



Strategy Planning for the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve

Environmental Education Workshop Report  
(26 February 2020)

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is in its early phases of development, currently with a strategic direction encapsulated in six key focus areas namely 1) landscape coordination; 2) Town and land use planning capacity development; 3) Water pollution; 4) Green enterprise development; 5) Membership and 6) Youth environmental education. In order to develop a mature strategy for the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve we recognize the importance of engaging and working with stakeholders in the landscape to further develop our strategy within each of the focus areas.

The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is employing a collaborative and participatory approach to further the vision and strategic direction for a successfully functioning biosphere reserve. This approach is being pursued through a series of workshops for each focus area. The workshops are designed to provide a space to engage with stakeholders in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve domain, and to begin the development of a strategy by drawing on the experts and experiences of stakeholders. We are asking stakeholder to help the biosphere reserve to identify challenges and their resolutions in the medium and long term.

This report provides an introduction to the biosphere reserve concept and the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve domain and documents the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop of three under the youth environmental education focus area which was held on Friday 26 February 2020 at the Environmental Education Centre located at the Garden Route Botanical Gardens in George. The workshop invited environmental education practitioners and non-governmental organizations operating in the field, government agencies and other interested individuals and organizations.

This first youth environmental education workshop began with mapping the youth environmental education landscape by inviting participants to introduce their current activities providing details of who they work with and the topics they focus their activities on. Thereafter a discussion was facilitated to identify gaps and needs in youth environmental education in the biosphere landscape. This report primary serves as a record of the outcomes from the two open discussion that took place.

Furthermore, a short post workshop assessment questionnaire was distributed to participants at the 1<sup>st</sup> youth environmental education workshop. This questionnaire sought the participant views and opinions of the workshop and took the form of short and open questions related to the workshop facilitation and outcomes. This report ends off by providing the results of the post workshop assessment.

## **2. BIOSPHERE RESERVE CONCEPT**

The UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme launched in 1971 aimed at improving relationships between people and their environments and to promote economic development that is socially and culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable. MAB aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.

MAB operationalizes their aim through a World Network of 701 Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) in 120 countries across the globe. All these biosphere reserves aim to be model sites for sustainable relationships between people and nature and represents an exciting and new approach to landscape management. These sites are essentially complex social ecological systems (SES) (Figure 1) where humans and nature are intertwined and where the landscape holds value for people living in it. "The economy and society are embedded within the biosphere, as intertwined parts of the planet. The biosphere serves as the foundation upon which prosperity and development ultimately rest." (Folke et al. 2016).

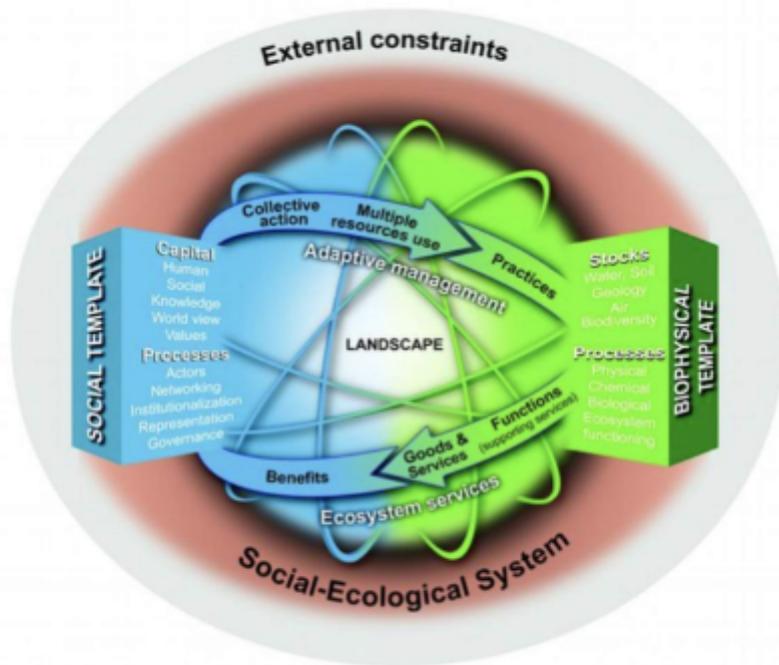


Figure 1. A social ecological systems (SES) framework ensuring humans and nature are considered simultaneously with the developments in the landscape.

Biosphere reserves are established to be sites of excellence to explore and demonstrate landscape level approaches to conservation and sustainable development. They are “science for sustainability support sites where inter disciplinary approaches to understand and manage changes and interactions between social and ecological systems are tested. They are mechanisms by which to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The United Nations 17 Sustainable development goals (SDGs), emphasizing the biosphere as the basis (SDGs 1,11,16,7,3,4,5,2) and the economy (SDGs 8,9,10,12). 6 Garden Route Biosphere Reserve Workshop, urbanization, land use and land use change and capacity building

### 3. GARDEN ROUTE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The newly formed Garden Route Biosphere is a region both socially and ecologically rich with over 500 000 people and a network of active social actors living and working within a biologically diverse natural habitat with great natural beauty that underpins a strong tourism economy in the region. The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is located within the Cape Floristic Region along the southern coast of the country (Figure 3). The area includes the Tsitsikamma, Goukamma and Robberg Marine Protected Areas, Wilderness Lake RAMSAR site, Garden Route National Park, the Nelson Bay Cave and the Langkloof Valley. The Garden Route National Park, primary core area of the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve, also forms part of the Cape Floral Region Protected Areas World Heritage Site, inscribed by UNESCO in 2004.

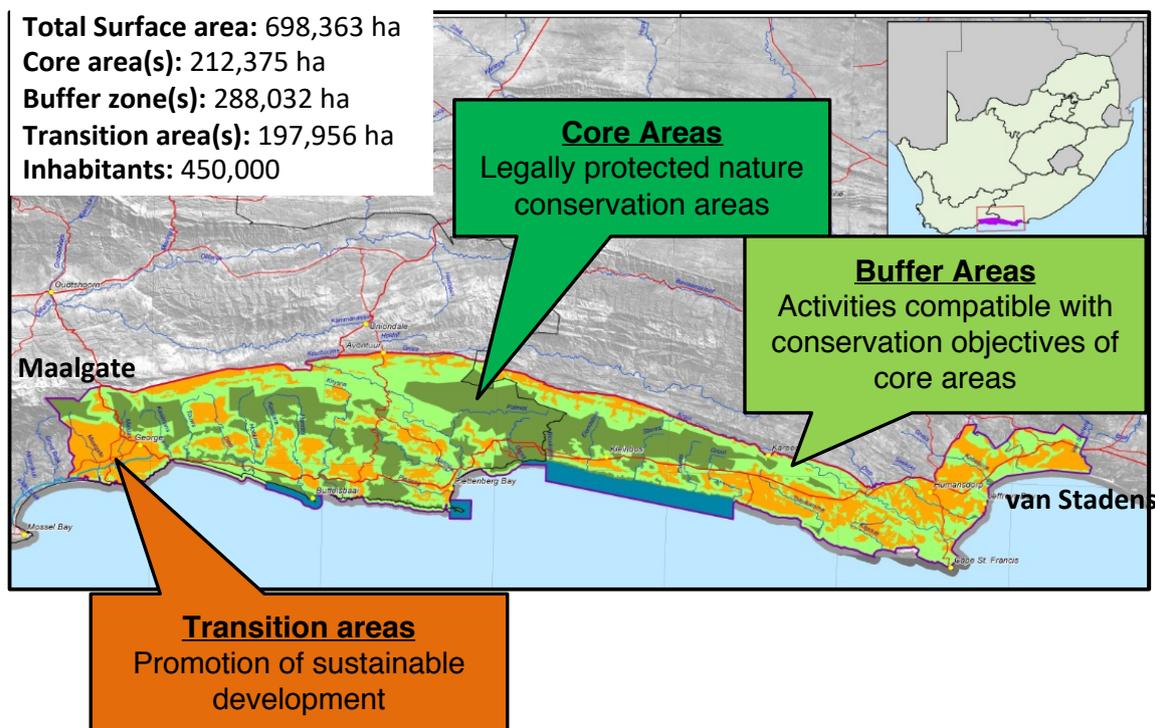


Figure 3. The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve

In this era of the Anthropocene<sup>1</sup>, the region is threatened by climate change, increasing urbanization and a multitude of land uses including associated waste, the spread of invasive alien species and unsustainable harvesting of natural resources. These threats are coupled with a burgeoning population, high levels of inequality and unemployment, low skills levels and limited social capital. These social and ecological drivers threaten the sustainability of the region and have informed the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve key focus areas.

#### 3.1. Developing a strategy for the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve

The Garden Route Biosphere Reserves overarching strategy looks at the landscape through a social ecological systems lens and considers our natural and social capitals, processes, our strengths,

<sup>1</sup> relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. "we've become a major force of nature in this new Anthropocene epoch"

weaknesses, as well as drivers in the system and threats to our assets. This strategy now consolidates the biosphere reserve efforts into six key focus areas namely:

- 1) Landscape Management Coordination, focused on leveraging the rehabilitation and protection of ecological infrastructure in the biosphere reserve;
- 2) Green Enterprise Mentorship Development, primarily aimed at developing skills and capacity in the youth;
- 3) School Youth Biosphere Programme, to work with school goers, colleges and universities;
- 4) Biosphere Membership, to develop the necessary infrastructure to make a connection with stakeholders in the biosphere reserve;
