



Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Vision

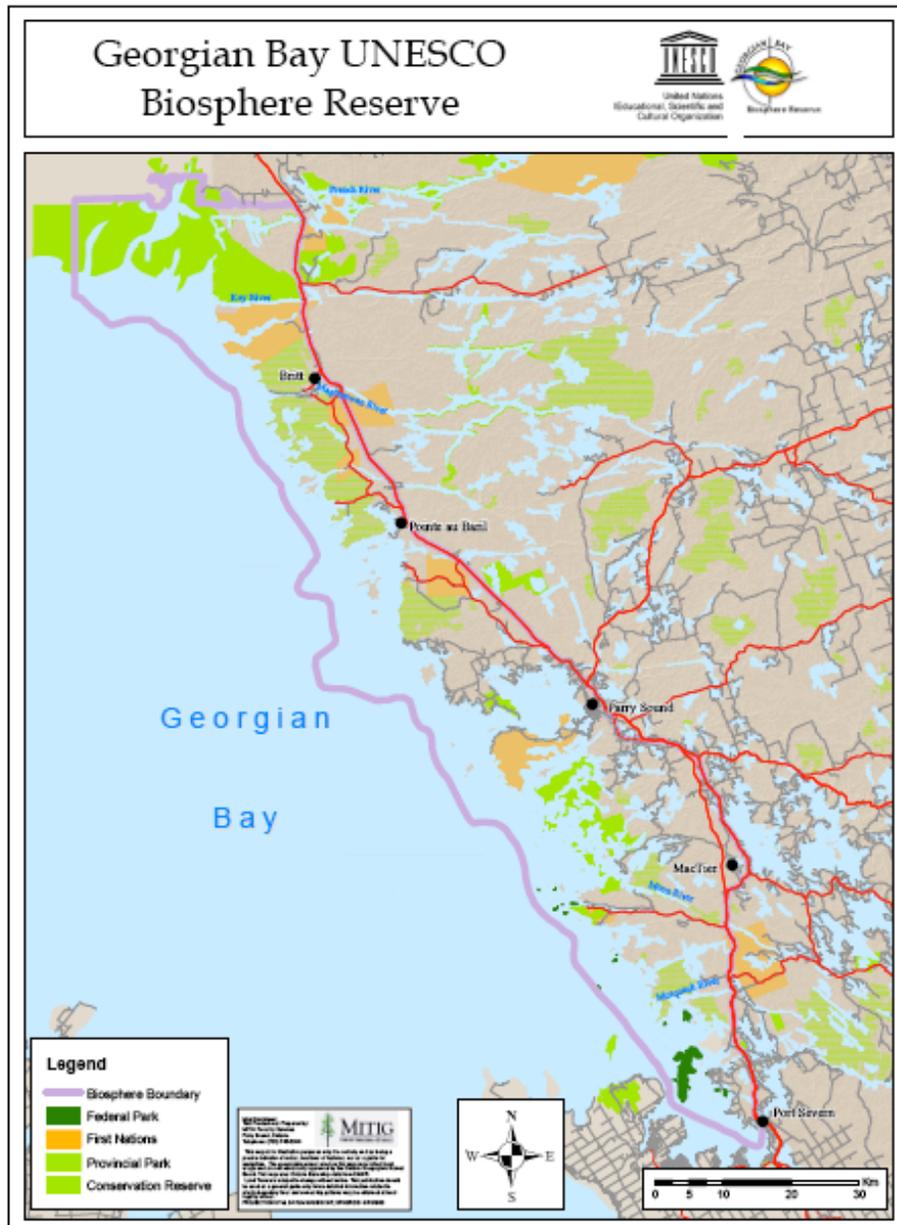
Following the mandate of UNESCO World Biosphere Reserves, our vision is to be an international model of sustainability for eastern Georgian Bay, while protecting the ecological values of the region.

Mission

To facilitate cooperative action in support of the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development through education and public outreach, that will foster a shared responsibility for the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve for the next seven generations.

