

MEETING MINUTES

MABR Roundtable Gathering Vol. 29
Friday, March 8, 2024 from 09:00am to 11:30am
Location: City of Parksville Council Chambers
100 Jensen Ave E, Parksville, BC V9P 2H3



Attendees (11)

Amir Tabatabaei, Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director
Anne Skipsey, Town of Qualicum Beach, Councillor
Graham Sakaki, MABRRI, Research Institute Manager
Jenica Ng-Cornish, MABRRI, Assistant Manager Projects
Kim Burden, Nanoose Economic Development Corporation, Chief Executive Officer
Lehann Wallace, Regional District of Nanaimo, Electoral Area G Director
Mandy Hobkirk, Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, Coordinator
Michael Recalma, Qualicum First Nation, Chief
Ray Woroniak, Community Representative
Steve Adams, Mosaic Forest Management, Resource Technologist
Sylvia Martin, City of Parksville, Councillor

Objectives

The main objectives of this Roundtable gathering are for participants to:

1. Continue to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue with one another.
2. Hear from one another about regional/organizational/community updates.
3. Discuss past, present, and future events and research for the MABR/RI.

Welcome & Opening Prayer

- Round of introductions.
- Mandy reviewed the *Culture of Engagement*.

Agenda Adoption

- Agenda adopted.

Roundtable Member Updates

Kim Burden, Nanoose Economic Development Corporation

- The master plan has been approved by community and is now moving forward with developers. Plans include building 1,000 – 1,500 multifamily residences and commercial space along the highway across from the Snaw-naw-as Market gas station.
- Snaw-naw-as Market has been bestowed with honours and won a dealer award in Canada for over 5 million litres sold.
- The Snaw-naw-as Campground is in the process of finishing electrical upgrades, and has plans for building new cabins and a new office with a goal of being a first-class destination for camping.

Steve Adams, Mosaic Forest Management

- The spring planting program is starting, with approximately 4 – 5 million seedlings to hit the ground. Another plant will occur in the fall, bring the seedling total to 9.5 – 10 million.
- Partnering with Arrowsmith Cycling Club to sanction access to the Hammerfest Trail Network in Errington, a 91-km network of mountain bike trails located in Mosaic's private managed forest lands. The agreement gives ACC formal access to manage, maintain, and recreate in the trail network.
- For the third year in a row, Mosaic is recognized as one of BC's top employers.

Lehann Wallace, Regional District of Nanaimo

- Points to highlight as the local supply of water and new legislations create complexities for the RDN and MABR:
 - The RDN Financial Plan is on the agenda for the Board next week. This is a challenging budget due to inflationary pressures.
 - The phase 3 water budget for French Creek has been completed by Julie Pisani. It is a culmination of surface water, well data, info from the Ministry, and factors in water purveyors in the area to develop a numerical model for surface and groundwater. As a follow up, Lehann to provide a link to the board discussion on this report, as it ended with a request for the Ministry to convene a governing body to look at the French Creek watershed and ensure that the ministry is aware of the situation we have with water and how complex the governance is.
 - Local governments are in an unprecedented situation with Provincial legislations relating to Bill 35, Bill 44, and Bill 46. Considerations of land use planning and cost and infrastructure are changing which has been disruptive to local government operations.

Anne Skipsey, Town of Qualicum Beach

- New provincial legislations have paused other projects that the town is able to work on.
- Put forward a motion at the 2023 UBCM Convention on the control of scotch broom. Joanne Sales with Broombusters will be meeting with the president of UBCM to discuss future work.
- Earth day tree planting event will plant over 500 seedlings in Grandon Creek area.
- The TQB Environment and Sustainability Committee has welcomed a new member who is excited about being within a biosphere region; potential for future collaboration opportunities.

Sylvia Martin, City of Parksville

- Similar to RDN and TQB, new provincial legislations are impacting the City.
- Councillor Gauer put forward a motion for protection of riparian areas in the region. The motion was deferred, but received good support.

Chief Michael Recalma, Qualicum First Nation

- Opening day for the QFN gas station occurred on Monday!
- QFN will be working Broombusters for a program over spring break to have kids out and working on the area around the fisheries road.

Amir Tabatabaei, Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce

- Over 40 events are planned for remainder of the year; the AGM is coming up on April 25.
- Budget for this year is focused on sustainability and transparency.

