



## Summary

### **Research and Knowledge Forum**

### **Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve**

Elkhorn Resort, Wasagaming, March 20 – 21, 2009

**Attendance:** see Appendix 1

- 1) Laura Rance – **key note speaker**, editor of the Manitoba Cooperator  
“A Healthy Biosphere: What is it and What does it Take?”
- 2) **Overview of Biosphere Reserves**
- 3) **Summary of pre-forum survey**
- 4) **Overview of Past and Present Work**
- 5) **Panel Discussions**
  - a. Ecosystems and Neighbours: Protected and Working Landscapes (Cary Hamel)
  - b. Rural Communities: Changes Ahead (Doug Ramsey)  
*Trend towards urbanization has stabilized*  
*50% of Canadians live in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver/Victoria or Edmonton/Calgary*  
*See rest of speaking notes*
  - c. Sustainable Economies: What’s Working? (Ann Dandeneau)

### **6) Results - Table Group Discussions**

#### **Economic Development - Knowledge Gaps**

- what are the opportunities re: economic development?
- what is needed re: regional infrastructure, industry?  
-success stories – learn from Morden/Winkler/St. Boniface (immigration)
- how to enhance cooperation between communities? explore benefits?
- how to increase benefit of national park visitation for local communities?
- how to create an entrepreneurship culture?
- what are businesses’ needs, can universities provide practical research?
- how to promote “buy local” and reduce importation of locally available products?

#### **Natural Ecosystems - Knowledge Gaps**

- how to develop the RMBR’s capacity to take the lead on research coordination?
- ecosystem monitoring program - how to develop an integrated program (national park and surrounding municipalities)?
- what are the ecological targets? What’s the best route to attaining conservation targets?  
What baseline information is needed? What did our landscape look like 100 to 200 years ago?
- is a research centre feasible and who could/would manage it (local communities, provincial gov’t., private conservation organizations, RMBR, etc.)? Would a research centre help close

the divide between locals/academia? What would make this area more attractive to researchers?

- how to address habitat loss? What is the value of natural ecosystems/native species versus modified ecosystems/non-native species? Is there a role for programs such as ALUS (alternate land use services), what is governments' role? What is the value of natural ecosystems/native species versus modified ecosystems/non-native species?
- climate change - how do we begin adaptation (e.g. water and wastewater mgmt.)?
- what are the opportunities in the future for renewable resource use e.g. managed woodlots, fish farming, etc.?
- how can the management of beavers be improved (mimic natural checks and balances)? Understanding the ecology of beavers is important.
- environmental management practices
  - i. what are the economic advantages - alternative energy sources, other green technologies?
  - ii. how to reduce waste, what's the feasibility of alternate waste management?

#### **Social/Cultural – Knowledge Gaps**

- what do people value in the natural landscape? Is the landscape relevant to their day-to-day life? Social questions could steer education programs.
- what is the indigenous knowledge of communities?
- how can these communities be engaged in RMBR?
- can the RMBR facilitate engagement between FN and other communities in RMBR?
- what are the impacts of outmigration and the motivations for returning to the area?

### **7) Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve – its role, general comments and suggestions**

Vision for the RMBR

- Lead a visioning forum with producers, etc. to identify vision, enhance ownership/pride in RMBR
- Need to identify barriers and baggage that inhibit success - then work on removing those barriers (e.g. some see BR as a threat)
- promote a model of sustainable living
- develop a model for citizen engagement - Identify and link existing, working networks, planning processes and organizations
- initiate programs, take leadership
- facilitate rural municipalities working together/partnerships

RMBR role

- raise its profile amongst residents
- engage local businesses, dealers, schools
- collect/disseminate local knowledge
- celebrate and communicate the value of living in a BR, use stories
- promote the value of healthy ecosystems to local communities, can the Rapid Environmental Assessment be used by locals to help them make decisions?
- promote the biosphere reserve brand, an exotic product
- attract green businesses, trades people, join MB. Environmental Industries Association?
- cultural resources - enhance knowledge and teaching e.g. historical values
- connect people to place through tourism and recreation (i.e. experiential learning, loop trails around and through the park, inventory of services - B&Bs, local products, camping sites)
- Understand the market and what we have to offer (e.g., recreation, quality schools)

- organize eco-tourism events – e.g. geo-caching, tours in biosphere reserve
- create a “corridor group” that could access more \$
- RMBR could manage crown land use
- RMBR could act as coordinating body for regional planning.