Mandate

Biosphere Reserves are important ecosystems that are internationally recognized by UNESCO, where communities combine conservation of biodiversity with sustainable development. Biosphere reserve organizations provide logistic support through monitoring, education, research and training. They are nominated by communities within a shared landscape to demonstrate how to achieve sustainable livelihoods, vibrant culture and robust economies based on a healthy environment.



Designated by UNESCO in 2004, the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve aims to integrate core protected areas (such as provincial and national parks), surrounding buffer areas (mostly Crown Lands) and an outer transition area of communities that support sustainable development. The biosphere reserve does not affect existing jurisdictions but creates a forum for cooperation and operates through community partnerships.

Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve Inc. (GBBR) is the management organization that convenes partnerships and community programs to fulfill the UNESCO mandate. It is based in Parry Sound, Ontario.

According to the guiding international document for UNESCO biosphere reserves, “Biosphere reserves should preserve and generate natural and cultural values, through management that is scientifically correct, culturally creative and operationally sustainable,” (Seville Strategy, 1995).

This Strategy outlines program objectives, and recommended actions at the international, national, and biosphere reserve levels. Appendix C summarizes the 24 performance indicators, based on whether GBBR is actively engaged or partially engaged.

Eastern Georgian Bay

The Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve is an area of 347,000 hectares that stretches 200 km along the eastern coast from Port Severn to the French River, in the world’s largest freshwater archipelago, also known as the 30,000 Islands. The unique geography and geology of the area create more than 1,000 distinct habitat types that support a variety of rare species.

Who We Are

Established in 1998, the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve Inc. is a non-profit community organization. Its mission is to foster a shared responsibility for the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve for the next seven generations, through conservation, education, and sustainable development. The organization is comprised of volunteers from various walks of life with a common purpose. We strive to achieve four pillars of sustainable development: Environmental, Economic, Social & Cultural.

From 2004-2014, the GBBR grew from a volunteer-based organization to a fully operational organization supporting 4 full-time and up to 10 part-time staff, interns and project consultants. Through consistent education, networking and consultation, and a wide range of community partnerships and projects, the GBBR has effectively created a high level of community awareness and engagement.

How We Operate

Sustainable development can only be achieved by working with other groups and organizations committed to the same goals. Our work necessitates creating partnerships, building networks, facilitating dialogue, and coordinating programs with other partners.

“The management of each biosphere reserve essentially as a ‘pact’ between the local community and society as a whole. Management should be open, evolving and adaptive. Such an approach will help ensure that biosphere reserves - and their local communities - are better placed to respond to external political, economic and social pressures.” – Seville Strategy (1995)

Our role at GBBR Inc. is to help inform, educate, facilitate and provide leadership where it is needed. Once a program has been established, we explore ways to transfer leadership while maintaining an interest in the “big picture” of activities that support conservation and sustainable development in the region. We are able to act as a neutral forum for governments and civil society, and to mobilize the participation of organizations and committed individuals for a healthy community. We have an estimated 200 partner organizations across every sector. In order to build leadership for sustainability in our communities, we aim to support existing initiatives, or initiate them where needed. Once other partners are actively engaged, or a program is sufficiently established to become sustainable, we work to transfer leadership.

Our Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Conserve Biodiversity and Natural Capital

Restore and maintain the ecological integrity of the region through collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, communication with the public and decision-makers. Measure changes in ecosystem health at the landscape scale, identify potential threats, and key opportunities for environmental protection at the local and regional level.

Goal 2: Promote Sustainable Development

Facilitate public dialogue and practical initiatives at the community level, through education and demonstrations of sustainability initiatives in the private and public sectors. Build capacity for sustainability planning and implementation through partnerships. Promote “healthy communities” as a central theme of our work to address livelihood and quality of life issues, social and economic equity and integration, and responsible resource management.

Goal 3: Build a Culture of Sustainability through Education

Enhance local environmental awareness and skills through learning opportunities for all ages, focused on our natural and cultural resources, as well as sustainability issues, and enable public participation in conservation and sustainable development activities.