- 5) Water Pollution, aimed at improving the state of rivers and estuaries in the biosphere reserve and especially related to pollution; and
- 6) Town / Land Use Planning Capacity Development focused on sustainable cities development and improved decision-making regarding land use planning in the biosphere reserve.

The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is not an implementing agent in the landscape but rather one that plays a co-ordination and facilitation role. We therefore firmly acknowledge the need to work together with our stakeholders. We ask how we can support and strengthen existing agents and action taking place. In the coming year we wish to collaboratively develop key focus area strategies, funding proposals and action plans, building on what our stakeholders are currently doing in each of the areas. We believe our success lies in a bottom-up process working with agents in the landscape to collaboratively develop a mature strategic direction for the GRBR.

### *3.1.1. Stakeholder engagement*

The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is undertaking a series of workshops for each key focus area to provide an opportunity to engage with stakeholders and agents in the landscape and to collaboratively develop a strategy. The Garden Route Biosphere Reserve hosted a first stakeholder engagement meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, inviting a diversity of stakeholders in the landscape to introduce them to the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve strategic direction and the various key focus areas. To further develop these key focus areas the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve will be hosting a series of three workshops for each of the key focus areas in the coming months. These workshops are to facilitate the formulation of working groups and stakeholder collaboration. These workshops will lay the groundwork for the development of Key Focus Area strategies by bringing together relevant and interested stakeholders for the specific key focus areas. The workshops aim to provide a space for:

- Engaging with stakeholder in the landscape
- Relationship building and the development of social capital
- Laying the groundwork and collaboratively developing a strategy for the key focus areas
- The emergence of a working group for each focus area of committed individuals / organizations who find congruence with the aims and objectives of the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve and see the reserves focus areas aligning with their current activities

## **4. NOTES OF THE STRATEGY PLANNING FOR THE GARDEN ROUTE BIOSPHERE RESERVE: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

The remainder of this report is focused on the outcomes of the first Youth Environmental Education Workshop held at the Environmental Education Centre at the Garden Route Botanical Gardens on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. These notes document the outcomes of the workshop which was primarily aimed at mapping the education landscape and identifying gaps and needs in youth environmental education in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve domain. The first workshop invited participants to introduce their organization and briefly share with the group what their education focus is and their

current activities. A second open discussion was facilitated around the gaps and needs in youth environmental education in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve.

