

Research Priorities of the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve (2010-2015)

The following concepts are based upon discussions leading up to, and including, the RMBR Research and Knowledge Forum of March 2009.

Rural communities in the RMBR need to explore a range of opportunities that will enhance regional infrastructure, increase collaboration between communities, and encourage immigration of creative young people into the region. There is a need for applied, practical research in the following areas:

A. Sustainable Economic Development for Rural Communities

- how can we diversify the economic base for communities and families in the region? Agriculture and forestry, recreation and tourism, art and culture, and a variety of other small industry opportunities should be considered.
- how can we facilitate and encourage a creative entrepreneurial culture in the region?
- how can we increase cooperation between municipalities, First Nations and government agencies to maximize the benefit to all communities?
- what do local businesses need to succeed, in terms of infrastructure, marketing and other concerns, and how can costs and benefits be shared?
- how can we create a vibrant local economy that keeps youth in the community and encourages immigration into the region?
- how can communities in the Biosphere Reserve increase the benefits they receive from visitors who come from all over the world to visit Riding Mountain National Park?

B. Cultural and Social Adaptation in Rural Communities

- how do people value their relationships with the natural environment?
- what would make the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve more relevant to residents of the region?
- how can we encourage sharing of the rich cultural diversity of the area?
- how can we record and communicate the traditional knowledge and community history of the local people?
- what are the impacts of “out-migration” from the area, and how can this be reversed?
- how can the RMBR facilitate engagement of First Nations and other communities in cultural, social, economic and environmental exchange?

C. A Healthy Environment for Rural Communities

- how can environmental monitoring programs be coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries?
- what baseline information is available to give context to current and future conservation initiatives?
- can the RMBR fulfil a role as a centre of excellence for research and knowledge?
- how do people in the region value the various benefits of a healthy lifestyles, natural environments, and native biodiversity?
- what are the “environmental footprint” and the “carbon budget” of the RMBR region?
- how can we best begin the process of adaptation to climate change?
- what are the opportunities for renewable resources in the region (woodlots, fishery, specialty crops)?
- what economic opportunities exist in areas of alternative energy sources, green technologies, a waste reduction in the region?
- what are the potential roles and synergies of various industry, government, academic and other agencies with an interest in the region?