Goal 4: Expand GBBR Presence

Continue to use education in all its forms to establish the presence, mandate and core values of the GBBR and the UNESCO biosphere reserve program. Strive to actively involve all geographic parts of the region (north-south, outer Bay and inland lakes) and the diverse stakeholders, including cottagers, boaters, residents, First Nations, and visitors.

Goal 5: Maintain and Build Internal Organizational Capacity

Strengthen the organization’s capacity to fulfill its mandate, manage programs effectively and establish alliances within and outside the community to share information and expertise, and enhance local visibility.

Goals	CONSERVATION	Timing
1. Build Network Capacity	<p>1.1 Consult widely with conservation stakeholders to confirm priority action areas and ensure effective networking and collaboration. Host regular gatherings of science, research, and monitoring stakeholders, as needed.</p> <p>1.2 Document studies within the Biosphere Reserve on a regular basis and make them available on the gbr.ca website and in the Wilfred Laurier University archive.</p> <p>1.3 Work with partners to identify research needs and potential projects for interested students and universities.</p> <p>1.4 Integrate the biosphere reserve into future conservation planning. Assess the need for a landscape-scale “Conservation Action Plan” for the region by networking with key partners.</p>	<p>Ongoing and informal consultations.</p> <p>Bi-annually</p> <p>2016-2017</p> <p>2016-2018</p>
2. Communicate Science	<p>2.1 Expand the “State of the Bay” ecosystem health report card program with partner organizations to fulfill identified research needs and action priorities.</p> <p>e.g. Update “Large Natural Area” models for measuring habitat values (eg. connectivity) Identify critical fisheries issues and responses; report them to the public. Include key themes of public interest (eg. climate change, invasive spp).</p> <p>2.2 Develop “best practices” water quality monitoring and coordinate the program with local government and citizen volunteers throughout the region.</p> <p>2.3 Develop a 2018 “State of the Bay” report with partner organizations, building on the success of the 2013 report.</p> <p>2.4 Offer “State of the Bay” public workshops associated with the report.</p> <p>2.5 Clearly communicate key issues & trends to public and decision-makers.</p>	<p>2015-2018</p> <p>2014-2016 2015-2017 2017-2018</p> <p>2015-2018</p> <p>2016-2018</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2015; 2018</p>

3. Promote Stewardship	<p>3.1 Engage citizens and decision-makers in conservation & stewardship programs.</p> <p>3.2 Host a “State of the Bay” conference to showcase the range of scientific research and environmental issues in Georgian Bay-Lake Huron; showcase GB5 partners’ work.</p> <p>3.3 Support citizen science in the areas of water quality monitoring, especially in areas where data is lacking (eg. Lake Partner Program in Ontario)</p> <p>3.4 Promote wildlife and monitoring programs for the public through education and technology (eg. Ontario Herptology Atlas app; Invasive species; “Loon Survey”)</p> <p>3.5 Continue to support Species at Risk outreach and best practices.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2015-2017</p> <p>2015-2018</p> <p>2015-2018</p>
EDUCATION		
4. Support educational programs for students	<p>4.1 Consult widely with education stakeholders to confirm priority action areas and ensure effective networking and collaboration (via Education Advisory Committee). Strive to include geographic and cultural representation, youth and elders.</p> <p>4.2 Work with the schools and other education partners in the region to engage teachers and students in understanding the biosphere reserve, and related themes.</p> <p>4.3 Expand education for sustainable development, using “Lessons-in-a-Backpack” in local environments (eg. school yards, trails, parks) to enhance ecological literacy.</p> <p>4.4 Review and improve online resources, including curriculum lesson plans for download, the website, the links & support resources. <gbbbr.ca/education></p> <p>4.5 Assess the collaborative potential of other educational groups and agencies to create synergy and complementary education products (e.g., parks, universities and colleges, nature clubs, research foundations, stewardship council or land trust, etc.)</p> <p>4.6 Respond to, and invite, higher education institutions that might participate in GBBR’s conservation, education, and sustainable development goals.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>2015-2016</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>2015-2016</p> <p>As needed.</p>
5. Create summer learning opportunities	<p>5.1 Expand “Kids in the Biosphere” with interested partners (e.g., municipalities, cottage associations, First Nations, summer camps, etc.)</p>	<p>2015-2017</p>

