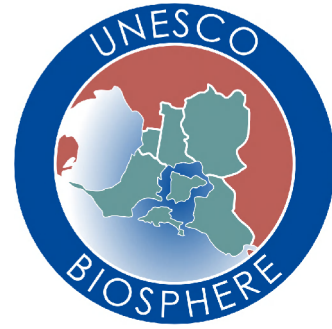




"Showing the Way to Sustainability"



ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

INCORPORATING

FINANCIAL REPORT 2008-2009

OF THE

MORNINGTON PENINSULA AND WESTERN PORT BIOSPHERE RESERVE FOUNDATION LTD

ABN 15 107 484 408

OFFICE:

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Hastings, Victoria, 3915

CHAIR'S REPORT

The last twelve months have been a period of consolidation and modest growth for the Biosphere Foundation. With the perspective of the last 5 years as Chairman of the Board, I believe that we are continuing to make progress in the key areas of our work program and against the objectives of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program. Importantly, we have been able to initiate new alliances at the local, national and international levels.

We are continually developing relationships through our partner local governments. The Man and the Biosphere Program is not universally understood; however, through our established projects, the Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Program and the Watson Creek Integrated Catchment Management Project, we are gaining respect for our initiative and capacity. Our Research Committee continues to build strong themes for our future work. Our proposed Mass Balance Project in conjunction with CSIRO's Division of Sustainable Ecosystems remains in development and I hope that we will be able to engage positively with the five councils and shires that make up the Biosphere region to build this unique program.

Nationally we are developing alliances with two new Australian Biospheres. The Noosa Biosphere was proclaimed in 2007, and this year the Great Sandy Biosphere in the Burnett Mary region of Queensland was proclaimed at the UNESCO Biospheres Meeting in Jeju, South Korea. Clearly biospheres are an attractive mechanism for communities to build understanding and engagement on sustainability matters. There is now interest in the formation of an "Association of Australian Biospheres" in an effort to help coordinate Biosphere activities, education, awareness, marketing and promotion of Biospheres both in Australia and internationally, and to act as a lobby group to increase Biosphere awareness and support from all levels of government.

Internationally our Biosphere has been represented on two occasions this year. Our Executive Officer, Cecelia Witton has attended UNESCO sponsored meetings in South Korea; this included a meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of the Man and the Biosphere Program to discuss common issues on the potential impacts of climate change and opportunities offered in ecotourism. The Board congratulates Cecelia on this strong initiative, welcomes the opportunities she has created and looks forward to the development of the program relationships she has been able to generate.

I am able to report that a key component of the development of our Biosphere is the establishment of an Advisory Board. This group includes the former Minister for Planning and Environment Tom Roper, Associate Professor Michael Buxton and Professor John Fien of RMIT University, Dr Mick Lumb, Honorary Associate Professor Ian Wills formerly of Monash University and Andrew Grant, CEO of CO2 Australia and former Chair of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. We are very pleased that Andrew is able to speak at our Annual General Meeting this year. This group is meeting regularly and providing high level strategic advice to the Board.

As we go to our Annual General Meeting, our organisation is necessarily focussed on restoring and building our membership, initiating effective fundraising programs, and securing long term financial support.. I must impress upon you that your support in these areas is crucial to our continued success. I encourage you to access our website at www.biosphere.org.au to familiarize yourself with our programs and progress; renew your association, consider supporting the Biosphere financially in addition to your membership and introduce your friends and family to our Bandicoot Buddies campaign.

The members of the Board have committed to ongoing personal support of our organisation. Through this leadership we hope that we can build new alliances throughout the community consistent with Biosphere objectives. We are looking forward to the forthcoming year.

Rob. Gell
Chair

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The past year has been an exciting time for the Foundation, with the completion of three of our Envirofund projects - Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve habitat improvement, Southern Brown Bandicoot recovery and Phase I of the Watson Creek Project - and the WWF Threatened Species grant, with additional funds being received from WWF to continue monitoring, which will help to confirm the progress made towards securing the future in the Biosphere Reserve of the iconic and threatened Southern Brown Bandicoot.

These projects have enabled the Foundation to establish a profile and demonstrate its ability to complete projects successfully. The Watson Creek Project has contributed to community capacity building as well as improved catchment and water quality condition. A number of native species will benefit from fox control and other work carried out primarily to protect bandicoots. We thank the many volunteers who worked tirelessly on these projects to help the Foundation to achieve these outcomes.

