



United States  
Biosphere Network



# U.S. BIOSPHERE NETWORK 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



2025

Bridging People, Planet,  
and Partnerships

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>Letter From the Chair</b>	<b>p. 3</b>
<b>What is the US Biosphere Network?</b>	<b>p. 4</b>
<b>Mission and Vision</b>	<b>p. 5</b>
<b>Youth Engagement, Research, and Outreach</b>	<b>p. 7</b>
<b>International Knowledge Exchange</b>	<b>p. 9</b>
<b>Shining a Spotlight on Our People</b>	<b>p. 10</b>
<b>Looking Ahead to 2026</b>	<b>p. 11</b>
<b>Who's Who at the USBN</b>	<b>p. 12</b>
<b>Our Partners</b>	<b>p. 13</b>
<b>Ways to Support USBN</b>	<b>p. 14</b>



# A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am writing this from Michigan, where the snow is falling today and is the kind of quiet you only get in a snow squall. I say this only in part because in moments of quiet, I fully realize what a cacophonous time this is. We find that any sort of media is constant, the ambient din of modernity is constant, the natter of endless post-interaction surveys is constant, and the insidious curation of hate and discontent is dangerously constant. However, the snow today is lovely and quiet and - when respected – whether walking, driving, or shoveling, is an absolute joy. I urge you all to find joy in this tumultuous world.

In one corner of this world, we get to contemplate our relationships individually and jointly with the natural world and with each other. This too is an absolute joy. There is a deep obligation we harbor, by our very presence, to tend the relationships of and with nature in all its forms - as beauty, as utility, as sustenance, and solace. We are of and in nature.

So, where does this leave us in relation to our work with the Biosphere Program? The Biosphere Region designation is not a merit badge or earned rank of some sort, but a recognition that our magnificent landscapes are a shared and communitarian construct that exist though time as an outcome of the relationships between human choice and biogeography history. The BR designation is a recognition of relationship writ large. And it is relationships that are both hard and soulful.

We are bolstered in our mission, resolve, and trajectory. Our work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally is critical. And we collectively and willingly carry this weight. The work is hard, but arduous work is worth it. We will build on our strong relationships with our Canadian and Mexican Biospheres. We will continue to engage on the world stage, we will seek financial support for our work, we will support students to extend our reach and provide them meaningful experiences, we will partner with our academic community, we will listen and learn from tribal and indigenous leaders, and we will draw on our insights, share our challenges, and celebrate our successes. We should be thinking of how we can expand the number of BRs in the US and strengthen the others. We should be increasing the breadth and capacity of our local efforts to build durable consortia and partnerships. Biospheres should be expanding their reach across their geographies and not relying on a precious few to carry the weight. Now is not the time to entrench. There is joy in creating the work that shall be, not in lamenting the world that was. This work matters and needs to cut through the clatter around us with a focus and assiduous determination – for it matters a great deal. Find joy and solace in our efforts. So, while the snow falls silently, it builds up quickly and manifests great weight. So does your work.

Sincerely,  
Jon W. Allan



# WHAT IS THE U.S. BIOSPHERE NETWORK?

**We Are A Network of Networks.** The U.S. Biosphere Network (USBN) is made up of 28 internationally recognized places across the continental United States, the US Caribbean, Alaska, and Hawai'i called biosphere regions. Communities and organizations work together in biosphere regions to connect people and nature, from deserts to forests, grasslands to rivers, and mountains to oceans and coasts. Together, we care for the beauty and value of our lands and waters and the benefits they bring to our communities. As part of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves, we collectively steward internationally recognized areas of ecological importance, biodiversity, and cultural significance.

At the core of our network is the understanding that our quality of life depends on the essential services, tangible and intangible, that nature provides. From fertile soil to flood plains, drinking water to outdoor recreation areas, the USBN offers paths for people and organizations to maintain vital environmental, social, and economic benefits.



