

February 5, 2015

Beaver Hills Initiative  
c/o Strathcona County  
Planning & Development Services  
2001 Sherwood Drive  
Sherwood Park, AB  
T8A 3W7



City of Fort Saskatchewan  
City Hall  
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Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta  
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Office of the Mayor

Re: Beaver Hills Initiative – Biosphere Reserve Nomination

The Beaver Hills Moraine, an area of 1,595 km<sup>2</sup> east of Edmonton, has a distinct hummocky “knob and kettle” terrain. With soils unsuitable for cropland / arable farming, much of this area has not been cleared or cultivated, supporting native forests, grasslands and wetlands unlike the surrounding landscape. This combination of local geomorphology, hydrology and climate, contributes to the unique landscape of the Beaver Hills. The natural green space and resulting biodiversity add to its character. Together, these features are in sharp contrast to the surrounding agricultural, urban and industrial lands, where natural habitat has been reduced to smaller discontinuous patches, making the Beaver Hills a truly distinctive feature on the regional landscape. The relatively intact natural landscape provides key ecosystem services to the region, including flood mitigation, provisioning of clean air and water, as well as cultural and aesthetic character. However, this landscape is under increasing pressure from development and is at risk of degradation and fragmentation of its natural features.

The Beaver Hills Initiative (BHI) is a multi-stakeholder collaboration comprised of local governments, provincial and federal protected areas agencies and other organizations with interests in the region. In recognition of the moraine’s special qualities, these partners came together in 2000 to promote a regional approach to land management that will conserve the moraine’s character.

This commitment to conservation, sustainable development, and accommodating and guiding change through collective and collaborative action are also the distinguishing characteristics of the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB). Biosphere Reserves are special place for people and nature and represent the only global designation and accreditation for an area demonstrating excellence in sustainable development in practice. In January 2009 the Board Members of the BHI gave approval for its Protected Areas Working Group to proceed with the preparation of the

nomination form for the Beaver Hills to be recognized internationally as a Biosphere Reserve. Excellent progress has been made in completing the requirements for the nomination.

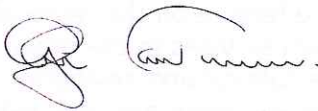
One of the key messages we want to share is that Biosphere Reserve designation does not intrude on property rights, Aboriginal rights, jurisdictional and administrative authorities, or on the responsibilities of elected bodies. Biosphere Reserve designation does not require any additional funding by local authorities, agencies, and other partners beyond that which is in place at the present time. It should be noted that the designation will afford international recognition of the importance of the Beaver Hills as a distinctive landscape, and endorsement to what the BHI has already been undertaking and achieved to-date. In addition, the BHI's collaborative approach to regional land-use planning which demonstrates practical solutions to conservation and sustainable development not only exemplifies the intentions of Alberta's Provincial Land Use Framework but by becoming a member of an internationally recognized network of Biosphere Reserves the BHI becomes an active contributor to finding solutions to environmentally significant global issues.

Prior to submitting the completed nomination form for review by UNESCO, the nomination has to be endorsed by those authorities/agencies responsible for the protected areas within the proposed Biosphere Reserve as well as those elected local governments that are representative of the communities located within the area. The intention is to have the Biosphere Reserve nomination completed and ready for endorsement by this May. It would be appreciated if you considered supporting this nomination by providing a letter of support for the Biosphere Reserve nomination. A suggested template for that letter, which you may wish to use, is included as an attachment for your convenience.

If you require further information on the Beaver Hills Initiative and the Beaver Hills Biosphere nomination please visit our website at <http://www.beaverhills.ca>

The Beaver Hills Initiative appreciates your interest and looks forward to receiving your letter of support for the Biosphere Reserve nomination.

Sincerely



Glen Lawrence, Chair BHI

Encl.

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