UNESCO's invitation to the Foundation to participate, last December, in the *Conference on the Impact of Climate Change on Coastal and Island Biosphere Reserves*, held on Jeju Island, Republic of South Korea, was a pivotal point in our development. The further invitation to return to Jeju for a follow-up workshop and seminar in May 2009 provided an invaluable opportunity to exchange information and strengthen contacts in the world network of Biosphere reserves, which now includes over 550 sites across 107 countries. Participation enabled us to showcase the assets of the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve to a worldwide audience and to open avenues through which we can benefit from international experience.

We have now established the reference group Advisory Panel whose members understand the value of the Biosphere model. They are volunteering their time because they believe in the future and the need for change. Their experience and guidance, both in broad terms and on specific issues that may be referred to them by the Board, will provide advice to the Foundation that will help direct our focus to build capacity and achieve outcomes.

Recently the Western Port Catchment Committee secretariat relocated to the Foundation, this forum will continue facilitation of community and stakeholders in providing exchange of information and fostering of greater understanding and co operation in the region.

We look forward to the challenges of the future, which are many, and to expanding our role in the region. At this critical stage we need the ongoing support of our current members and supporters and to recruit new members, to continue working to keep this special place special.

Cecelia Witton
Executive Officer

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Research Committee has had another active year. The Committee has met regularly during the year, usually once a quarter. The meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend.

The Biosphere successfully completed two Envirofund grants for bandicoot conservation works worth \$52,000, including a Landscape Species Grant worth \$5,000 for mapping and planning. The Biosphere was awarded a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Threatened Species Network Community Grant worth \$15,000 for fox control and a habitat improvement Envirofund grant of \$16 000.

The Committee prepared a briefing paper on a proposed education strategy for the Biosphere. The paper considers the major themes of the education strategy that are consistent with the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. These being: gender equality, health promotion, the environment, cultural diversity, peace and human security, sustainable urbanisation and sustainable consumption. The paper makes a number of recommendations to the Foundation Board for the further development of the education strategy, including the benefit of running an open workshop to seek community input into the draft strategy and the formation of a stand-alone education committee in due course.

The Research Committee received excellent presentations during the year from:

- Greg Hunt (Western Port Greenhouse Alliance) on the Western Port Human Settlements and Adaptation Project.
- Mr. Garrick Pergl (Mornington Peninsula Shire Council) on the Biodiversity Action Plan for the Mornington Peninsula.
- Rod McLellan and Scott Chidgey (Port of Hastings Corporation) regarding the scoping phase studies for the Stage I expansion of the Port of Hastings.
- Cecelia Witton, Executive Officer of the Foundation, on her UNESCO/MAB visit to Jeju Island Biosphere Reserve (Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Republic of Korea).

The Committee completed a community survey into the research priorities for the Biosphere. The top four issues identified were: a second Western Port study, an inventory of biodiversity, further research on the Southern Brown Bandicoot, and the development of a suite of core indicators.

David Nicholls and Terry Coates continued to very capably lead the Research Committee's activities in relation to the Southern Brown Bandicoot (see separate report).

The Committee helped formulate a Foundation Board policy on the management of the Southern Brown Bandicoot as an issue of priority for the Biosphere. This is available on our website.

The Committee continued to assist the Biosphere in progressing the Mass Balance project. This project seeks to develop an understanding of the flow of energy, water and recyclables right across the Biosphere using a procedure developed by CSIRO. The project is still in proposal form and consultations are continuing with local government and other potential project partners.

The Committee would like to thank: the Biosphere Foundation's Executive Officer, Ms Cecelia Witton; the Chairman, Mr Rob Gell, the Foundation Board; Ms Yvonne Reifenberg, the Foundation's Administration Officer; and Chisholm Institute for their great support and help during the year.

Peter Woodgate
Chair, Research Committee

SOUTHERN BROWN BANDICOOT RECOVERY PROJECT

The Southern Brown (SB) Bandicoot is but a single species; however it is a key service provider in the ecosystem contributing to the health of the soil by distributing fungi spores and ensuring successful cycling of soil and plant nutrients. The bandicoot has a high birth rate and the population can recover quickly, if the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation and predation from introduced pest predators are reduced. The species occurs across all local government regions of the Biosphere Reserve. As we become successful in achieving its recovery, such efforts will have a major benefit for many other species of our biodiversity and our conservation objectives. Most activity was directed to the bandicoot recovery; however, our program has included a GIS study of biodiversity following the Research Plan Strategy and is contributing to wildlife corridor studies of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Cardinia Environment Coalition.