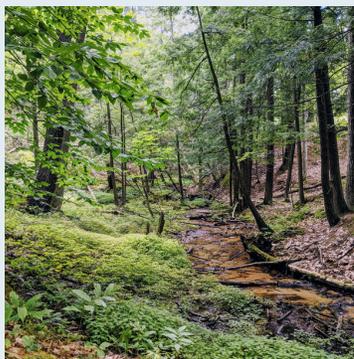
Map of 28 U.S. Biosphere Regions. Source: Graham Klag

Voluntary and non-regulatory in our approach, our designation provides a forum for collaboration that is as unique as the communities we serve. This includes traditional conservation areas such as national and state parks, forests, and marine sanctuaries, and other conservation areas, as well as private landowners, economic sectors, youth, indigenous communities, and historically-marginalized communities.



# USBN MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

20  
25  
—



# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, RESEARCH, AND OUTREACH

## US Researcher Receives MAB Young Scientist Award

Megan McDaniels was the second US scientist to be awarded the MAB Young Scientist Award! This prize recognizes outstanding young scientists and helps fund their impactful research in biospheres. Megan is a 4th-year PhD student at UC Davis and is researching the long-term impacts of disease-induced changes to wildlife populations in the San Guillermo Biosphere Reserve in Argentina. She looks into camelids and puma populations as well as parasite-host dynamics. The USBN was pleased to support Megan and her work linking the USBN to the larger biosphere community.



## University of Michigan Masters Team Completes Report

The graduate student team from the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability finished their capstone project and have continued on to new adventures after graduating. We are very thankful for their work including GIS shape files of all 28 biospheres, a gender inclusivity report, a climate resilience report, and a [storymap](#) intended to be used at the local, regional, and national levels. [Read their report](#) here!



## Youth Board Update

Youth Board members, Aiden Lyde and Jenelle Booker, graduated from their universities in May and made monumental strides in expanding the capacity of youth engagement in the USBN. Jenelle continues to serve as the chair of the Youth Board and led two youth-focused side events at the 5th World Congress. Target 20 of the Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan, "Develop the MAB Youth Network, includes goals to establish a funding strategy and include youth in all levels of decision making.





## USBN Serves Up Sustainable Food Education Program

In fall 2024, the USBN received a grant from the Fritz Henkel Foundation through the German Commission for UNESCO for the Healthy Food, Healthy People, Healthy Environment Program. The funding supports Guanica Forest (PR), Champlain Adirondack (NY-VT), and Southern Appalachian (NC) in creating classroom and experiential learning programs for students and adults to grow and access healthy foods and recipes. The projects took off this year after a second Henkel grant was awarded in March. The program expands sustainable growing practices and cultural awareness of food traditions, including Indigenous foods, working with tribes, schools, farmers, and civic organizations. [Read more here!](#)

- **Guanica Forest** → a local conservation organization created a fruit and medicinal plant nursery at a community center with hands-on training and workshops. They also installed a rainwater irrigation system and hosted a food marketing microbusiness workshop, demonstrating how community-driven action can improve food access.
- **Champlain Adirondack** → the South Hero Land Trust worked with local tribal leaders to co-create an Abenaki Foodways Educator Toolkit to teach Abenaki history, culture, and food traditions. They're also hosting cooking lessons and a speaker series to spread knowledge about tribal food sovereignty. [Learn more here!](#)
- **Southern Appalachian** → the Noquisi Initiative worked with members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians for a workshop that explored integrating contemporary science with Indigenous practices. They also created a forest garden to serve the local community.



## Mojave Colorado Biosphere Completes Strategic Planning

The Mojave Colorado Desert Biosphere Region steering committee and partners collaborated with NPS facilitators for an impactful strategic planning session in June. They gathered for three days to identify the critical needs of the region in conservation and economic development, create a value proposition, and strengthen partnerships.

# INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

## 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves

The USBN is only a small part of the biosphere picture. It takes an international effort which was seen at the 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Hangzhou, China this past September. Taking place every 10 years, the congress convened nearly 3,000 stakeholders, including scientists, policymakers, community leaders, and entrepreneurs from over 100 countries to review progress and set priorities for the next decade under the MAB Programme. The USBN was represented by Sarah Gaines, Jenelle Booker, and Chris Groves who led several workshops and side events. Major outcomes included the Presentation of the Hangzhou Declaration, landmark commitment to strengthen the MAB Programme and WNBR, and the Endorsement of the Hangzhou Strategic Action Plan (2026–2035), a roadmap containing thirty-four Action Targets within three major objectives.