	<p>5.2 Design and offer programs in partnership with other groups (see 4.5)</p> <p>e.g. Pilot a “Biosphere Camp” day program with interested partners.</p> <p>5.3 Reach out to the northern and southern regions of the Biosphere Reserve with educational programs and products through partners.</p>	Ongoing.
<p>6. Provide a forum for learning and sharing knowledge within and between communities</p>	<p>6.1 Enhance local environmental awareness and skill through learning opportunities for all ages focused on our natural and cultural resources, as well as sustainability issues, and enable participation in conservation and sustainable development activities.</p> <p>e.g. a) Films That Make You Think series b) Gardening & Local Food workshops or events c) Green Business Speakers (certification, cost-savings, best practice) d) Sustainable Behaviours (energy efficiency, green buildings, etc)</p> <p>6.2 Build relationships with those individuals interested in linking First Nations with the biosphere reserve, and identify partnership projects that will be led by First Nations.</p> <p>e.g. a) Document oral teachings about traditional use of resources (plants, fish, animals). b) Signage that teaches people where they are welcome to go and where is sacred, using templates from other communities for Aboriginal Tourism. c) Species at Risk education workshops and signage in area communities, and an exchange of traditional and scientific knowledge. d) Translation of traditional place names, to share cultural knowledge in the area. e) Potential themes for children’s books about the people and the land.</p> <p>6.3 Invite interested individuals and representatives of area First Nations to join a “Cultural Advisory Committee” for GBBR, to identify priorities for collaboration.</p> <p>6.4 Create communications partnerships that will use GBBR’s key messages to advance community interests (eg. Wasauksing First Nation REZ 91.3 radio programming)</p>	<p>Ongoing, and as capacity exists.</p> <p>Ongoing, and open to interested individuals from any community.</p> <p>2016</p> <p>2015-2018</p>
<p>7. Support research & monitoring</p>	<p>7.1 Encourage use of the biosphere reserve for basic and applied research, particularly projects with a focus on local issues, interdisciplinary projects incorporating both the natural and the social sciences, and projects involving the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems, the maintenance of water quality and ecological integrity, and the sustainable use of natural resources.</p>	Ongoing.

	<p>7.2 Develop a functional system of data management for the use of research and monitoring results in the management of the biosphere reserve. <stateofthebay.ca></p> <p>7.3 Support the development and use of indicators of sustainability (in ecological, economic, social and institutional terms). (Consider a university course that measures sustainability of the biosphere reserve (eg. Queen’s University for Frontenac Arch BR)</p> <p>7.4 Promote the development of ecology field educational centres as facilities to support research, monitoring, data storage and sharing, visiting researchers, public and school education programs.</p> <p>7.5 Use the biosphere reserve for on-site training and for national, regional and local seminars and conferences. Partner with economic development leaders to do an opportunities assessment.</p>	<p>2015-2018</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2017 Consultation</p> <p>2018 Consultation</p>
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT		
<p>8. Facilitate public participation</p> <p><i>“Strengthen the community’s capacity to address social issues by building platforms for cooperation and developing systems for more informed decision-making.”</i></p>	<p>8.1 Organize forums and set up demonstration sites for the examination of socio-economic and environmental problems of the region, and for the sustainable utilization of biological resources important to the region.</p> <p>e.g. Review the public input received in 2004 and design a public process to determine the current and future directions of the biosphere reserves <i>as a region</i>. (i.e., beyond this organizational strategic plan for GBBR).</p> <p>a) Public Forum Oct 16-17 for the Town of Parry Sound “Healthy Communities Plan” b) Use the model of “Ma Ville, Ma Voix” from Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve c) Structure events for public engagement in both southern and northern parts of GBBR</p> <p>8.2 Facilitate information exchange and public dialogue to catalyze ideas on revitalizing current economic sectors by integrating sustainability concepts into business practices to enhance profitability and long-term viability.</p> <p>8.3 Encourage private sector initiatives to establish and maintain environmentally and socially sustainable activities in the region. Showcase examples of best practice.</p>	<p>Ongoing: - social services - education sector - tourism development - healthy community</p> <p>2016 Networking 2017 Forum & Plan 2017-2018 Actions</p> <p>Ongoing networks, seminars, and public Communication Plan</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>