- Redevelopment of the business centre is underway and includes creating a cultural corner to exhibit Indigenous heritage for the region.
 - Expecting 7000 people through it this year.
 - Cosmetic renovation scheduled for other parts of business centre in late spring/early summer.
- Recruiting directors for the board in April at AGM – reach out to Amir if know of anyone interested.

Community Representative Updates

Ray Woroniak

- New mapping project happening within the MABR led by Qualicum Beach Streamkeepers with support from the RDN DWWP Seed Funding. Starting with Beech Creek, Grandon Creek, and Whiskey Creek, mapping the elevation and latitudes/longitudes of the streams. Hoping to have everywhere in the MABR and beyond mapped.
 - If there is not enough funding to map all of Whiskey Creek, DWWP will inform on areas of highest importance to map.
 - Mosaic has Lidar imagery for all their lands and have all creeks mapped – Steve to look into sharing data.
 - Question for consideration: With existing mapping that Mosaic has, is there an opportunity to collaborate – if Mosaic already has location information, are there other gaps that can be filled in?
- Many restoration projects underway that various groups are working on together.
- Biosphere Awareness Day: Will have about 50 tables (approx. 25 already filled) – looking for community groups or businesses that fit into the SDGs to explain their role to the community. Please reach out to Ray with any suggestions.
- Brant Wildlife Children’s Festival (April 5, 2:30 pm): Invite for Roundtable members to attend.
 - Approximately 30 groups will be present, and Gord Johns plans to attend.
- Thank you to Mosaic for providing funding in support of the Leigh House.

MABR Updates

Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Society (MABS) – Graham

- As VIU declined signing the lease for the Leigh House, the Roundtable suggested either partnering with the Chamber of Commerce or to form a society.
 - The latter was the most feasible option, so a society has been formed and obtained provincial certification.
- The current board of directors consists of Kim Burden (President), Ray Woroniak (Vice President), James Shaw (Treasurer), Jessica Pyett (Secretary), Pam Shaw, Graham Sakaki, and Jenica Ng-Cornish
 - Invite open to all Roundtable members to join the board of directors. Positions currently filled by MABRRI staff acting as placeholders, and welcome Roundtable members to replace.
- The society has a bank account, insurance for office space, and insurance for volunteers working out of office space.

Leigh residence/MABR office – Graham

- MABS signed a lease agreement for the Leigh House and took possession on February 15th.

- Currently working to get money from Mosaic and ECCC held at VIU transferred over to the Society for operating costs.
- Currently working on programming and how to utilize the space.
 - Chief and Jesse Recalma are providing 3 pieces of artwork (carvings) from QFN to be for sale to be at Leigh House
 - Will continue to collaborate on and celebrate culture and heritage out of the location.
 - Working with Chief and Jesse to determine an appropriate name for the office space.
- Will do a soft opening with MABRRI staff working out of the location and community can visit. A grand opening will be hosted once a name is decided on – some hurdles in terms of heritage house and TQB policies.
 - Aiming for a soft opening at the beginning of April to have approximately one week to promote the Brant Wildlife Festival out of this office.
 - Loosely targeting May 22nd for grand opening.
- The space currently has a boardroom table with 8 chairs for meeting space, two fully equipped work stations, fridge, and microwave.
- MABRRI staff will work out of the office from 9am – 3pm Monday – Thursday. Opening days/hours likely to change over time depending on how location is being visited.
 - Applied for funding for 2 summer students to work out of full time.
- Question: Will the meeting space be used to raise funds and what are the parameters used for booking?
 - Considering the purchase of a TipTap to collect donations.
 - Ray has a key and considering providing a key to a MISC member.
 - For use of space, organizations should align with one of the 5 mandates of BR to be able to use it. It is not intended to be an open community space, and we are not looking to promote it as such. Community partners (e.g., stewardship groups) already know about the opportunity to use the space for collaboration.