## Mammoth Cave - Mexico Partnership

Kentucky's Mammoth Cave region (USA) and the Yucatan Peninsula (Mexico) are two of the world's most extensive cave systems. They are collaborating for proper management, continued research, and protected water resources. The binational collaboration started in 2022 between students and scientists from the Mexican non-profit conservation organization Karst Lab México, Western Kentucky University, Mammoth Cave National Park, Mammoth Cave Biosphere Region Advisory Council, and the Cave Research Foundation. Their overall aims include fostering public diplomacy, sharing knowledge, and advancing karst protection and management strategies. This year, two partners from Mexico spent a month in Kentucky conducting karst research and organizing the 12th Mammoth Cave Research Symposium.



# SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PEOPLE

## USBN Welcomes New Steering Committee Members:

*We are thankful for the service of our 2025 Steering Committee members and have gracefully transitioned by welcoming two new members.*

Jon Putnam spent over 25 years with the National Park Service (NPS), including 20 years with the NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA). Over the past two decades, he has worked to promote the international mission of the NPS by facilitating cooperation. Jon has also served as a park ranger in Alaska, Colorado, and New York, as a Peace Corps volunteer in southern Africa, and with the U.S. Agency for International Development. Jon has recently joined the U.S. Biosphere Network as Vice Chair for Operations and will rely on his experience with UNESCO programs like the World Heritage Convention and the Man and the Biosphere Program.



Rudy D'Alessandro joined as an *At-Large Member* and is looking forward to supporting the Network's outreach with existing U.S. biosphere regions where he has long-standing connections, particularly at national park units such as Rocky Mountain. Rudy also has extensive experience with international cooperation and conservation. He is especially excited to see biosphere regions delve more deeply into community science, sustainable food, and soil resiliency issues.

## Special Biosketch: Senior Advisor Cliff McCree

Cliff provides technical assistance to the 28 biosphere regions and expert advice and guidance to the Steering Committee on USBN programs and UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program policies. He was Federal Liaison to the USBN until his recent retirement from a 23-year career at the National Park Service. Cliff served as U.S. Focal Point to the MAB Secretariat and represented the U.S. at the MAB International Coordinating Council. He continues as USBN liaison with the MAB Secretariat on behalf of the USBN Steering Committee. His government service includes Congressional staff positions and the US Environmental Protection Agency where he was awarded the Silver Medal for Superior Service for his work on the national farm bill and agricultural policy. He has also won awards for several film documentaries he produced and directed.

# LOOKING AHEAD



TO 2026

## SEAS Capstone Project

The USBN is thrilled to partner with the University of Michigan on another capstone project with graduate students from the School for Environment and Sustainability. Over the next 18 months, students will work with the Obtawaing Biosphere Region to support their coastal resilience plan by developing a prioritization map using quantitative data and community input to guide collective action and resource allocation. They seek to integrate traditional and scientific ecological knowledge that aligns with community needs to co-create a habitat-specific restoration framework.



## First National Summit of the USBN

Leaders from all US biospheres will gather this June in Colorado to reinforce partnerships and receive technical support for the periodic review process. It is meant to facilitate a community of learning and knowledge sharing while having a bit of fun!

## STAY CONNECTED!

Follow us on social media! Click the icons below!



# OUR MISSION & VISION REMAINS THE SAME

## Our Mission

Foster national and international connections among biosphere regions, facilitate their sharing of best practices, and support their work to connect people and nature.

## Vision for the Future

A healthy global environment where people and communities prosper based on shared knowledge and respect for the beauty and benefits of nature.



*Building community stewardship through innovative solutions to address environmental challenges.*



### 28 BIOSPHERE REGIONS IN THE US

There are 28 internationally recognized biosphere regions across the continental US, the US Caribbean, Alaska, and Hawai'i.



### OVER 48 MILLION ACRES IN THE US

Biosphere regions account for over 48 million acres of biodiverse lands and waters in the US.