This year saw completion of three Natural Heritage Trust projects, concluding with the final auditing and reports to NHT.

1. An ambitious community engagement project at The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve saw the installation of dog-proof gates to the perimeter fence, a survey of hundreds of 5x3 metre panels of the eleven kilometres of perimeter fencing. We conducted walks and community meetings in the Reserve and in six schools and communities. We planted local provenance native plants to reduce the width of tracks and conducted a survey of the attitudes of the neighbours to the Pines Reserve. We surveyed the bandicoot habitat, searched for bandicoots and monitored sand pads for the activity of foxes, dogs, motor bikes and people. Parks Victoria and the neighbouring Golf Course conducted pest predator management.

2. In the Koo Wee Rup region we improved the habitat of the southern brown bandicoot by planting 6,000 grasses, sedges, shrubs and trees. We distributed pipes as safe shelters. Six kilometres of fence was installed. Some of the wildlife corridor plantings meet CMA guidelines; others explored new solutions. This work also benefited wetlands and the endangered growling grass frog.

3. Our partners, WWF and Westernport Swamp Landcare, with extensive advice and support from Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, DSE Southern Ark and DSE Port Phillip Region (with Phillip Agribusiness) and Phillip Island Nature Reserve, we implemented a fox control program across 300 square kilometres. We used 1080 poison, recommended as the only cost effective control measure. This is a major accomplishment, for there was community concern and while the procedure is safe, there was no room for error. We estimate that we reduced the population of foxes by 133; this may be half to one tenth of the population. The Biosphere gave a report to each of the quarterly Swamp Land meetings. Melbourne Water (using their new SB Bandicoot Strategic Management Plan) is starting its fox control program. Melbourne Water land connects and gives refuge to small populations of bandicoots, so is a vital piece of the Recovery Program.

We developed interpretation materials as a result of these activities and we have been included in signage prepared by the DSE including a roadside sign, sign for contributing properties and other literature.

We applied for Caring for our Country funding – the replacement for the NHT program. This has not been successful on three occasions. We may be able to make a contribution to a successful Port Phillip and Westernport CMA project with Parks Victoria and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council for the continuation of our fox control program and a scientific evaluation of changes to fox numbers and biodiversity gains.

Three funding applications are in preparation to private philanthropic trusts.

The scientific program has focused on detecting bandicoots in their natural habitat. Reports from the community continue to be welcomed, but there is a need to have undisputed identification. With the SB Bandicoot Technical Reference Group we have investigated a variety of techniques and determined that digital surveillance cameras, known as trail cameras, are the most cost effective. Parks Victoria and Malcolm Legg discovered a population of bandicoots on Quail Island; a most important find.

The proposed freeway through the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve occupied considerable energy from the Biosphere and individual members. The new Advocacy Policy was drafted and then used to guide the Biosphere membership. Six members of the Frankston Roundtable and the Research Committee, and the Executive Officer made submissions to the EES Panel, explaining the threats to the population of bandicoots and other biodiversity values. These identified habitat loss, fragmentation of the population and habitat degradation and fox predation as key threats. The Frankston Roundtable members, The Pines Protectors and the Friends of The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve continue to make submissions for the Pines Management Plan and to the Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett, under the EBPC Act. The Minister's determination that the proposed freeway go through the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve, is not seen as sustainable management; however, the conditions imposed are a strong vindication for the positions taken by our members. These include a management plan, translocation, predator fence and studies on reconnecting the habitat.

The Growth Area Authority identified rural land for Melbourne's growing human population that impinges bandicoots. These proposed new developments further isolate the Royal Botanic Gardens and further fragment our bandicoot population. We contributed advice to such meetings and recently, to the biological and planning studies aimed at identifying biodiversity and wildlife corridors with DSE, with Practical Ecology, Bret Lane Associates and Ecology Australia.

The Research Committee added to its library of electronic maps, entering into agreements with DSE CGDL for the use of property boundary and address data. This adds to GIS layers on the Ecological Vegetation Classes and Atlas of Victorian Wildlife records on Threatened Species. We acknowledge Chisholm Institute as curator for these data.

Victoria's large infrastructure projects offer an opportunity to achieve biodiversity gains to offset the substantial losses that also occur. However, it is proving to be very difficult to have significant environmental, gains included. The pipelines and roads can and do fragment the environment but the Melbourne water flood mitigation channels and the old rail line across Koo Wee Rup indicate how these linear features can also connect parts of the environment (Coates *et al.* 2008). There is an opportunity for the new infrastructure, if wide enough and if properly revegetated and managed might rejoin isolated natural reserves.

