



UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Proposal to the CRD

Environmental Services Committee

| April 16, 2024



Camossung q'emásənj
Urban Biosphere Region Project



The Greater Victoria UNESCO Urban Biosphere Project

- In August 2024 ~100 people, from a cross-section of organizations in the Capital Region, passed a resolution to nominate the Victoria Region as an Urban Biosphere Region. and requested the Capital Region District (CRD) to compile the nomination documents and forward them to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.
- A smaller planning group has brought us to where we are today.



RESOLUTION CARRIED AT THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE FORUM

The Greater Victoria NatureHood and the UNESCO Victoria World Heritage Project in collaboration with those organizations who steward the diverse natural and cultural environment of Greater Victoria, meeting at Government House under the patronage of Her Honour Janet Austin OBC, the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, on Thursday, August 29, 2024, do resolve:

The Greater Victoria NatureHood forward a request from this Forum to the Capital Regional District (CRD) that - in consultation with appropriate local Indigenous, political, academic and civil organizations - the CRD compile a set of supporting documents, as required, and forward same to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO for the International Coordinating Council, to nominate the Victoria Region as an Urban Biosphere Region. (Carried unanimously)

Proposed by Martin Segger representing the UVWHP and Bob Peart on behalf of the GVNH



What are Biosphere Reserves/Regions?

A UNESCO Biosphere is ‘a designation only’ recognition; however, it provides an international moral force for habitat conservation and an organizational framework to coordinate the social and economic initiatives of the several hundred local institutional, civil and corporate actors in the CRD.

1971

UNESCO Conference Paris, France



1971



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Man and
the Biosphere
Programme



759 biosphere reserves in 136 countries
19 in Canada
3 in British Columbia

BRIGHTON-HOVE ENGLAND

**THE FIRST URBAN BIOSPHERE RESERVE
2014**



Strategic Objectives

Four for all, Five for Canada



Conserve Biodiversity

Conserving and enhancing biological diversity



Science & Education

Support for research, education, monitoring, and information exchange



Sustainable Development

Balancing social, economic & environmental interconnections (SDGs)



Climate Change

Support mitigation and adaptation to climate change

Lead and support First Nations reconciliation efforts

Reconciliation



3 zones of biosphere reserves

Each biosphere reserve is organized into 3 interrelated zones, from lowest to highest human influence on nature

Core Zone

Buffer Zone

Transition Zone





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Why is the BR designation appropriate for the CRD?





