resource use.

Protected areas are included as core areas because they act as reference points on the natural state of the ecosystems represented by the biosphere reserves. Information from these core areas may be used to assess the sustainability of activities, or the maintenance of environmental quality, in surrounding areas. Also, managers of the core areas may contribute resources to projects developed with residents, businesses and other partners of the biosphere reserve. A committee or organization with strong community representation normally provides direction for biosphere reserve activities in Canada.

The large outer part of a biosphere reserve is the Area of Cooperation. This is where people live and work, ideally in a manner that supports the integrity of the core areas and is sustainable. This term emphasizes the role of cooperation as a way to address the objectives of a biosphere reserve.

The authority over land/water use or planning is not changed when a biosphere reserve is designated in Canada. Government jurisdictions and private rights remain as they were before designation. A stakeholder's signature on a nomination document for a biosphere reserve implies only a moral commitment, not a legal commitment, to cooperate with others to achieve the objectives of a biosphere reserve.

Fort Anne, Annapolis Royal



The three major functions of a biosphere reserve are: Conservation of Biodiversity, Sustainable Development, and Support for Logistics. The term "logistics" refers to the activities of education, research, training and monitoring which partners in a biosphere reserve provide in support of conservation and development. Education, research, training etc. help to build local capacity to make sound decisions and implement them. The planning that goes into these activities helps residents in a biosphere reserve to identify and meet their own needs, in their own way. It also provides opportunities to draw together broad-based support from all sectors of the community or communities associated with the biosphere reserve.

As residents and organizations in a biosphere reserve use a variety of activities to address conservation and sustainable development in ways that are meaningful for them, they also have opportunities to share their discoveries with others. This will often occur informally, as people in the surrounding region notice the development of community-based expertise in a biosphere reserve, and want to find out more about it.

There are also formal networks for sharing information. The Canadian Biosphere Reserves association provides national communication and coordination for its member biosphere reserves. At the same time, the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Student and Research Network uses volunteers to advise post-secondary students and researchers on biosphere reserve studies they may be planning. Internationally, there is a world network of biosphere reserves which facilitates meetings and exchanges among coordinators of biosphere reserves. UNESCO supports this network and helps to share positive examples among countries. There are joint projects and studies at both national and international levels.

UNESCO has been encouraging biosphere reserves to develop Management Plans or Coordination Plans to increase their effectiveness. In countries such as Canada, where most biosphere reserve associations have no authority over land use, biosphere reserve activities depend on cooperation. For this reason, the term *Cooperation Plan* is more appropriate. As you may see in this plan, partnership and participation are emphasized. The plan is developed for the residents, businesses and other organizations and agencies of the biosphere reserve. In it, the goals for the three functions of the biosphere reserve are joined with the challenges and actions that best reflect local needs and desires. This cooperative approach encourages innovation, fosters pride in local achievements, and creates a desire to share these experiences within Canada and with other countries around the world.

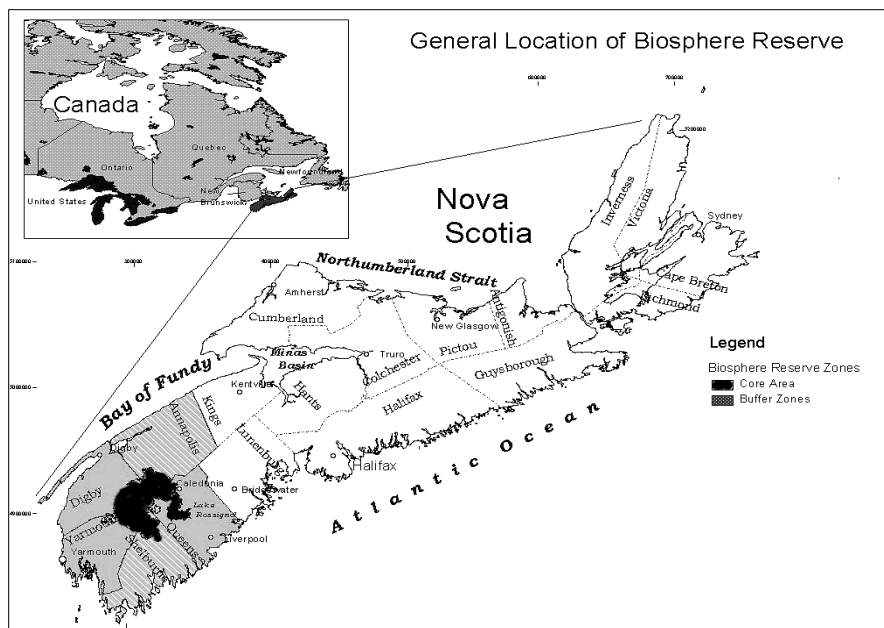
II Background

The region of Southwest Nova Scotia was designated a Biosphere Reserve in September, 2001 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the Man and the Biosphere Programme. The designation recognizes the importance of two large, contiguous protected areas in Southwest Nova Scotia, Kejimikujik National Park and the Tobeatic Wilderness Area, and of the potential in the broader region for multi-sector cooperation and sustainable development. The five counties surrounding these parks are included in the designation on a voluntary basis, as determined by community interest and project development.

There are no land-use or management changes associated with the designation of 'Biosphere Reserve', the designation simply acknowledges beneficial land use already occurring in the region. Lands serving a 'buffer' function for the core areas of the Biosphere Reserve are managed either by provincial (Department of Natural Resources) or private jurisdiction (e.g. N.S. Power and Bowater Mersey Paper Company), according to a voluntary commitment to support the goals of sustainable development and conservation.

The Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve (SWNBR) is the first in Atlantic Canada, and the 11th in the nation. The Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association (SWNBRA, or the Association), a volunteer organization that includes members from academe, municipal government, non-governmental organizations, local community and industry, sought the designation. Representatives from Parks Canada and the Provincial Departments of Environment and Natural Resources sit as advisors to the Board. The Association worked together to apply for the designation because they felt the region's rich culture and ecology deserved international recognition as an exceptional place to live and work, protect, and promote. The Association also saw the potential for the region to benefit from international and national attention, and increased regional cooperation and support.

The entire region, which includes the five counties of Annapolis, Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne and Queens, with Kejimikujik National Park and Historic Site and the Tobeatic Wilderness Area contained therein, is 13, 770 km².



There are 18 municipalities distributed primarily along the coastline within the five counties, making it a challenge to establish a central meeting place or regional representation capable of attending all meetings. The economy of the region is natural resource-based, with a primary dependence on forestry, agriculture, tourism, fishing, mining, and natural gas extraction. The intense promotion of tourism, especially ecotourism (e.g. bird and whale-watching), conflicts with visual aspects of ongoing clear-cutting of forests and proposed mining etc., and is a significant local issue. The out-migration of youth from small towns and a general decline in population is also a serious concern, as is a lack of opportunity, relevant education, and the loss of facilities such as hospitals to centralization.

A Starting Point:

It must be noted that the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve, while having already received designation approval from UNESCO, does not yet have formal endorsement from the federal or provincial governments. Also, while three of the counties in the region currently support the initiative, work continues to recruit participation from other municipalities. In addition, there has not been the necessary amount of public participation in the development of the nomination proposal.

In an attempt to address the situation, the project coordinator and the Association have initiated an intense public outreach effort in the past two and a half months, and this outreach will continue indefinitely. Prior to the initiation of the Cooperation Plan project, an effort had been made to invite public support and involvement in the development of the Biosphere Reserve organization (e.g. presentations to some municipal councils and NGOs, and through partnering on projects). Nonetheless, there remains a substantial number of people in the region who do not know what a Biosphere Reserve is, or that there *is* one in Nova Scotia, but interest and support is growing.