### 759 BIOSPHERES WORLDWIDE

USBN is proud to be a part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves which has 759 Biospheres in 136 countries across the world.

# WHO'S WHO IN THE USBN?

## USBN STEERING COMMITTEE

- Jon W. Allan, Chair (Obtawaing, Michigan)
- Jonathan Putnam, Vice-Chair of Operations, (Champlain Adirondack, New York)
- Jeremy Dertien, Vice Chair of Planning (Formerly Congaree, South Carolina)
- Rudy DAlessandro, At-Large, NPS Retired
- Samuel Cuthell, Secretary (Golden Gate, California))
- Jenelle Booker, Youth Board Chair (Champlain-Adirondack, New York)
- Cliff McCreedy, Strategic Advisor

## USBN SUB-COMMITTEES

- Chris Groves, Chair of Governance Committee
- Meredith King, Communication Director, University of Michigan

## ADVISORS AND FISCAL SPONSOR

- Cliff McCreedy, Sr. Strategic Advisor
- Danielle Becker, Coastal Advisor, NOAA Affiliate
- Deb Davidson, Fiscal Partner, Center for Large Landscape Conservation

## YOUTH BOARD

- Jenelle Booker (Chair)
- Beata Dewitt
- Meredith King
- Chelsea Ballard

## 2026 - 2027 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN MASTER'S TEAM

- Gwenny Burrows
- Lauren Gietzen
- Margaret Dominic
- Jack Sanitate
- Kaitlin Fahey



# OUR PARTNERS

*"The work of the US Biosphere Network is the work of our partners."*

*-Jon W. Allan, Chair, US Biosphere Network*

## USBN PROUDLY WORKS WITH THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:

- U.S. National Park Service (NPS)
- Center for Large Landscape Conservation
- The Stewardship Network
- NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program NPS Scientists in Parks and Stewards Individual Placements
- Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units Network
- George Wright Society
- Canadian Biosphere Regions Association
- Commission on Environmental Cooperation
- German Commission for UNESCO
- Henkel AG & Co and the Fritz Henkel Foundation
- UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey

## ACADEMIC PARTNERS

- University of Michigan
- University of South Carolina
- University of Vermont
- Paul Smith's College
- State University of New York's College of Environment and Forestry
- Western Kentucky University
- University of Tennessee
- Colorado State University
- University of California
- University of Virginia



# WAYS TO SUPPORT USBN

## Support Conservation and Communities with a Gift

Make a direct contribution to improve human connection to nature, enhance biodiversity, boost climate resilience, and promote sustainable socio-economic development. Options to donate include:

- [ONLINE](#) (\*Direct your gift to US Biosphere Network in the drop-down menu)
- By Check
- By Electronic Transfer

## Establish a Corporate Partnership

Collaborate with the USBN as a corporate partner. Contact USBN Chair Jon W. Allan at [allanjw@umich.edu](mailto:allanjw@umich.edu) for partnership opportunities.

## Give Through Your Donor-Advised Fund

Simplify your charitable giving and make a lasting impact by donating through a Donor-Advised Fund.

## Grow Your Monthly Impact

Contribute monthly, enabling ongoing conservation work that preserves landscapes, wildlife, and communities.

## Honor and Remember Loved Ones

Celebrate or memorialize loved ones with a meaningful gift that helps safeguard natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

## Leave a Lasting Legacy

Explore planned giving options to ensure a lasting legacy that supports Earth's landscapes and communities. Contact USBN Chair Jon W. Allan at [allanjw@umich.edu](mailto:allanjw@umich.edu) for guidance.

## Why Your Support Matters

Our work connects local communities, tribal sovereigns, and conservation partners, enabling us to tackle pressing issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, and economic sustainability. A strong, unified network will help amplify these efforts on the national and global stage. A modest investment in USBN's capacity will have a ripple effect on landscape and seascape conservation across the U.S.

Thank you for being part of this movement and for your continued commitment to the U.S. Biosphere Regions and the vision of a healthier, more sustainable future. Together, we can make 2025 the year we take USBN to new heights!

