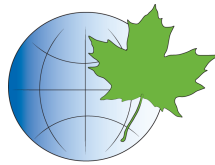




Towards a 2030 Biodiversity Strategy

DISCUSSION PAPER RESPONSE BY



• Canadian
• Biosphere
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AN INTRODUCTION TO BIOSPHERE RESERVES/REGIONS:

Canada's 19 UNESCO-designated **biosphere reserves /regions (BRs)** focus on activities that promote balance between people and nature. BRs receive the designation because of the high levels of biodiversity in the landscape and the communities that promote a sustainable way of life.

BRs are organizations that work in **collaboration with communities, focusing on the conservation of biodiversity and culture through community and local economy initiatives**. BRs also strive to support the land, water and culture priorities of the Indigenous nations that host them. For more information, visit <https://www.biospherecanada.ca/reconciliation-stories>.

In essence, BRs strive to integrate biodiversity and cultural diversity considerations into everything they do, and take a holistic approach by framing their work in **Sustainable Development Goals** with links to biodiversity, climate change and sustainability. As home to **2.8 million Canadians**, it would be impossible to summarize here all the actions implemented by the 19 Canadian BRs to conserve biodiversity. Nevertheless, they provide an excellent starting point for integrating and implementing biodiversity conservation measures across an **area of more than 235,000 square kilometers across Canada**.

QUICK FACTS

- 19 BRs in Canada, 700+ worldwide
- 2.8 million people live in Canadian BRs
- 50+ Indigenous Nations host the Canadian 19 BRs
- BRs are represented by 41 Members of Parliament

BIOSPHERE RESERVES ARE



Regions: 235, 000 square kilometers of regions in Canada, typically surround a national or provincial park and representing Canada's iconic landscapes.

235



Organizations: 19 non-profit, non-governmental organizations, governed by 4 pillars of work including biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, climate action and reconciliation.

19



On an ethical space journey where BRs are working with some of the 50 First Nation that host the BRs to incorporate two-eyed seeing of both Western and Indigenous perspectives into all BR activities.

50



Communities: Groups of local residents and businesses working towards a common sustainable development goal and including 30,000 volunteer hours

30000



Implementing global mandates - UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention of Biological Diversity and the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples - at a local scale. They are also part of a 700+ member network of BRs around the world.

700+

Figure 1: An overview of Canadian biosphere reserves/regions



Figure 2: A map of the Canadian biosphere reserves/regions



WHAT ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF A BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR 2030?

There are five main principles for a successful national biodiversity strategy. These principles include:

- **Respect and support Indigenous nations** - Indigenous nations have been custodians of the land, water and air since time immemorial. The strategy must provide sufficient resources to support conservation actions by Indigenous nations, acts of reconciliation, calls to action under the Truth and Reconciliation program, and capacity building.
- **Multi-level biodiversity protection** - Biodiversity measures must be implemented across all ministries and levels of government, in conjunction with other initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and other government strategies. This increases the impact of different strategies whose themes are intrinsically linked.
- **Work with all players in society** - implementation must include Indigenous nations, civil society organizations, governments, academics and the general public.
- **Integrate biodiversity protection into land-use planning** - Municipal and regional governments (MRCs) have the greatest influence on local and regional land-use planning. Integrating biodiversity protection into municipal and regional planning will have a considerable impact on biodiversity conservation in Canada.
- **Ambitious vision and action** - Ambitious vision and commitment to action are needed at all levels of government, across all parties, and under the leadership of the federal government, to make significant progress in protecting biodiversity.

In addition to these principles, the following are important to any strategy:

- **Provide multi-level timeframes** - Short-, medium- and long-term goals are needed to take immediate, urgent and ambitious action as part of a broader, longer-term vision.
- **Measure impact** - Qualitative and quantitative targets are needed to show progress made and actions still to be taken.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING THE KMGBF 2030 GOALS IN CANADA?

In 2023, **protecting biodiversity is inextricably linked to human well-being**. It is important to protect biodiversity not only in the vast, less populated regions of northern Canada, but in all parts of the country. Particular attention needs to be paid to high biodiversity areas in the south of the country, since they are under the most pressure and are generally located in more rural communities, with lower incomes and less capacity, or close to urban areas that are under intense development pressures.

The unofficial tag line of the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association is **people and nature, in balance**. That is what is needed here. The greatest challenge for the implementation of biodiversity conservation measures will be to cope with the many **anthropogenic pressures** that have affected and will continue to affect the landscape. A second major challenge to achieving biodiversity goals in Canada is to **get the public on board**, and for them to understand the link with the raison d'être of safeguarding biodiversity. This is a challenge found in many global issues, affecting society as a whole. The final major challenge concerns **adequate implementation resources** for the civil society sector, the sector responsible for local implementation of federal objectives.

