



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

Actions	# Points
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"> • provides 2-way sharing (conversations versus education) • allows buy-in • research and economics tied with it 	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

Actions	# Points
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

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

<p>How? Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation and dialogue – not presentations • Inventory of what is being done → invite participation • Recognize local, traditional knowledge. • Visioning 	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.