TransD International Learning Laboratories (TILL) – Graham

- The TRANSECTS (Transdisciplinary Education Collaboration for Transformations in Sustainability) project is a SSHRC partnership hosted by the University of Saskatchewan. Partners have the role of hosting a Transdisciplinary International Learning Laboratory (TILL). The MABR is hosting 18 students and 8 mentors from Germany, South Africa, and Canada from May 8th – June 14th.
- Students are staying at dorms in VIU for entirety of programming (6 weeks).
- Our TILL is focusing on how invasive species are impacting ability to meet SDGs in the BR.
 - Have some placeholder research questions for students; hoping they will develop their own.
 - Hoping for reports that can inform action plan for the MABR to reduce threats associated with invasive species.
- Various field trips are scheduled throughout the 6 weeks, including to Howe Sound and Clayoquot BRs, and numerous locations within the MABR such as to the headwaters of Englishman River with Mosaic, Amazing Places, QB hatchery, Snaw-naw-as Gardens.
- Roundtable members will be invited to a welcome dinner as well as a closing celebration party at Rath Trevor Beach.
- Question/comment: Stormwater management strategy plan now has 3 facilities in the RDN. Invasive species are threatening the engineering of those facilities – consider adding this site to the tour.

- Demonstrates progress of stormwater management in the BR, but infrastructure was built and there is no sustainability plan for it.
- Stormwater Park – located off of Kay Rd. in the Rivers Edge subdivision. Three areas were retained to manage water coming off of cut blocks. Demonstrates connection to industry, government, and river protection.
 - There are massive broom fields here (Joanne Sales is involved). Oceanspray nearby is inhibiting broom growth – experimenting with whether oceanspray can be planted to control growth.

Regional Gathering – Attendees

- The second BC Biosphere Gathering was hosted in Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region from February 26th – 28th. Roundtable members (Chief Recalma, Auntie Geraldine, Catherine, Mandy), and MABRRI staff (Graham, Jenica, Courtney, and Kyla) attended from the MABR.
- Attendees reported that it was a welcoming and insightful event. The purpose was to share knowledge between biospheres, with a focus on Indigenous knowledge, shared stewardship of lands and waters, and local culture. A notable activity was evenings spent in the Skw-une'was Longhouse, where stories were shared and a youth dance group performed.
- Read Howe Sound's blog post here: <https://www.howesoundbri.org/latest-news/2024/3/2/hosting-the-bc-biospheres-gathering>
- MABR will be hosting the next BC Biosphere Gathering next year.

UNESCO Endorsement for BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund Project

- An important story to share – the work that the province is doing now to fund challenges we're having with past destruction of habitat and looking at how those implications roll across industry, multiple jurisdictions, and peoples' sense of place.
 - This is a conversation to have – BRs role to connect people with place and what's happening in it.
- The press release references the UN Decade of Ocean Science – celebrate this locally and our link to UNESCO as a BR. The connection to the UN provides more strength behind what a BR is, and enables people to get engaged.
- Press release: <https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2024/02/government-of-canada-announces-unesco-endorsement-for-british-columbia-salmon-restoration-and-innovation-fund-project.html>

Brant Wildlife Festival – Mandy

- \$17,250 coming in from sponsorships and donations of various prizes.
- Introducing a passport program that will encourage festival participants to interact with local businesses. The passport includes a list of participating businesses – with a purchase at these businesses, participants will get a sticker for their passport which then enters them for a grand prize (still seeking a donation for this prize).
 - Each business will have a wooden brant geese to display notifying that they are participating.
- Also introducing a photo competition to highlight the work of many talented photographers in the area, and to gain access and permission to use photos being taken.

MABR Sustainability Award – Graham

- Revisiting the idea of creating a sustainability award for local businesses.
- Amir offered to work with the MABR to develop this award.
 - There are presentation opportunities at the AGMs every year or in collaboration with business excellence awards.

Roundtable hosting rotation – Mandy

- Moving forward, looking to use a running list to cycle through for hosting space.
- Sylvia, Anne, Steve, Chief, and Graham to be added to the list. Mandy will reach out to members not in attendance at today's meeting.

Periodic Review next steps

- The MABR's periodic review was submitted to CCUNESCO January 31st. We have heard back from CCUNESCO with some requests to make tweaks to zonation mapping.
- The review process involves two reviewers coming to visit in April/May for 2-4 days to see us in action. They will then submit a report within 30 days of their visit and the final application goes to UNESCO.
- Final decision to be made in 2025.
- Thank you to everyone who supported the process of putting together our document!

Alumni rotation on the roundtable

- Mandy working on terms of reference and guidelines.

Next roundtable

- June 7th, 9:00am – 11:30am at the Leigh House (MABR Office).