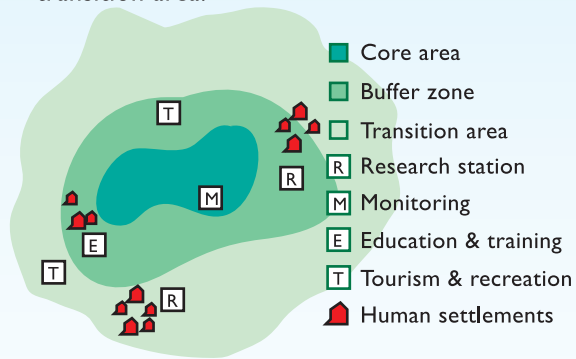


WHAT IS A BIOSPHERE RESERVE?

A Biosphere reserve is divided into three zones. The core, or relatively undisturbed area, the buffer zone and the human settlement area, known as the transition area.



CORE AREAS

Core areas are securely protected areas, such as national parks or reserves, where biological diversity can be conserved and researched. Other low impact uses, such as nature based recreation and education, are also encouraged. The core area may be regarded as a benchmark against which to measure the impact of development occurring outside the core. For example, the core area may be compared with other areas in the monitoring of ground water levels, water quality and the effects of plant and animal diseases. Their role as a reference gives added purpose to these parks and reserves. The management of core areas is focused on retaining its viability and reducing threats. Their role as a reference gives added purpose to these parks and reserves.

BUFFER ZONES

Buffer zones adjoin core areas and help protect them. These areas are used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices and may include both public and privately owned property. Buffer zones often include agricultural or forested land, the productivity of which may increase by being involved in the Biosphere Reserve program.

This program invites private landowners to voluntarily manage their land in sympathy with the core areas. Mutual benefits can be gained from cooperative management strategies, including protection of habitat and water catchments, improved fire control, reduced weed invasion, wildlife control and enhanced tourism, education and research programs.

TRANSITION AREAS

These areas are the heart of a true Biosphere Reserve, for it is within them that local communities, management agencies, scientists, economic interests and others work together to manage and develop the ecologically sustainable use of the area's resources. Transition areas may contain intensively managed farmland, forestry and other industries, port facilities, aquaculture and residential communities.

One outcome of getting people involved in the Biosphere Reserve program is to maintain land and marine productivity. The region's great natural values include internationally significant rainforests, coastal estuaries, wetlands and heaths, sandy surf beaches and a wealth of marine life. Participation is voluntary, but the incentive for individuals and enterprises to become involved is the recognition or accreditation they could receive as sound environmental managers. For example, in the case of primary producers, participation in the Biosphere program could provide marketing opportunities to brand the products coming out of the region.

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WHY BE PART OF UNESCO'S WORLD WIDE BIOSPHERE RESERVE NETWORK?

The aims of a Biosphere Reserve project are to preserve the important natural values of a region, to encourage and improve approaches to sustainable use and development, and to establish arrangements that make it easier to integrate conservation and sustainable use.

Most environmental problems are interconnected, so they need to be tackled on a larger time scale. A Biosphere Reserve does not replace the existing environmental programs of Commonwealth, State and Local governments, but aims to bring something extra to them by providing an organisational framework and incentives for a more integrated approach and enthusiasm for participation. Benefits include:

- promoting the global importance of the area;
- encouraging greater community involvement;
- improving communication and education networks with national and international bodies;

- promoting partnerships between different sectors of the community; and
- establishing research, monitoring, feedback and knowledge management capabilities.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF A WOLLUMBIN BIOSPHERE RESERVE

- Broad community acceptance, cooperation and active participation is essential to make the project a reality.
- Biosphere Reserve projects are community driven and provide an essential catalytic medium between local communities and their environment, local governments, regional and state bodies, and State and National governments. This extends overseas to UNESCO and to other local Biosphere Reserve communities around the world.
- Biosphere Reserve status demonstrates an aspirational ideal towards a common future that has to be ecologically sustainable. Actively embracing the practice of sustainability places us in the driver's seat rather than trailing along behind, increasingly confronted by problems.
- New and existing industries will benefit from this internationally recognised but locally driven program.

WHERE TO NOW?

The proposed Wollumbin Biosphere Reserve is likely to be administered by a foundation or trust. This would be an incorporated body that could form partnerships, receive donations and implement programs following community consultation.

The proposed Wollumbin Biosphere Reserve project is community based but will need the support of local governments, state bodies such as National Parks and Wildlife Services, Department of Land and Water Conservation, Planning NSW, tertiary education institutions and local industries.

Progress will depend on effective organisation, enthusiasm and the commitment of participants.