In part, the lack of awareness stems from a need to delay publicity until provincial support is assured (a public announcement/celebration of the designation has not yet occurred, for this reason). Unsurprisingly, this plan is less about cooperation development than it is about organizational development, public relations, and enabling the regional public outreach effort that is required. In other words, the cooperation plan for the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve is a starting point; a beginning, it is *a guidepost for building community support, organizational capacity, and identifying needs and priorities.*

III Vision

In recognition of our unique cultural heritage and natural region, and of the shared responsibility to conserve this environment, the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association, with the voluntary support of educational institutions, community, business and government partners, will seek to balance the conservation of natural and cultural heritage with sustainable resource development in Southwest Nova Scotia, in support of prosperous local economies and healthy communities.

IV Goals

A) Priorities for Conservation:

- Support voluntary conservation measures to protect landscapes, habitats, species at risk and genetic diversity in the core areas, lands serving as buffer, and area of cooperation.
- Promote increased recognition and understanding of the natural environment, sensitive habitat and species of the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve
- Support the preservation of the ecological integrity of the protected wildernesses of Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site of Canada, and the Tobeatic Wilderness Area through relevant research, education, and community stewardship.

B) Priorities for Sustainable Development:

- Engage in research and projects that are of direct use to communities (on the basis of socio-cultural or ecological determinants), as identified by public input.
- Encourage and partner in the development of innovative resource use and conservation techniques to explore new approaches to local resource use (e.g. wind energy).
- Promote demonstration sites to illustrate traditional, new and experimental sustainable practices of natural resource use.
- Promote and encourage the development of appropriate nature-based recreation that is ecologically sustainable (eco-tourism).

C) Capacity Building (logistic support):

- Increase the capacity of the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association to be more capable of taking on new projects, forming partnerships, recruiting multi-sector regional representation, and functioning effectively as an organization (i.e. sharing the work-load, making collective decisions, etc.)
- Increase visibility and understanding of the Biosphere Reserve and its activities.
- Gain the support and voluntary cooperation of the businesses, industries and communities of the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve to support and plan conservation and development activities.
- Facilitate dialogue and cooperation among federal and provincial agencies, academics, private landowners, industry, community members and organizations with respect to development decisions and conservation objectives.
- Develop opportunities for the participation of students, teachers and community leaders in Biosphere Reserve activities and projects to improve local awareness of cultural heritage and natural environment, and of potential opportunities for involvement and research.
- Support citizen participation to inform conservation and development planning and implementation in the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve.

V Partnerships and Opportunities

Because the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve is in the development stage, particularly with regard to community support and awareness, and because the province has yet to formally endorse the Biosphere Reserve, some partners/supporters may not wish to be identified in this document as official ‘partners’, even if they have previously been identified as such. In other words, some organizations and people who are *acting* as ‘partners’ will not be identified here as such (e.g. provincial government and associated agencies).

A) **Participating person, group or organization contributing to the goals of the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve:**

- Bowater Mersey Paper Products: Forestry Company contributor of lands serving as buffer area
- Nova Scotia Power: Contributor of lands serving as buffer area
- Acadia University: partner on the Species at Risk project (ongoing)
- Desbrisay Museum: supporter and partner in the Species at Risk traveling exhibit project
- Nova Scotia Community College, Centre of Geographic Sciences (COGS)
- Nova Scotia Nature Trust
- First Nations Forestry Association
- Tobeatic Wilderness Committee: mandate is to ensure the ecological integrity of the Tobeatic Wilderness Area
- Friends of Keji
- Douglas Lumber
- H. Freeman and Sons

B) **Potential person, group or organization who could contribute to the goals of the biosphere reserve:**

Note: We identified potential partners and interested parties throughout the region via the process of developing invite lists to our focus group meetings. The following are a portion of the organizations that were invited to participate in the planning sessions.

- Culture and Heritage Organizations (including the Nova Scotia Multicultural Organization and the Acadian Council)
- Regional Development Authorities (Lower Queens Regional Development Authority, Southwest Shore Development Authority, Western Valley Development Authority)
- Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre
- Bear River First Nation
- Acadia Band First Nation
- Provincial government departments, including the Departments of Economic Development and Tourism, Fisheries and Agriculture, Environment and Labour, and Natural Resources.
- Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (and regional branches)
- Town and village municipalities throughout the five counties
- Regional School Boards (including the tri-county school board)

- Coastal Communities Network
- Healthy Communities Network
- Sustainable Communities Initiative (pilot project Annapolis Royal)
- Heartwood Institute (environmental leadership experience for youth)
- Tourism Associations (including N.S. Tourism Partnership Council)
- N.S. Women’s Institutes (e.g. Shelburne County FishNet)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Meteghan River Salmon Restoration Project
- Tuskent River Environmental Protection Agency
- Dalhousie University
- Regional Planning Commissions
- J.D. Irving Ltd. (principal landowner/forester in region)
- Nova Scotia Field Naturalists (affiliate branches, e.g. Annapolis)
- Nova Scotia Community College (Shelburne and Yarmouth campuses)

VI Tools for Coordination of Biosphere Reserve Activities

In April 2002, the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association became members of the Coastal Communities Network (CCN) and the Healthy Communities Network; both of which are province-wide partnerships (representing hundreds of community organizations, government agencies and educational institutes) with a focus on rural development in a sustainable, healthy manner.

CCN meets on a monthly basis, and the Healthy Communities Network meets quarterly. SWNBRA’s involvement in these organizations shows an interest in regional collaboration and information sharing, while offering skills and input into issues such as the development of ‘determinants of health’ (environmental) for the Healthy Communities initiative. Further, both networks will allow SWNBRA to identify potential partnerships with like-minded groups and people who also attend these sessions. It will also allow others to hear about the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve, and perhaps become involved.

SWNBRA also attends meetings of associated organizations such as the Nova Scotia Nature Trust to: demonstrate genuine interest in their activities, offer support, and stay informed of issues of mutual concern and potential partnering opportunities. Sending a representative of SWNBRA to workshops (such as a recent one hosted by the Western Valley Development Authority on marketing non-profit organizations) is another way of ‘networking’ and identifying opportunities for partnering with regional groups with similar interests.

The structure of SWNBRA also assists in coordination/cooperation efforts, as we are a multi-sector group representing diverse interests from conservation to industrial development, government to academia. The benefit of having different voices and perspectives at the table is an important aspect of cooperation efforts. Though the SWNBRA Board of Directors needs to be restructured and strengthened logistically to ensure fairness and accountability (one of the priority actions of this plan), it will continue to represent multi-sector interests, and encourage cooperation and partnering on projects.

VII Resources to achieve the priority goals

- A) Current Resources:** The Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association receives in-kind support of office space through Nova Scotia Power as part of their ongoing support of community organizations such as the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association. Technology and equipment have been supplied through the support of HRDC for past projects. The Association

also receives project-oriented funding from Parks Canada and Environment Canada (e.g. Species at Risk Grant and Science Horizons research positions).

The Association has also secured a one-time allotment of \$800 from the Community Animation Programme (a joint venture of Environment Canada and Health Canada) to bring in a facilitator to the next Annual General Meeting to do a workshop with the new Board of Directors. The funds will be used to orientate the new Board members in their new positions and as a group, and to ensure the new Board will function effectively toward common goals.

- B) Lacking Resources:** Ongoing funding has been, and continues to be a serious problem for the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve, particularly as it has been operating in a 'reactive' mode, according to the availability of funds and staff. Continuity is a substantial problem, due to the constant turnover of the project coordinator position (usually in response to the end of a 9-month internship), and a lack of resources to allow for overlap of these contracts to initiate the new coordinator. For example, this project to develop a Cooperation Plan has been the only source of funding for a project coordinator for the past two and a half months at this Biosphere Reserve. A substantial amount of groundwork has been done; essentially by the coordinator, and there are no funds to allow for continuation.

SWNBRA needs to enter into a substantial public outreach effort in the coming months, and it is not clear how this will be funded. This will include the publication of a brochure and other presentation materials, funds to hold meetings and to travel throughout the region, and staff to do the work. At this time, it is not clear how the Association will manage this task. Additionally, the organization needs to do fundraising in order to enter into any future endeavours. This will require time and staff to seek out new funds along with securing charitable status, writing funding proposals and applications, and maintaining financial records.



Near the old CFB Cornwallis N.S.

VIII Proposed projects to achieve the priority goals:

<p>Priority 1: Capacity Building Immediate to Short-Term (in the next year)</p>	<p>Strategic Action/Tasks:</p>	<p>Comments: (without new funding, conservation and sustainable development initiatives will be difficult to administer)</p>
<p>Structure and Viability of the Board of Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a Sound Governance Structure that is acceptable and defensible. The structure needs to account for a balance of interests, regional representation, accountability and requirements for Board members. b) Develop Board Orientation Materials for next Board meeting (including Association by-laws, responsibilities of Board members, etc.) c) Form a strong, effective nomination committee: this is essential in order to identify and recruit new board members who can carry out the work identified in this plan. d) Hold workshop for new Board of Directors to ensure cooperation, understanding of their role as Board members, develop camaraderie and identify priorities and specific interests. 	<p>The Governance Structure is the #1 priority, and needs to be sound before the next Annual General Meeting and election of new Board.</p> <p>The development of orientation materials has been initiated</p> <p>(funding has already been allotted for the facilitation workshop for the next Board of Directors, to be held following the next Annual General Meeting)</p>
<p>Communications Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop communications materials to assist with community outreach. A brochure is necessary (a prototype is ready, but it needs to be exactly what the Association needs). b) We also need presentation materials for meetings: a tryptic style table set-up. c) General media package (for e.g. develop visual style guide, identify media contact, responsibilities of media contact, make final decisions on letterhead, logos and use, etc. 	<p>Finalize/develop designs and images for brochure Clear final design with Board and get printed.</p> <p>Getting estimates from Bay of Fundy initiative as they have already developed comparable presentation materials to what we need.</p> <p>The WVDA have excellent media/communications materials (Wanda has them). These are good examples to build from.</p>

<p>Communications Materials (continued)</p>	<p>d) As soon as (if and when) the province gives formal support, we need to do a series of articles in newspapers, etc., to publicize the new Biosphere Reserve.</p> <p>e) Website updates: the French portion is outdated (i.e. pre-designation), and the English needs improvements</p>	<p>As of April 24/02, the Ministers of Environment and Natural Resources have stated they accept the request to initiate a formal review. It is not certain when the review will be completed.</p>
<p>Official Celebration of becoming a Biosphere Reserve</p>	<p>Upon receiving formal support from the provincial government, a public celebration/kickoff is necessary (it would be good also to do an artwork contest, or something of that nature to involve youth in the event).</p>	<p>Collaborate with provincial representatives, other community groups, businesses, etc. to celebrate the designation</p>
<p>Community Outreach</p>	<p>Presentations need to be given to a general public audience throughout the region, and for the councils of the municipalities that have not yet been contacted. Continue involvement in the Coastal Communities Network and Healthy Communities Network.</p> <p>Long-term planning should be developed with public input - and public participation needs to be coordinated as part of the community outreach efforts.</p>	<p>It is not clear whether the Association has the resources for this undertaking. It is also not clear whether the Province has objection to such outreach at this time.</p> <p>There is a public participation survey already on the English website, and can be used to invite input; interested persons need to be made aware of this mechanism.</p>
<p>Funding Sources</p>	<p>a) Seek Charitable Society Status</p> <p>b) Research and apply for potential funding sources (already initiated)</p> <p>c) Attend ‘Foundations’ conference at Marine Resource Centre in June/02. (contact is Martin Kaye)</p>	<p>M.E.C. funding applications are due at the end of May (should be pursued).</p>
<p>Plan Update (1 year)</p>	<p>A year from now (April 2003), this plan should be revisited, updated, and assessed for successes and failures. It will be time to address more long-term goals and priorities, and to re-evaluate the issues and plans identified here.</p>	<p>After more community outreach takes place; a new Board of Directors is formed, and more ideas are identified; this plan should be adapted accordingly.</p>

Priority 3: Sustainable Development 1- 2 years (continued)	Strategic Action/Tasks	Comments:
Increase recognition and understanding of B.R.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop Educational materials for use by teachers pertaining to Biosphere Reserves and related issues b) Develop indicators for the Biosphere Reserve Association to track activities and show positive impacts related to the establishment of the B.R. (in other words, develop method of showing usefulness of being a B.R.). c) Continue to Develop connections with other groups and individuals in the area: develop a database of those doing companion work in support of the goals of the Biosphere Reserve. 	<p>Gary Selig at Desbrisay Museum has already initiated contacts, etc.</p> <p>The development of indicators of success may also help Association in securing funds, by being able to show worthiness.</p>
Develop and Support Eco-tourism	<p>Develop relationships with tourism associations in the region, as well as with regional development authorities and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Work with these groups on eco-tourism projects and initiatives (to be determined, as the capacity of the organization builds). Compile information on and learn from eco-tourism development at other Biosphere Reserves.</p>	<p>See materials of the N.S. Tourism Partnership Council, and associated regional contacts.</p>

IX How was the Coordination Plan Developed?

The Plan was built on the basis of a series of personal contacts, a meeting with senior provincial representatives, and focus group planning sessions. Primarily it was the work of the project coordinator to do planning and outreach work, with the assistance and guidance of a planning committee made up of keen members of the board of directors. The planning committee met regularly (usually once a week for over two months) to give important advice and background to help the coordinator focus her work. Representatives of the three Regional Development Authorities helped to identify key persons in their areas to invite to the planning sessions, and without this assistance, it would have been a laborious task.

A number of key conversations with councilors from the counties not yet formally supportive of the Biosphere Reserve designation, and people with intimate knowledge of the region and/or the background of this Biosphere Reserve laid the groundwork for the plan. An important meeting with senior officials from Parks Canada and the provincial Departments of Environment and Labour, and Natural Resources also provided essential information. It should be noted here that the province is currently undertaking a formal review of the nomination materials (with invitation to other departments, such as Economic Development and Tourism, and Fisheries and Agriculture to participate), and that the Association anxiously awaits their response.

The coordinator also made an effort to make connections with important grassroots initiatives in the region, particularly the Coastal Communities Network and the Healthy Communities Network. SWNBRA is now an active member in both networks, and participation in meetings and partnerships will help the Association to build credibility and visibility. More importantly, both networks offer SWNBRA the opportunity to support and take part in ongoing efforts to improve our region.

The coordinator also attended one of the public planning sessions held by the Bay of Fundy Biosphere Initiative (April 8/02) to gain perspective from their experiences and approach, and to gauge community response. Also, it was an effort to show mutual support, and make personal connections.

The most important facet of developing the cooperation plan was a series of three focus group planning sessions held in different centers throughout the B.R. region.



Focus-Group Meeting at Cornwallis Park, April 10/02

FOCUS GROUP PLANNING SESSIONS: <i>in brief</i>		
Date	Meeting Place	Comments:
April 9, 2002	Civic Centre/Fire Hall Town of Shelburne Shelburne County, South Shore	Important industry representatives, the Nova Nature Nature Trust, and a Shelburne Councilor attended. Key issues: buffer, more community outreach, youth opportunities.
April 10, 2002	WVDA Building Cornwallis Park, North Shore	Municipal Councilors from two counties, community organizations, environmental groups, WVDA, sustainable communities representatives present. Key issues: buffer area, increase communication and outreach, need ongoing funding, more grassroots support, mining and eco-tourism conflicts, new energy/resource-use approaches.
April 17, 2002	Yarmouth County Museum, Yarmouth, Southwest tip of province.	Attendees included: provincial government representatives, environmental organizations, heritage and health reps., SWNBRA members, Federation of agriculture, dev. authority. Key issues: visual impacts and eco-tourism, alternatives to clear-cuts – education for foresters on private lands as well as corporate, assistance to farmers, marketing sustainably harvested crops, developing indicators.

The planning sessions themselves were very important for the opportunity to discuss the Biosphere Reserve concept and the nomination/designation process, as well as to gather ideas from the participants for input into the making of this plan. However, the planning process to set up these meetings was also beneficial. In order to set up the meetings and have reasonable attendance, it was necessary to invite a wide range of people; and for many of the invitees, it was the first they had heard of the Biosphere Reserve concept or designation. In other words, it was an excellent opportunity for the project coordinator to introduce the idea to key contacts throughout the region, and to invite participation, instead of simply offering information.

Having completed the groundwork for the development of the plan, the second phase of consultation begins. This 'work-in-progress' plan will be sent to all of the participants who gave input into its development, as well as to those contacts who did not attend the sessions. Hopefully, those with an interest in participating but who were unable to attend (or were not certain of what it was they were being invited to) are now offered a second opportunity to give input by responding to this plan. Additionally, after the plan goes through the first revision with input from all of the participants, it can then be used as a consultation tool as the Association embarks on a broader-scale outreach effort.

This more intense, community-based consultation will be the time and place to discuss long-term plans. At this time, it is too early to say what this Biosphere Reserve will look like in six months, let alone two years from now. It is necessary now to get out into the communities, talk about ideas and possibilities, and identify plans and priorities on *that* information.

X What was Learned Developing the Coordination Plan?

The Problems:

It became obvious during the development of the plan that the Biosphere Reserve does not have as much widespread support as it needs, and that the core group of volunteers is overextended. Also, it became clear that the nomination/designation process was not optimal, and that ensuring full support before designation should be recommended to other Biosphere Reserve applicants.

It also became evident that a lack of ongoing funding is a significant issue; the constant turnover of coordinators has led to discontinuity, some confusion, and lack of ongoing personal connections with other groups and people. Additionally, volunteer management of the office, funding, and administration has led to communication problems (mostly due to lack of time and energy to keep people informed), inconsistency, frustration, and the loss of some board members because the organization does not have the capacity to orientate new people as they come in.

And Possibilities:

Semi-rural towns along the coast of Nova Scotia are surprisingly disconnected from one other, in terms of the management of shared resources, tourism and other development planning, and efforts to renew and sustain communities. Most of these towns are small, and struggling. The Biosphere Reserve Association could play an important role in bringing communities together in shared efforts, and shared knowledge, especially when there are successes to learn from. *Identifying where the Biosphere Reserve Association fits in the context of the region, in that there is a real need for a non-governmental organization to bridge sectors and bring diverse interests together, has been an important benefit of this project.*

A welcome discovery was the amount of ready support offered especially by the regional development authorities (who really are doing some great things in this province), and the interest and excitement that a lot of people expressed. It was also great to recognize how many people in this region really care about where they live, and how many good things are already in the works. While the concepts of cooperation; mutual support; partnerships; and preserving culture, traditional lifestyles and the natural environment may be the exception elsewhere; in Southwest Nova Scotia they are important facets of everyday life - by necessity. The Coastal Communities Network exhibits many of the traits that a successful Biosphere Reserve Association should possess (at least in this planner's opinion), and SWNBRA is lucky to have such a strong advocate and friend already operating here.

To close, this preliminary plan is an important wake-up call, and a call to action for the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve Association, its key supporters, and potential partners not yet involved. It is, as stated earlier, a starting point. The real work, and the fun, begins now.

Thank you to all those who have taken part in the development of this document. Please respond with comments, suggestions, revisions and ideas you may have regarding this plan, and the Biosphere Reserve.

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