

The Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve: A Brief History

The Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve officially came into being in 2000. The designation for the region was not a result of one action, person or organization. Rather, the idea of a biosphere reserve designation was floated on many fronts and began to gather momentum in the 1990s. The milestones noted below are not exhaustive, yet point to some of the key initiatives and actions that coalesced to result in the UNESCO designation.

- 1970** UNESCO creates the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program, out of which comes the idea of an international network of biosphere reserves. These sites promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. They are places that seek to reconcile conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through partnerships between people and nature. Biosphere reserves are seen as ideal places to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to sustainable development.
- 1978** Canada gets its first biosphere reserve: Mont Saint-Hilaire in Quebec.
- Fall, 1984** Land-use disputes begin in Clayoquot Sound when local First Nations, individuals, and organizations, including the Friends of Clayoquot Sound, resist proposed logging on Meares Island.
- 1988** Dr. Philip Dearden, a professor in the University of Victoria's Department of Geography publishes a paper, *Protected Areas and the Boundary Model: Meares Island and Pacific Rim National Park*. (*Canadian Geographer*, 32(3), 256-265) which discusses the idea of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation for Clayoquot Sound.
- 1991** The Clayoquot Biosphere Project is formed "to understand, protect and restore the diversity and integrity of the Clayoquot Sound ecosystem." The not-for-profit organization also supports efforts to "establish United Nations Biosphere Reserve status for the Clayoquot Sound region." (Note: This organization is different from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust. The Clayoquot Biosphere Project operated until 1999.)
- April 22, 1993** The Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE) releases a report that makes nine recommendations. Recommendation 4 states: The government supports the designation of the Clayoquot Sound area as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, to include a federal Model Forest, with activity in the area to be evaluated against Canadian obligations under the UNCED Biodiversity Treaty.

- June 2, 1993** The Government of British Columbia releases its *Response to CORE's Public Report and the Recommendations Regarding Issue Arising from the Clayoquot Land Use Decision* (announced April 13, 1993). It supports the CORE recommendation to pursue Biosphere Reserve status in "consultation with local groups and the Nuu-chah-nulth nation."
- June, 1993** The Clayoquot Biosphere Project hosts a two-day workshop which explores the concept of a biosphere reserve with Clayoquot Sound communities.
- March, 1994** The First Nations of the region sign the Interim Measures Agreement (IMA) with the Government of British Columbia. Through this process, the Central Region Board (CRB) is formed. One of the CRB's responsibilities is to establish a panel to explore the idea of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for Clayoquot Sound.
- 1996-97** Community forums and meetings are held to discuss the idea of a Biosphere Reserve. In June 1997, the CRB begins a draft proposal to UNESCO.
- 1998** Formal deliberations begin and a Nomination Working Group is formed to oversee the draft nomination document. The group includes local mayors, the chair of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, and First Nations leaders.
- January, 1999** Nomination document sent to UNESCO.
- January 21, 2000** The Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve becomes part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
- May 5, 2000** Dedication ceremony for the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve, held in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve.