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U.S. BIOSPHERE RESERVE DIRECTORATE

REPORT TO THE U.S. NATIONAL MAB COMMITTEE

DESIGNATION OF U.S. MAB AREAS

AND

RECOGNITION OF ENTITIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE  
U.S. BIOSPHERE RESERVE PROGRAM

February 1996



# **U.S. Biosphere Reserve Directorate Report to the National MAB Committee**

## **Designation of U.S. MAB Areas and Recognition of Entities Contributing to the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program**

### **SUMMARY**

At the October 30 meeting of the U.S. MAB Executive Committee, MAB National Committee Chairman Dean Bibles underscored the need to expand participation of outside groups in achieving the goals of the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program (USBRP). He introduced the concept of a U.S. MAB designation to recognize areas making significant contributions toward USBRP goals, but which may not be interested or ready to pursue UNESCO designation as a Biosphere Reserve. The Committee requested the Biosphere Reserve Directorate to further develop this idea and report back at the next meeting.

On the basis of discussions at its meeting in late January in Riverside, California, the Directorate proposes to recognize contributions to the goals of the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program in two ways. The first is through designation of areas, either as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves or through the proposed new category of U.S. MAB Areas. The second is through U.S. MAB recognition of groups, organizations, programs and partnerships that are contributing to the goals of MAB and desire to be associated with the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program. In addition to U.S. MAB-affiliated Regional Biosphere Reserve Cooperatives (for which U.S. MAB issued guidelines in 1990), the Directorate proposes criteria for two additional levels of recognition: U.S. MAB Cooperative Planning Ventures and U.S. MAB Affiliates.

### **DESIGNATIONS OF AREAS**

#### **A. UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves**

The international designation applies to areas that satisfy UNESCO criteria for selection of Biosphere Reserves set forth in the Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves, approved by the UNESCO General Conference in November, 1995. Each designated Biosphere Reserve is a recognized a unit of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The protected areas and sustainable use areas that comprise a Biosphere Reserve are proposed by their administrators, recommended by the Biosphere Reserve Directorate, nominated by the U.S. National MAB Committee and designated by UNESCO. Endorsements of proposed nominations by potential partners in planning and implementing Biosphere Reserve functions are encouraged. (Detailed criteria are provided separately in the Directorate's Proposed Guidelines for Selection of Biosphere Reserves.)



## **B. U.S. MAB - designated U.S. MAB Areas**

The U.S. MAB - designated U.S. MAB Area designation applies to areas that are successfully demonstrating Biosphere Reserve functions, but cannot be nominated for UNESCO designation at this time. U.S. MAB Areas include (1) areas that possess the qualifications for designation as Biosphere Reserves under UNSECO criteria but have organizational frameworks in place that do not presently desire to pursue such designation; and (2) areas that meet some, but not all of the UNESCO criteria for designation and have organizations in place working to meet UNESCO designation criteria, even if they chose not to seek UNESCO designation.

The latter must meet the following guidelines to be considered for designation as a U.S. MAB Area:

- a. The area encompasses a mosaic of ecosystems representative of a biogeographic region, including a gradation of human interventions
- b. The area is significant for biodiversity conservation
- c. The area is of sufficient size to demonstrate sustainable development at a regional scale and maintenance of the ecological integrity of the region
- d. Has existing or proposed spatially defined locations that may evolve through additional measures into protected, sustainable use, and cooperative areas of a Biosphere Reserve
- e. Is subject to a public involvement process that will ensure the participation and support of public authorities, organizations, local communities, and private interests in undertaking the purposes of a U.S. MAB Area
- f. Has a framework for a growing organizational structure to carry out the internationally recognized functions of a Biosphere Reserve

Protected areas and sustainable use areas in a U.S. MAB Area are proposed by their administrators, recommended by the Biosphere Reserve Directorate, and designated by the U.S. MAB National Committee. Endorsements of proposed nominations by local partners and potential partners in the U.S. MAB Area are encouraged.

U.S. MAB Areas are full partners in the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program but are not part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.



**Table 1. Comparison of Categories of MAB Biogeographic Designations**

	<b>Biosphere Reserve</b>	<b>U.S. MAB Area</b>
Designation	UNESCO	USMAB
Fulfills recognized BR functions	Yes	Yes
Meets UNESCO selection criteria	Yes	Some or all
Requires Regional MAB Cooperative	Yes (new areas)	No
Participates in World Network	Yes	No
Participates in U.S. MAB Information System	Yes	Yes

### **RECOGNITION OF CONTRIBUTING GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The Biosphere Reserve Directorate proposes that U.S. MAB recognize groups, organizations, programs and partnerships that are making significant contributions toward harmonizing ecosystem conservation, research, education, local participation, and sustainable development at a landscape (seascape) or regional scale.

There are presently hundreds of stakeholder-based landscape and ecosystem entities that share common goals with the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program, but only a dozen or so that are presently on the path to establishing UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves. Some of these entities focus on particular functions, e.g., environmental education, long term ecological research. Others focus broadly on issues of regional sustainability. Still others focus on facilitating regional or international linkages that could help strengthen the Biosphere Reserve network.

The Directorate proposes that U.S. MAB recognize entities that desire to participate as cooperators in the U. S. Biosphere Reserve Program. Recognition would include groups, organizations and partnerships that are planning and implementing cooperative Biosphere Reserve programs, facilitating regional cooperation involving designated Biosphere Reserves or U.S. MAB Areas, or are developing valuable relevant experience in a region that presently lacks a MAB-designated area.

The Directorate recommends several levels of association with U.S. MAB Program based on contributions toward the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program (see Table 2), as follows:



## **A. MAB Cooperative Planning Venture**

A MAB Cooperative Planning Venture (CPV) is a cooperative program or project that is developing experience, methodologies, or management practices especially relevant to ecosystem management or sustainable regional development. CPVs may facilitate experimental programs and the development of innovative management approaches and models for consideration in the functional development of these areas. Recognition of CPVs is also envisioned as a vehicle for encouraging development of organizational frameworks in areas that may have the potential to become future Biosphere Reserves, and to help encourage endeavors to implement the Biosphere Reserve concept in the United States.

The U.S. Biosphere Reserve Directorate will encourage and facilitate communication with CPVs, e.g., through MAB electronic networks, case studies, and technical exchanges involving U.S. Biosphere Reserves. The Biosphere Reserve Directorate will recognize CPVs as cooperators in the USBRP through exchange of correspondence. CPVs will be eligible to participate in Directorate-sponsored programs and projects (e.g., small grants program).

Examples: Local watershed plans, Chicago Biodiversity Initiative, Catskills planning group, regional multi-species management plans.

## **B. U.S. MAB Affiliate**

A U.S. MAB Affiliate is a group, program, organization or partnership that identifies with the goals of MAB and the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program, and is working actively toward implementation of these goals in a particular ecosystem or landscape (seascape). Included are:

- Cooperative groups working to develop nominations of U.S. MAB Areas or Biosphere Reserves (e.g., steering committees in the Tijuana Watershed, Ozark Highlands) or additions to existing Biosphere Reserves,
- Organizations or programs working cooperatively with USMAB to promote particular Biosphere Reserve functions (e.g., The Nature Conservancy's Bioreserves Program, NSF's Long-Term Ecological Research Program, the National Biological Service's GAP Analysis Program)
- Cooperative regional organizations with expressed interests in furthering Biosphere Reserve goals (e.g., International Sonoran Desert Alliance), and
- Regional partnerships explicitly established to strengthen Biosphere Reserve functions (e.g., Mammoth Cave Area Biosphere Reserve Cooperative, Association for the Central California Coast Biosphere Reserve).

Entities recognized as U.S. MAB Affiliates may involve government agencies at all levels,



nongovernmental organizations, commercial interests, universities and research institutions, community groups, ~~and local citizens~~. U.S. MAB Affiliates participate in U.S. MAB information networks and are eligible to participate in Directorate-sponsored programs and projects (e.g., small grants) and receive MAB technical assistance for developing Biosphere Reserve nominations and programs.

U.S. MAB Affiliates are recognized by certificate from the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Directorate on the basis of their capabilities, interests and accomplishments in furthering the goals of the U.S. Biosphere Reserve Program.

### **C. Regional MAB Cooperatives**

Regional MAB Cooperatives are cooperative organizations, formally recognized by the U.S. National Committee and affiliated with U.S. MAB. Regional MAB Cooperatives explicitly identify with MAB. They are recognized as integral components of the U.S. MAB organization, and the principal framework for developing and integrating the functions of Biosphere Reserves in the particular biogeographic area. They may include a variety of structures and mechanisms to facilitate the voluntary participation of Federal, state, and local agencies, universities, nongovernmental organizations, and community groups. The purpose and structure of the Regional MAB Cooperative is set forth in an interagency or cooperative agreement, or other appropriate instrument that establishes the roles and responsibilities of partners. Formal affiliation of a Regional MAB Cooperative with the U.S. MAB Program is proposed by the partnership, endorsed by the Biosphere Reserve Directorate, and approved by the National Committee, which issues a certificate of recognition as a Regional Biosphere Reserve Cooperative affiliated with U.S. MAB.

Regional MAB Cooperatives follow U.S. MAB's guidelines for regional MAB organizations, approved by the National Committee and published in the U.S. MAB Bulletin in October 1990 (See Attachment).

Examples: Southern Appalachian regional MAB cooperative, consisting of the Federal-state Southern Appalachian MAB Cooperative and the nonprofit Southern Appalachian MAB Foundation; the proposed Colorado Rockies Regional Cooperative.



**Table 2. Comparison of Categories of U.S. MAB Affiliations**

	<b>Cooperative Planning Venture</b>	<b>U.S. MAB Affiliate</b>	<b>Regional MAB Cooperative</b>
Certificate of Recognition	No	Yes	Yes
Level of MAB Association	Directorate	Directorate	National
Explicitly Promotes MAB/BR Goals	No	Yes	Yes
Eligible for U.S. MAB Assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Figure 1: RELATIONSHIPS OF DESIGNATIONS TO REGIONAL MAB PROGRAMS**