#### 4.1. Conversation 1 - organizational introduction and current education activities

To begin the conversation Dr Bianca Currie, the Chairman of the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve, invited stakeholders to consider how their work and current activities can find congruence with the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve aims and objectives and if they can see their current work dovetailing with the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve Youth Programme. She also asked participants to consider how the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve can be used to leverage support for current successes and for addressing the gaps and needs in the landscape. She asked what role or part the participating organizations can play in the strategy and the landscape. Participants feedback can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Stakeholder organizational introductions and current activities related to youth environmental education.

<b>Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF)</b>	Have a lot of partners and an established partnership with the UNESCO Youth Forum. They engage by doing community outreach programmes (3 years active), raising awareness, good green deeds, environmental calendar days, and the Yes Programme. They have many funders and integrate their programmes on a global scale.
<b>Department of Environmental Affairs and development planning (DEADP)</b>	Focus is placed on environmental days at schools with the aim to accommodate at least 50 students at a time, however, it can prove to be difficult to get schools to participate as they have trouble with transport. These environmental days are not targeted at specific schools; thus, any school is welcome to participate.
<b>George Municipality</b>	Work with SANParks and Cape Nature and participate in social development within the municipal area. They visit communities and clinics and are funded by DEA and work with a lot of conservancies.
<b>SANParks, People and Conservation department (Knysna section)</b>	Stakeholder engagements with the municipality, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and Department of Education. Schools and communities are beyond the park's boundaries, instead park-based activities such as sandy and rocky shore explorations, clean ups, excursions, and camping activities are hosted at the park if schools and the community are interested. All age groups are welcome to join in on the activities, often when schools or the community engage with these activities Knysna section gets 'once-off' groups, sometimes more than twice a year ranging from 8 – 120+ in group size. This can prove to be problematic as capacity within the park is a big problem. Knysna section does not have any funders and make use of their own operational budget.
<b>SANParks (Tsitsikamma section)</b>	SANParks week which focusses on Environmental Education, there are different themes for the Environmental Education week. The parks offer free access country wide in September which attracts +-5000 people (record from 2019). They engage with all age groups but target Grade 5 – 7. They offer 'a Kids in Parks' Programme (for 500 kids) and have youth hubs in SANParks. They have five-week quality programmes which focusses on awareness, works with Working on Fire and MTO and offer biodiversity social projects. They have Community relations (with isolated communities) and help the unemployed who are skilled. SANParks is funded by an operational budget and DEA. They work together with other conservancies according to the Environmental Calendar (have environmental days). They have science labs and nurseries (legacy projects). Their general comment was that: 'We need the voice of youth, like a high school student.'

<b>SANParks</b> (Science Services)	Connect science with awareness and experiments by collaborating with students in an outdoor setting to identify species. They participate in climate change presentations with high schools, work closely with educators, and work with older age groups. Their beneficiary groups are broad, and they aim to carry knowledge over from older generations to the younger generations. They are in the process of getting a structure in place to achieve this.
<b>Cape Nature</b>	Engage with schools, communities and farmers and run programmes with them every month which include clean ups and capacity building. There are three themes which they focus on when engaging with schools, communities and farmers and that is water, fire and species conservation. Cape Nature has a collaboration with Working on Fire which can be useful when running programmes dedicated to fire.
<b>Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA)</b>	Small committee (core organizing committee) which makes use of modern technology for more communication for example distributing monthly newsletters. They support other organizations and engage with monthly outings. They do not have any funding or costs, any funding that is received is small and comes from charging participants.
<b>The Knysna Basin Project</b>	More impactful ongoing projects is to equip teachers with resources to teach environmental education. They ensure that the Environmental Education programmes are linked with the school curriculum, they often work with Grade 4 – 7 learners, teaching them about rocky shores. They conduct visits to schools and encourage learners to be a part of an Eco club which gathers on Wednesdays and Fridays. The Knysna Basin Project is very active in the social media domain and is able to fund their projects via WWF and the Table Mountain Fund.
<b>ORCA Foundation</b>	Volunteer programme. They engage with Grade 4 – 7 and have outreach days and have a lunchbox theater. They note that the learners look forward to participating and learning. A general comment made was to: “Get Nature’s Valley Trust to attend the meetings. There seems to be a little bit of funding. It is nice to see everyone working with the Environmental Education calendar”.
<b>Landmark Foundation</b>	Busy with worksheets development. They present Green clubs (relationships with schools) with nine Green clubs located in the area. They have a Creche project and a community gardens project (don’t have funding). They participate with youth in conservation and provide green passports. They also present waste management programme
<b>Touws River Conservancy</b>	Engage with landowners and have outreach days which revolve around alien clearing and education on poaching. They have monthly meetings and host workshops every year. They rely on their own funding and utilize the soft approach when raising awareness for the conservancy.
<b>Grootbrak Conservancy</b>	Organize meetings and workshops which are relevant to the community. They engage people through the Spekboom challenge, setting up a monthly market store, participating in arbor week and getting local schools actively involved in their projects. Their projects and activities are volunteer based as they do not have much funding.