	8.4 Encourage training programs for local communities and other local agents (such as decision-makers, local leaders and agents working in production, technology transfer and community development programs) in order to enable their full participation in the planning, management and monitoring processes of biosphere reserves.	2017-2018
9. Support Food Security	9.1 Working with community partners, identify priorities for community projects. e.g. a) Community Gardens, Food Banks, Good Food Box programs b) Community Kitchens, communal cooking & eating with meals to take home c) School Breakfast Programs, including bulk purchased Ontario produce d) Local Food Map & Charter for institutional and personal purchasing practices	2015-2017
	9.2 Learn from other regions (Ontario, Canada) to adopt best practices and create sustainable programs by planning and sharing resources and training volunteers	2016-2018
10. Expand Sustainable Tourism	10.1 Establish a local consultative framework in which the economic and social stakeholders are represented to advise GBBR on key directions, and collaborate on common goals. Eg. Ad hoc committees, working groups or project steering committees.	Ongoing.
	10.2 Build on the Communications & Marketing Plan to reach target audiences of tourism operators/businesses and tourists/visitors, using the best available tourism data.	2015-2016
	10.3 Promote visitors' information about the biosphere reserve, its importance for conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity, its socio-cultural aspects, and its recreational and educational programmes and resources.	Ongoing.
	Eg. Expand the "Amazing Places" pilot program with area partners in a provincial context, to provide authentic experiences. <visitamazingplaces.ca>	2015-2018
ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE		
11. Implement good governance	11.1 Review Constitution & Bylaws periodically, as needed, as GBBR's guiding document.	Ongoing.
	11.2 Support a strong and effective Board of Directors, through recruitment and training.	Ongoing.

	11.3 Ensure financial best practice, reporting and transparency.	Ongoing.
	11.4 Maintain good record-keeping; document GBBR operational process & networking.	Ongoing.
12. Have effective internal & external communications	12.1 Create an internal communications plan for Board, Management, and Staff.	2017
	12.2 Review current Marketing & Communications Plan and adjust goals, as needed.	2017
	12.3 Review Brand Guidelines and assess branding impact & new opportunities.	2017
13. Ensure organizational sustainability	13.1 Using financial planning tools and diversified revenue streams, create an organization that is resilient to change and one that can support sustainable growth.	Ongoing.
	13.2 Invest in mentorship, staff training and professional development to build new skill sets, share knowledge, and transfer leadership, as needed.	Ongoing and scheduled.
	13.3 Review Fundraising Plan and adjust goals, as needed.	2016, 2018
	13.4 Mobilize public and private funds, from businesses, NGOs and foundations, for the benefit of the GBBR and the biosphere reserve region.	Ongoing.
14. Participate in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves	14.1 Follow the developments of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme through international communications, and participate as needed.	Ongoing.
	14.2 Participate in UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves, as resources allow, including regional meetings (EuroMAB) and thematic working groups.	As resources allow.
	14.3 Participate in Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association activities, as resources allow, in order to strengthen the network and share experiences with other sites. Support the collaboration of provincial biosphere reserves (Ontario) to build capacity for all.	Annually, or more frequently on a project basis.