In short, at a national level, the main challenges are to know biodiversity, protect it and work with stakeholders to achieve this.

WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED AND IMPLEMENTED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT WE MEET THE 2030 TARGETS AND ARE ON TRACK TO MEET THE LONGER-TERM 2050 TARGETS?

Due to the interdependent nature and mutual benefits of the climate change and biodiversity loss crises, **climate action and biodiversity measures should be prioritized together**. Immediate action should be prioritized, local initiatives should be supported, and strong political support at all levels should be implemented to ensure momentum and progress towards the 2030 and 2050 targets.



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A David Suzuki Foundation's study findings reveal that the Howe Sound (which is also a BR) provide an estimated annual value of \$800 million to \$4.7 billion in ecosystem services.



WHAT SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES CAN WE BUILD ON?

Biosphere reserves/regions (BRs) are poised to work on these KMGBF targets to help the Federal government implement the Strategy:

-  BRs **work with and support municipalities and Indigenous nations** as well as academic, industry, and other NGO partners to **convene, coordinate, and collaborate** the integration of biodiversity outcomes into local planning, land use plans, and regional priorities.
-  BRs can help **raise awareness among the general public**, including the 2.8 million Canadians who live in biosphere regions, of the links between biodiversity, the economy and health. The Georgian Bay Biosphere has an active public engagement program which connects the biodiversity, culture, and the economy.
-  BRs can also assess their **region's ecosystem services** for use in municipal and Indigenous planning as well as linking biodiversity to its value with the public. A David Suzuki Foundation's study findings reveal that the Howe Sound watersheds (also a BR) provide an estimated annual value of \$800 million to \$4.7 billion in ecosystem services.
-  BRs can contribute to the protection of natural environments and species. BRs, like the Fundy, Southwest Nova, and Redberry Lake BRs, are planting trees while others focus on **restoration and stewardship** projects like wetland restoration and stream rehabilitation.
-  BRs are situated within managed landscapes like agriculture and forestry lands. Redberry Lake BR is supporting **sustainable agricultural practices** and the Mount Arrowsmith BR engages with the **forestry industry** through their Roundtable.
-  BRs are convening and collaborating with academics, **testing theoretical research within the BR setting** - a living lab.
-  BRs are supporting the **inclusion of Indigenous nations within decision-making**. The Clayoquot BR has board members from the municipalities as well as the Nations that host the BR.
-  BRs can work in the spaces and places surrounding protected areas, in **humanized landscapes and working landscapes**, in areas of high biodiversity with community buy-in. 11 of the 19 regions include a national park; The other 8 have a provincial park or other form of protected area as their core.

ARE THERE OBJECTIVES ON WHICH CANADA HAS ALREADY MADE GOOD PROGRESS, AND OTHERS ON WHICH IT SHOULD FOCUS MORE?

A great deal of effort, resources and progress has been devoted to Target 3 (protected areas and Other Effective Conservation Measures). We need to concentrate our efforts on targets that focus on functional and humanized landscapes. CBRA therefore suggests focusing on the additional targets of:

- Target **1**: Reduce to "close to zero" the **loss of areas of high biodiversity value** by 2030.
- Target **2**: Ensure that at least 30% of **degraded natural environments are restored** by 2030.
- Target **3**: Ensure that 30% of **terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine environments** are protected by 2030.
- Target **8**: Reduce the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity, including through "**nature-based solutions**" and/or "**ecosystem-based approaches**".
- Target **10**: Ensure **sustainable management of lands used for agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry**.
- Target **11**: Restore and enhance **ecosystem services**.
- Target **14**: Integrate biodiversity and its multiple values into **policies, regulations, planning and development**.
- Target **16**: Encourage people to make **sustainable consumption choices**.
- Target **20**: Promote **scientific cooperation** between Northern and Southern countries on sustainable use and protection of nature.
- Target **22**: Ensure full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-sensitive representation and **participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making processes**.

In addition to the additional targets, it is necessary to effectively implement the biodiversity supporting regulations already in place.



We need to concentrate our efforts on targets that focus on functional and humanized landscapes.





NO GOAL STANDS ALONE: WHICH GLOBAL TOOLS AND SOLUTIONS OFFER THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS SEVERAL GOALS?