#### 4.2. Conversation 2 - Gaps and needs in youth environmental education in the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve.

After identifying stakeholder activities in the landscape, a second conversation took place where participants were asked to consider the needs and the gaps in youth environmental education in the Garden Route. The following questions were posed by Dr Currie to facilitate the second conversation.

- 1) What is not being covered?
- 2) What do you battle to find funding for?
- 3) What are your challenges?
- 4) What should the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve strategy aim to address?

The gaps in youth Environmental Education were identified as follows:

1. Unemployment
2. Social issues that eventually affects the environment
3. Western Cape Education Department (WCED) – Formal and informal schools
4. Filling the gap of an absentee parent (mentorship)
5. Use of new technology
6. No organogram

The needs in youth Environmental Education were identified as follows:

1. Skills development
2. Training the trainers
3. Strong municipal bylaws
4. Rural development
5. Waste management
6. Green economic development
7. Capacity building
8. Indigenous knowledge
9. More practical excursions with kids
10. Functional educational tools
11. Resources, transport, staff, and funding
12. Better communication
13. Time availability
14. Empowering educators
15. Impacts of pets in the natural environment
16. Education forum for a more coordinated structure
17. Linking with the UN targets

Other general comments made were the need for a Garden Route Biosphere Reserve brochure which should provide information about the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve and the importance of funding for monitoring and evaluation processes.

## 5. POST WORKSHOP ASSESSMENT

At the end of the workshop a post workshop assessment questionnaire was distributed to the participants asking for their feedback on the workshop. The questions asked the participants to rate whether they strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A) or strongly agree (SA) with a question and also provided space to express their views. There was a total of 17 participants who completed the questionnaire, not all participants answered all questions. The results of the post workshop assessment are provided in Table 2.

*Table 2. Post workshop assessment results*

Criteria	SD	D	A	SA
Fair and equal participant			7	10
Different opinions were weighed			8	7
Participant knowledge was considered			7	10

Relevant knowledge holders were at the workshop			10	6
Participants felt their knowledge made a contribution*		1	10	5
Workshop not biased towards any one organization or sector		1	2	14
There was a common purpose			3	12
Ideas were shared			6	11
Neutral facilitation showing understanding of everyone's interests			5	12
Facilitators explained things clearly for everyone to understand			4	13
Influenced participants thinking about environmental education in the GR**			9	7
Participants learnt new things			10	7
Participants met people they hope to collaborate with			9	7
Participants will use the information they gained from the workshop			9	8
Participants will share their insights with others		1	11	5

\* one participant stated that they were "not sure"

\*\*one participants stated they were "not certain"

### 5.1. Open ended questions

Participants were asked what their overall experience of the workshop was. The following comments were made:

- Informative, inspiring and "eye opening".
- Good, necessary and important!
- Productive
- Well-structured and well conducted.

Many commented on the fair and open discussion where the diverse stakeholders were given a platform to share their programs and exchange ideas. However, one participant offered constructive criticism and wrote, "some key players were absent" and added that some topics were somewhat broad and irrelevant. The participant stated that for future discussions it would be best to narrow the focus in order to be more productive. Other participants highlighted the need to get teachers involved and that the timeslot for the workshop inhibited their participation.