APPENDIX A. Organizational Structure

- **Board of Directors** (9-15 members)
 - Executive (Chair/President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary)
- **Internal Committees**
 - Governance
 - Human Resources
 - Communications
 - Fundraising
- **External Committees**
 - Conservation Advisory
 - Sustainable Community Development
 - Education Advisory
 - Cultural Advisory
- **Management Team** (General Manager, Communications Manager)
 - Senior Project Staff
 - Junior Project Staff
 - Interns, Co-op students, researchers
 - Consultants

APPENDIX B. Sample GBBR Program Areas & Activities

1. CONSERVATION

Species At Risk (SAR) – education, [online](#), stewardship projects, signage, municipal training

Life on the Bay – [online](#) guide & stewardship party workshops

State of the Bay – background report, 16-page magazine [online](#) & local workshops

Water Quality Strategy – coordinating science, monitoring, public education across townships

2. EDUCATION

Lessons-in-a-Backpack – expanded to 24 class lesson plans, [online](#), with some field trips

Water Festival – annually at Killbear Park for 120 grade 5/6, led by highschool students

Georgian Bay Day – available for camps

Kids in the Biosphere – activity booklet and program, resources [online](#)

3. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Biosphere Action Group – part of the Local Food movement, seasonal workshops, garden tips [online](#)

Community Gardens – 70 free plots in Parry Sound with 20% to food banks

Food Forum – for up to 80 people with workshops & farm tour

Active Transportation – committee, bike lanes, safer routes, bike to school/work, promote trails

Tourism – “Experience Georgian Bay” 4-part workshop series, 40 businesses

Tourism – “Amazing Places” showcasing ecological and cultural treasures within the biosphere

4. COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Signage – signs installed in 4 municipalities; 2 billboards in high traffic locations; SAR signage

Monthly electronic newsletters online to 1,000+

Regular newspaper coverage; ad space with B&B Association and Festival of the Sound

Social media presence – 2050 facebook & 1000 followers on twitter online; monthly reach of 50,000+

Brand development – brand guidelines and logo; download online

5. MEMBERSHIP, DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIP

Annual mailings for 200 members

Annual membership drive, renewal campaign and members' reception

Membership benefits to businesses (free marketing) and reporting on impact to them

Online donations encouraged

Corporate sponsorship potential, especially fundraising sponsors

Three fundraisers/year (bank matching program, pledge event, ticket gala)

APPENDIX C. International Performance Indicators

Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves

GBBR Active = X Partial = P

1. Survey made of stakeholders' interests (2004, 2010, scheduled for 2017)	X
2. Factors leading to environmental degradation and unsustainable use are identified	X
3. Survey made of the natural products and services of the biosphere reserve	X
4. Incentives identified for sustainable resource use by local populations	P
5. Plan prepared for equitable sharing of benefits (Canadian tax structure)	X
6. Mechanisms developed to manage, co-ordinate and integrate BR programs/activities	X
7. Local consultative framework implemented (e.g. participatory committees)	X
8. Regional demonstration sites developed (e.g. gardens, apiary)	P
9. Co-ordinated research and monitoring plan implemented (e.g. water quality)	P
10. Functional data management system implemented (library/archive)	-
11. Biosphere Reserve is used for developing and testing of monitoring methods	X
12. Biosphere Reserve is used for developing local indicators of sustainability	-
13. Local stakeholders included in education, training, research& monitoring programs	X
14. Information for visitors to the biosphere reserve developed (e.g. <i>Amazing Places</i>)	X
15. Ecology field centre developed at the biosphere reserve (other than parks)	-

Continued...

GBBR Active = X Partial = P

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| 16. Biosphere Reserve is used for on-site training activities | X |
| 17. A local educational and training program is in place | X |
| 18. Different zones of biosphere reserves identified and mapped | X |
| 19. Buffer/transition zones to promote sustainable development & preserve core | X |
| 20. Local community involved in planning and managing the biosphere reserve | X |
| 21. Private sector initiatives for sustainable environmental/social activities encouraged | X |
| 22. Information and promotional materials developed for biosphere reserve | X |
| 23. Strategies developed for mobilizing funds from businesses, NGOs and foundations | X |
| 24. Evaluation of the implementation of the Seville Strategy (UNESCO Periodic Review 2014) | X |