Work to best practices



Part of a world-wide network



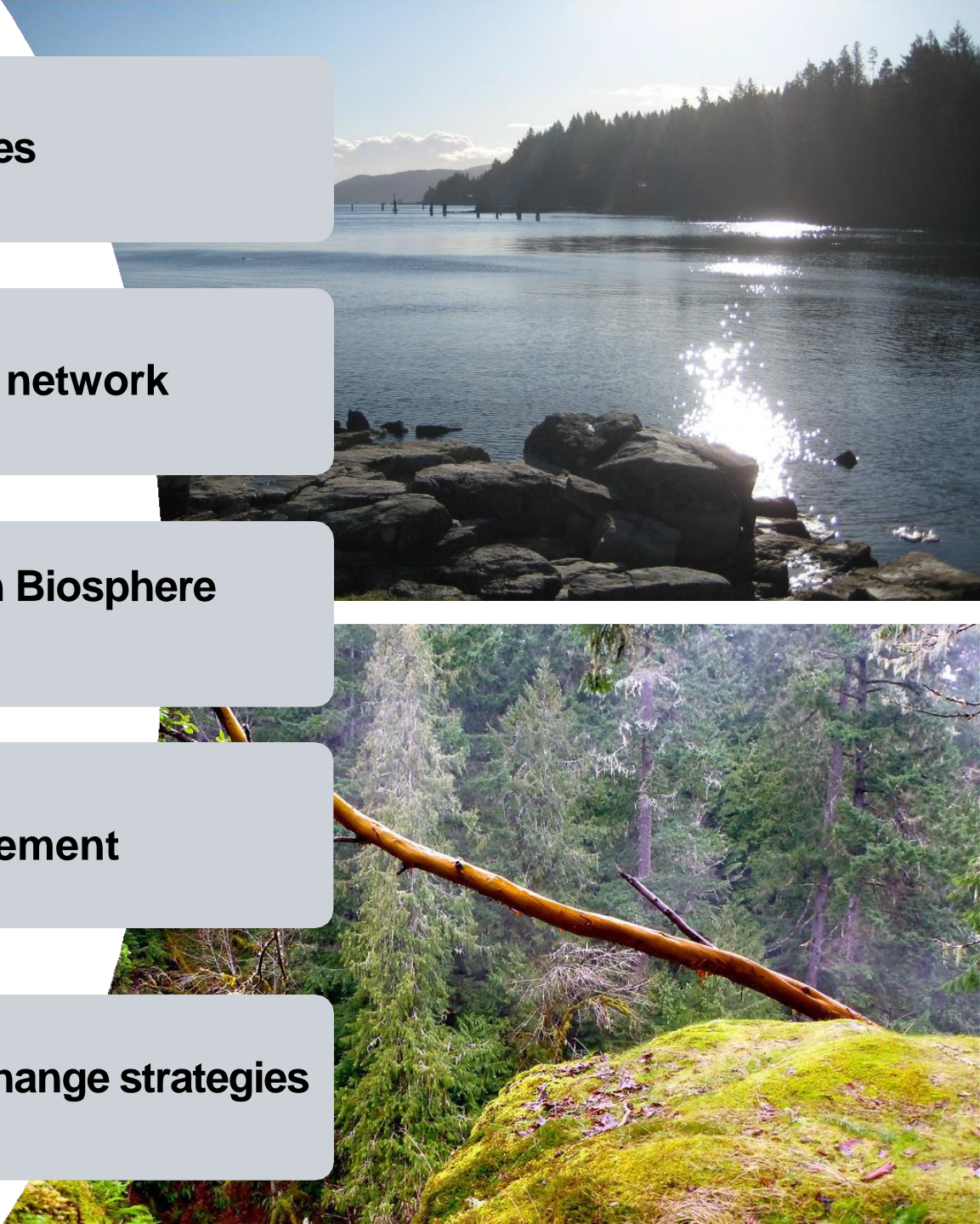
Emergence of Urban Biosphere Regions



Community Engagement



Enhanced climate change strategies for our Island home





**Support the aims of the
new CRD Bylaw #4575**



**Engage in Research
(university/college partnerships)**



**Membership in global sub-groups
(Urban or Coastal/Island)**



**Create a new framework for
regional cooperation
especially with First Nations**



Balance with Nature





Examples of Natural Resources:

Urban:

- Migratory Bird Sanctuaries: Gorge Waterway, Victoria Harbour
- Government House Garry Oak Woodlands
- Uplands & Pkols Parks
- Coastal Douglas Fir, Garry Oak/Camus and Arbutus ecosystems

Other:

- **300** Watersheds
- Gulf Island National Marine Park
- Trial Islands Ecological Reserve

Rural:

- Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt
- CRD Parks
- Swan Lake, Rithet's Bog





Examples of Cultural & Economic Resources:

- **63** Indigenous archaeological sites
- **57** Federal/Provincial Heritage Sites
- **400+** (est.) community habitat conservation groups
- Robust habitat and heritage protection law
- Multi-level funding
- Tourism: **60,000** jobs
- "Natural Environment" voted best feature in *Vital Signs* survey.





Timeline

Declare nomination

- August 2026

*At the Canadian Association of Biosphere Reserves
(called “Regions” in Canada) hosted by the
Nanaimo Malahat Biosphere Region group*

File Nomination

- December 2028

Declare Designation

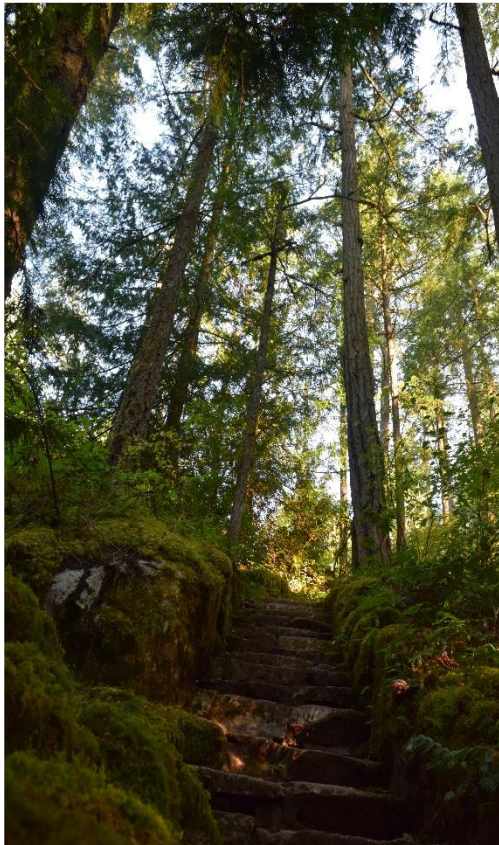
- December 2029





Next Steps

- Form a local roundtable governance structure of 15-18 people and organizations to represent the community.
- Establish a university/college base as the centre for research, supported by students and their projects.
- Assist the CRD in a 2-3 year consultation process with appropriate local indigenous, political, academic and civil organizations and compile the necessary supporting documents for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.



Our Ask:

That the following motion be forwarded to the CRD Board for consideration:

“In consultation with appropriate local Indigenous, political, academic and civil organizations the CRD compile a set of supporting documents, as required, and forward same to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO for the International Coordinating Council, to nominate the Victoria Region as an Urban Biosphere Region”.



Thank you!



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