

Salish Sea Biosphere Initiative

Becoming recognized as the world's most liveable community

To Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee, Capital Regional District, Victoria

Local citizens are laying the framework for a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation for the CRD. This effort is in harmony with the aims of the Regional Sustainability Strategy.

There are a great many efforts that could be undertaken under the umbrella of a Biosphere Initiative - the process to obtain recognition is itself valuable - from fostering collaboration between organizations, building shared conservation vision, expanding parks, taking protective measures for the Juan da Fuca Electoral Area, instituting protective urban covenants, etc.

Relations with First Nations are taken seriously by UNESCO especially in light of Canada's acceptance of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Tribal Parks and indigenous community green mapping could be important components.

We offer the following for the committee's consideration at this time:

- © Present our vision and preliminary plans to your Committee on April 29 for recognition and support from the CRD.
- © Incorporate an aspirational target into the RSS for recognition of the Region as a Biosphere Reserve.
- © Include the Agricultural Land Reserves in the RSS maps as a reflection of the importance of these lands to the overall picture of local conservation.

We include with this letter an overview of the Salish Sea Biosphere Initiative, in the hope of advancing a productive conversation with your Committee. Even though a Biosphere Reserve does not in itself carry legal protective measures, it does deliver a strong global message that there are moral and ethical standards that we aspire to.

Thank you in advance for considering our requests. We look forward to ongoing discussions and further exploring our mutual interests.

Jan Mears, Aiden Abram and Marion Cumming
on behalf of the Salish Sea Biosphere Initiative

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The Capital Regional District is a rich and diverse area that includes numerous First Nations, a thriving island city, dense rainforests, rolling agricultural lands, and coastal beaches.

Biosphere Reserves are sites recognized under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme, which innovate and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development. They comprise coastal and terrestrial ecosystems in which biodiversity is reconciled with sustainable use, and the integration of water, land and biodiversity management is tested and demonstrated. There are more than 600 sites worldwide in 119 countries. There are currently 16 Biospheres in Canada, including two on Vancouver Island: Clayoquot Sound and Mt. Arrowsmith.

A United Nations Biosphere Reserve designation and the process to achieve it weaves together the significant conservation work being done in the Region. A Biosphere Reserve acts as steward of the region's conservation activities, helping to connect across siloes, build shared vision, convene best practices, and assist in comprehensive conservation strategy.

The creation and protection of a Biosphere Reserve typically does not require enactment of new legislation. Biosphere Reserves are governed by the UNESCO Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves, as opposed to 'hard' laws like international treaties or binding conventions. Designation cannot intrude on property rights, Aboriginal rights, jurisdictional and administrative authorities, or on the responsibilities of elected bodies.

What is a Biosphere Reserve?

- © Reserves are designed to reconcile the conservation of lands with their sustainable use. There are three zones: Core protected areas, buffer zones with limited human activity (e.g. ecoforestry), and transition zones with a range of sustainable activities.
- © Areas recognized as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves fulfill three basic tasks: conservation, sustainable development, and logistics (e.g. research, education, etc).
- © They carry no regulatory powers, but can be powerful tools for coordinating sustainability initiatives, gaining international support and recognition, and protecting First Nations cultures.
- © They can be an important dispute resolution forum and foster the acquisition and spread of knowledge.
- © Biosphere Reserves offer an aspirational role in legal decisions about development.