

Frequently Asked Questions about the Noosa Biosphere

When you say biosphere reserve, what do you mean?

- International concept around integrating conservation and sustainable development;
- UNESCO designation for recognition as a model of sustainability and living laboratory to better understand socio-ecological ecosystems;
- Assessed and awarded under UNESCO's program on Man and the Biosphere (MaB);
- Geographical site defining the biosphere zone;
- Administrative organisation to carry out the intent of the concept - the administrative body for the Noosa Biosphere is the Noosa Biosphere Governance Board that operates under the Noosa Biosphere Limited company (owned by Sunshine Coast Council);
- Sharing experience and learning nationally, regionally and internationally within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

How has the biosphere concept developed?

- 1995 - UNESCO's Man in the Biosphere conference, International Conference on Biosphere Reserves, identified actions to be developed into what is known as the Seville Strategy - attended by 400 experts from 102 countries to enable an evaluation on the role for biosphere reserves in the context of the 21st century.
- The Seville Strategy includes the following objectives:
 - Improve the coverage of natural and cultural biodiversity by means of the world network of biosphere reserves;
 - Integrate biosphere reserves into conservation planning;
 - Utilize biosphere reserves as models of land management and of approaches to sustainable development;
 - Secure the support and involvement of local people;
 - Ensure better harmony and interaction between the different biosphere reserves;
 - Integrate biosphere reserves into regional planning;
 - Improve knowledge of the interactions between humans and the biosphere;
 - Improve monitoring activities;
 - Improve education, public awareness and involvement;
 - Improve training for specialists and managers;
 - Integrate the functions of biosphere reserves;
 - Strengthen the world biosphere reserve network.

- 2008 - UNESCO held a congress in Madrid to build upon the Seville Strategy resulting in the Madrid Action Plan, that aims to:
 - Anchor the research, training, capacity building and aims of MAB regarding issues of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, reduction and adaptation to climate change, and socio-economic and cultural well-being of human communities;
 - Enable the active use of biosphere reserves as learning sites for sustainable development, i.e. demonstrating approaches to enhance cooperation between academic, political, practitioner and stakeholder communities to address and solve site specific problems on an environmental, economic and social basis;
 - Collect, collate, and communicate lessons learnt from more than 30 years of the work of the MAB Programme to reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss;
 - Contribute to the emergence of a new generation of professionals and practitioners who can serve as diplomats, ambassadors and managers/coordinators for linking global environmental agendas to national and local development aspirations.

What are some of the benefits of biosphere reserves?

- UNESCO recognition can serve to highlight and reward such projects to enhance people's livelihoods and ensure environmental sustainability;
- Designation of a site as a biosphere reserve helps to raise awareness among local people, citizens and government authorities on environmental and development issues;
- Help to attract funding from different sources;
- Help to contribute to a global network of high profile pilot sites or learning places to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

What does this mean for the Sunshine Coast?

- Working together in partnership with the community, industry and research/education groups;
- Learning through networking with an emphasis in cross-biosphere collaboration;
- Enormous potential for the Noosa Biosphere Reserve to be a catalyst for more cross-biosphere collaboration;
- Opportunity for targeted eco-tourism in the region;
- Awareness raising to help preserve the pristine environment of the Noosa Biosphere and maintain quality of life for residents.

Who drives the Man and the Biosphere program?

- The program is driven by the MAB Secretariat which is based in Paris. The Secretariat has staff which liaise with the biosphere reserves on a regional basis. Australia is part of MAB's Asia Pacific Region. Dr Thomas Schaff is the Manager of the MAB program in the Asia Pacific Region. The head of the MAB Secretariat is Dr. Ishwaran.

How long have biosphere reserves been in existence?

- MAB was launched in 1971 to catalyse a greater understanding and skills to support sustainable relationships between people and their environment.

How many biosphere reserves are there in the world?

- There are 507 sites worldwide in 102 countries.

How many biosphere reserves are there in Australia?

- There are currently 14 biosphere reserves in Australia. They all have different values and approaches. The Mornington Peninsula is most similar in operation to the Noosa Biosphere Reserve.
- The Noosa Biosphere Reserve is the first in Queensland.