Research

- RMBR should be the organization to establish research priorities, coordinate research, and ensure it is communicated, shared, etc.
- raise awareness and develop support for research
- develop a research Terms of Reference with local participation
- connect researchers with youth, land owners, and municipal leaders
- Parks Canada, RMBR and universities should support more cooperative research projects
- attract internationally recognized research
- consider a membership with CURA (links universities to a community to meet research needs)
- RMBR could also act as a “library” of data and research, a conduit for sharing this information.

Employment

- connect to Eco Canada, eg. job descriptions and opportunities
- regional job opportunities listing
- provide counselling to youth regarding opportunities in the region
- encourage youth to try other jobs, not necessarily university jobs, within the region.

Communications

- knowledge of ecological corridors –facilitate information to land owners
- use broad band for business opportunities, communications and sharing stories of the biosphere reserve
- use new technologies to promote the biosphere reserve internet/web/blogs
- stories and visuals could promote ideas and conservation ideals (web 2.0 technology).

**8) Ranking Exercise** – (this was done at the forum, a quick attempt to rank the major points raised)

**Natural Ecosystems**

<b>Actions</b>	<b># Points</b>
Clarify RMBR purpose and objectives: promote brand/buy-in (stories, history, use of technology), best practices; leadership.	21
Engaging locals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides 2-way sharing (conversations versus education)</li> <li>• allows buy-in</li> <li>• research and economics tied with it</li> </ul>	20
RMBR to coordinate research priorities and facilitate local research, plus share results	16

Take full advantage of identified environmental assets in the RMBR (i.e. entrepreneurship; tourism; lifestyle; live/work/play)	16
Fostering an environment of entrepreneurship (i.e. succession, fill “gaps”, job/business bank	16
Develop a Research Centre	14
Uptake/participate in environmental stewardship ( i.e. alternate energy, recycling, and waste management)	14
Use citizen science as a tool for engagement and gaining knowledge.	13
Establish and foster relationships with and between stakeholders: municipal, businesses, users.	13
RMBR – determine their role in policy development in local area	7

Other (identified but unranked)

- Encourage youth to go away, but come back.

### **Rural Viability**

<b>Actions</b>	<b># Points</b>
Need to know motivations (e.g. attracted to quality of life, other)	11
End of the Day - need sense of place, home. Sense of community.	3
End of the Day (cont.) – need sense of community through engagement.	1

Other (identified but unranked)

- Need to know gaps that entrepreneurs can fill, identify services, identify barriers and what is missing.

### **Biosphere Reserve**

<b>Actions</b>	<b># Points</b>
Raise awareness and create sense of ownership of biosphere reserve, make legitimate, credible, RELEVANT	16
How? Baseline monitoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of climate change: social, biophysical</li> <li>• Stories/celebrating success</li> <li>• Fosters pride, sense of place</li> <li>• Inventory of indigenous knowledge</li> </ul>	16

<p>How? Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversation and dialogue – not presentations</li> <li>• Inventory of what is being done → invite participation</li> <li>• Recognize local, traditional knowledge.</li> <li>• Visioning</li> </ul>	13
Help decision-making expertise for RM's	2

**9) Knowledge and Research Forum Evaluation**

- The size of the present forum is about right - 40 people.
- Multiple forums may be needed in the future.

Future Forums – involvement from others

- First Nations
- Other front-line staff, e.g. Economic Developmental Officers, Chief Administrative Officers
- Regional staff with the province
- Educational communities, ie.: teachers, students, administrators
- Researchers that have done work in the area
- Rural municipal councillors
- Youth
- Tourism operators in the Westman and Parkland regions
- Land owner organizations
- Business community members
- Artists, crafts people and musicians

Goals Met

- didn't really touch on what can be done that's environmentally friendly and will also support communities i.e. multiple sustainable resource use options.
- science and research are just one tool - many other interests were demonstrated.

**10) Next Steps - ideas**

- Define role of biosphere reserve
- Raise awareness
- Community picnics within the area with rural municipal representatives
- Broaden membership and involvement in biosphere reserve activities.