The discussion paper notes that "the global biodiversity crisis is increasingly recognized worldwide, along with climate change, as a global environmental problem with serious consequences for all humanity". **Strong climate change policies will strengthen biodiversity conservation and, in turn, biodiversity-enhanced ecosystems will enable ecosystems to adapt to the climate changes already programmed.** They must not be treated in isolation. This strategy cannot be treated in isolation, as climate action is a gain for biodiversity conservation and vice versa.

The discussion paper also states that "Canada's economy, environment, social and cultural identities are closely linked to and dependent on its biodiversity". **Highlighting the importance of the link between biodiversity and the economy, as well as between biodiversity and human health, will enable progress to be made on a number of objectives.**

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) use a whole-of-society approach.** The federal government has SDG leads within each relevant federal ministry. Using the SDGs or a similar approach would involve all federal departments would help engrain biodiversity into the federal government. The integration of multiple levels of government - municipal, regional, provincial/territorial, national - will enable biodiversity outcomes to be mainstreamed throughout society.

A **coordinated communications strategy and messaging to the general public** is the only way to increase public awareness. A single message and approach must be used by all organizations and governments. This message must establish a link between biodiversity loss and personal needs (health, wealth, security, family). BRs have the capacity to collect data about biodiversity services, understand the science of biodiversity services and to communicate this information at a local level as well as incorporate it into governance and informed decision making at the regional scale.

Finally, the support and recognition of Indigenous nations will contribute to the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action** and the **United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

WHAT ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ENABLING MECHANISMS (E.G. NETWORKS, POLICIES) ARE ESSENTIAL TO INFORM IMPLEMENTATION DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS?

There are several existing mechanisms, approaches and knowledge systems that should be supported, including:



National networks, such as the **Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association** (CBRA), can help **facilitate more effective and robust knowledge transfer between local and regional organizations**. Using a network such as CBRA and the 19 biosphere reserves/regions (BRs) allows for local implementation and context, while still being able to summarize impact on a national scale. The use of sites like BRs spread across the country enables progress to be made by **building on existing core areas of biodiversity**. It also makes it possible to share experiences and promote learnings to increase the effectiveness of work on a national scale.



In addition to using a network of sites, CBRA also proposes a **local approach**. This approach involves using a facilitating organization, like BRs, that brings **local partners together around a complex issue to determine local needs, approaches and context, in order to multiply actions and benefits for biodiversity conservation**. BRs already have a model for balancing multiple targets (ie social and ecosystem health) and have diverse, equitable, and inclusive boards and staff working on these targets.



Municipal and regional governments have the greatest influence on local land-use planning. Integrating **biodiversity outcomes into municipal and regional land-use planning policies** will have a significant impact on the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in Canada.



Indigenous nations have been stewards of the land, water and air since time immemorial. Their inclusion, perspective, knowledge and skills should be supported to reduce threats to biodiversity.



The approach of Canada's 19 BRs to biodiversity conservation - the whole-of-society approach, the convening/coordination of local partners and meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations - should be used as a model to reduce threats to biodiversity.



Funding for local and grassroots organizations is a key element in this type of work, from the federal level right through to local implementation.



The approach of Canada's 19 BRs to biodiversity conservation should be used as a model to reduce threats to biodiversity.



Awareness of biodiversity conservation must be linked to people's physiological needs, such as the clean air we breathe, sustainable food production, clean water and our ability to have safe and secure shelter.



WHAT ARE THE KEY HUMAN NEEDS AND VALUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO MAKE BIODIVERSITY LOSS A GLOBAL CONCERN?

Faced with the threat and impact of global problems such as COVID-19, forest fires and floods, Canadians are beginning to realize the seriousness of these wider issues and how they affect their individual and family security. **Awareness of biodiversity conservation must be linked to people's physiological needs**, such as the clean air we breathe, sustainable food production, clean water and our ability to have safe and secure shelter. Generally speaking, the link between health and the services provided by protected ecosystems needs greater attention.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Faced with a problem like biodiversity loss, there will always be more to do. Success starts with the public becoming **more connected to the land** and to the impact of our individual choices on the landscape around us. Success means **implementing biodiversity policies as part of municipal planning**. Success is reflected in the fact that existing biodiversity areas, such as biosphere reserves/regions, **are not lost but strengthened**. Success is reflected in the tangible growth of civil society organizations, which are able to do more work at local level.

Transformative change means integrating biodiversity considerations into all federal ministries, following the example of the Millennium Development Goals and climate action. **Biodiversity conservation takes place in a humanized/working landscape**. Indigenous-led conservation and acts of reconciliation through a shared bond with the land.

Thank You

The Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association and the 19 biosphere reserves/regions in Canada thank the federal government for the opportunity to provide comments and participate in the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy.