

*Working toward a prosperous and environmentally secure future*



*Rocky Mountain Biosphere Reserve, Colorado. NPS photo.*

**What are biosphere regions?** Biosphere regions are special places where people and organizations cooperate to improve human livelihoods and sustain the benefits we receive from nature. Biosphere regions work to enhance the well-being of communities by achieving a harmonious relationship between people and the environment.



*New Jersey Pinelands Biosphere Reserve. J Brunell.*

### **Why is nature important to well-being?**

Our livelihoods and quality of life depend on healthy lands, air and water. The benefits of productive soils for farming, clean water for drinking and fisheries and wildlife, opportunities for outdoor recreation, natural systems for flood control and carbon sequestration, and other important resources all derive from a healthy environment. Our cultural history and spiritual well-being also depend on conserving natural and cultural landscapes.

**What are the main goals of biosphere regions?** Our environment is undergoing rapid change. Communities and organizations cooperate in biosphere regions to conserve the beauty and productivity of nature and ensure the benefits of a healthy environment. By working together at larger geographic scales, diverse groups of citizens and organizations make a greater positive impact on human livelihoods and the environment. Biosphere regions strive to be centers of collaboration and innovation for using local knowledge, the sciences, and education to create positive relationships between people and nature. They aim to give people and communities the means to thrive in harmony with their environment.

**Where are biosphere reserves located?** Twenty-eight biosphere reserves across the continental United States, and Alaska, Puerto Rico and Hawai'i span a wide variety of lands and waters, from deserts to mountains and rivers to oceans, and rural lands to urban areas. They include state and national parks, national forests, national marine sanctuaries other conservation areas. Biosphere regions are unique because they also include private lands and communities where people live and work. Together these special places provide tremendous environmental and economic values to local people and the nation.

**What are the benefits of participation?** Biosphere regions are recognized internationally for their unique beauty, cultures and economic values. Local communities and organizations build on this recognition to create partnership programs and gain capacity for economic development and conservation. The cultural values, practices and diversity of local peoples are included and respected. Participation in the U.S. Biosphere Network and World Network of Biosphere Reserves offers opportunities for training and development and exchanges of best practices.

**How are they established and structured?** Over 700 biosphere reserves in 129 nations worldwide are recognized by the international Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB).



*Mammoth Cave Biosphere Region. Bounty of the Barrens Farmers Market, Glasgow, Kentucky.*

Biosphere reserves always stay under the sovereign jurisdiction of their home countries, states and local jurisdictions. Participation is voluntary and cooperative. Partners include businesses, industry, agriculture, economic development entities, nongovernmental organizations, universities, civic organizations, native American tribes, state, federal and local governments and more, depending on their unique goals and landscapes. A local advisory group enables partners to work for consensus.

**What roles do people have in biosphere reserves?** The health and well-being of people are fundamental to biospheres. Whether they live close to the land, work locally in the modern economy, or directly manage public or private lands, people earn their livelihoods in ways that sustain the beauty and benefits of nature. People in biospheres work toward a shared vision of a prosperous and environmentally secure future.

**For more information:** Cliff McCreedy, Coordinator, U.S. Biosphere Network, [cliff\\_mccreedy@nps.gov](mailto:cliff_mccreedy@nps.gov) or Brian Houseal, Chair, U.S. Biosphere Network, [bhouseal@gmail.com](mailto:bhouseal@gmail.com)