



Beaver Hills, East of Edmonton, Added to UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve Network

SHERWOOD PARK, AB – March 21, 2016 - The Beaver Hills Initiative and its members are pleased to announce that the Beaver Hills became a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve on March 21, 2016. The Beaver Hills joins a global network of over 600 sites that are internationally recognized for their work to ensure ecologically sustainable human and economic development. It is the second biosphere in Alberta and joins 16 other Canadian Biospheres.

“The UNESCO Biosphere designation is basically international recognition for all the work that’s been done in this special area to maintain biodiversity and foster ecologically and socio-culturally sustainable human and economic development in this lived-in and working landscape. We’re looking forward to continuing our work and sharing our research and tools with the public, other biospheres and land use decision makers outside the Beaver Hills,” says Glen Lawrence, Chair of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Located 20 minutes east of Edmonton, Alberta, the Beaver Hills is a distinct landscape covering 1572 km² of hummocky moraine. The rolling, hummocky hills of the moraine sit about 100 metres higher than the relatively flat lands surrounding it, and it supports a patchwork of valuable wetlands, small lakes and forested uplands. Popular destinations in the moraine include Elk Island National Park, Miquelon Lake Provincial Park, Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, Ministik Lake Game Bird Sanctuary and the Strathcona Wilderness Centre.

The Beaver Hills Initiative was formed in 2002 after the staff at Elk Island National Park recognized a need for regional collaboration to address development and land use planning within the moraine. Since then the Initiative has grown to over 20 member organizations, which includes four local governments: Strathcona County, Lamont County, Beaver County and Leduc County. In addition, the provincial and federal government, local residents, indigenous organizations, NGOs and academia comprise the list of member organizations.

As the national contact for the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program in Canada, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO has provided ongoing strategic guidance for the Beaver Hills Biosphere designation. This internationally recognized area will remain under local jurisdiction, and member organizations will continue working collaboratively for a sustainable region through shared initiative and coordinated action.

The Beaver Hills Initiative would like to thank the public and their members for their support for the Biosphere Nomination. In addition, the Beaver Hills Initiative would like to thank UNESCO for their support and recognizing the Beaver Hills, as a place of unique beauty and value that exemplifies how people and communities can live, work and play in harmony with nature. **Visit beaverhills.ca for more information and a list of upcoming summer events** where you can help celebrate and learn more about Alberta’s newest UNESCO Biosphere.

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