In the last Annual General Meeting, it was reported that integrating and communicating our activities within the Biosphere community was a significant challenge. This is still true today. A partial solution was to implement the list server so that there is a forum for discussion; the service has been kindly provided by Jane Jobe.

The Research Committee's SB activities have been very generously served by volunteers; individuals Stephen Flack (2008- July 2009), Emma Birnbaum (June 2009 – on going), Gillian Cromie (August 2009 – on going) contribute one day per week. Greg Ashby contributed in 2007-2008. Students of the Conservation and Land Management of Chisholm Institute of TAFE contribute regularly. Leigh Swan, our fox control contractor, provided excellent service.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE provided services thanks to the generosity of Malcolm Macpherson Director and Peter Curson, School of Sustainability.

DG Nicholls
Bandicoot Recovery, Research Committee.

Southern Brown Bandicoot - Reports

- Biosphere. 2009 Report to NHT Envirofund Round 8. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Biosphere 2009 Report to NHT Envirofund Round 10. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Biosphere 2009 Report to WWF-NHT Threatened Species Network Community Grant. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Cairns, Mark 2008. Results from Workshop on Landscape Species for the Frankston Region. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Coates, T. 2009. Notes on Predator-proof perimeter fences. Prepared for Research Committee, MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd.
- Flack, Stephen, David G Nicholls 2009. Observations of animal tracks in a suburban reserve in south-eastern Melbourne. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Nicholls, David, Stephen Flack and Terry Coates. 2009. 1080 poisoning of foxes using baits: results from initial control in the Koo Wee Rup region. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Nicholls, DG., Ronnie May, Gillian Collins and Greg Ashby. 2008 An inventory of the perimeter fence of The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Nicholls, DG., Stephen Flack. 2009. Summary of Results from of the attitudes of the neighbours of The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve. MP & WP Biosphere Reserve Foundation Ltd. Report.
- Nicholls, DG 2009 Survey of potential sites for the Southern Brown Bandicoot in West and South Gippsland Victoria in 2008. Report to DSE West Gippsland.
- Nicholls, David G., Terry Coates. 2009 Buried Bait Survey – an evaluation of a new technique to detect bandicoots. Report to DSE West Gippsland.

Southern Brown Bandicoot - Presentations

- Nicholls, DG or Stephen Flack. Presentation to Westernport Swamp Landcare Group 2008, 2 February, 4 May, 3 August 2009 on Fox Control Program.
- Submission to SEITA Panel Hearings for EES for Frankston By-Pass. March 2009. Individuals and members of the Biosphere.

WATSON CREEK INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Watson Creek ICM strategic plan has guided activities over the last 18 months. With a grant awarded by Envirofund, the first phase of the strategy to “engage with the rural landholders to improve the water quality of Watson Creek” was put in motion. The Envirofund grant included funding for: facilitated meetings and workshops; field days; a boat trip within Yaringa Marine National Park; publication of a landholder booklet of Best NRM Practices; water testing along the creek and underwater photography of Yaringa Marine National Park.

Watson Creek Boat Tour

40 people, including Watson Creek landholders and representatives from the market garden industry, the Vegetable Growers Association, Inghams Chickens, horse agistment operators, and Yaringa Marina management, participated in this field trip of Yaringa Marine National Park. The objective was to demonstrate to all present the natural values of the marine park and the risk elements involved. During the tour, representatives from Parks Victoria and Central Coastal Board gave presentations to the participants, explaining the “bigger picture” – to enable them to gain a better understanding of how all activities undertaken in the catchment affect the marine environment.

The trip was a milestone event for the Project, as it brought together representatives from agencies, local government, local schools, and stakeholders from business and the community, in an informal setting, with a common focus, providing an opportunity for interaction between these diverse interest groups that would not otherwise occur.

Rural Landholder Catchment Tour

18 landholders participated in a field day, visiting rural properties that have undertaken sustainable land management practices and viewing demonstrations of best practices in water quality improvement and protection. A representative from Melbourne Water accompanied the tour and offered advice on grants available and seven participants availed themselves of this opportunity.

Watson Creek Business Breakfast

This was attended by 23 Watson Creek industry representatives, including market gardeners, the poultry industry and businesses operating at the Yaringa Marina. The objective of this event was to promote the environmental values of Yaringa Marine National Park and to challenge industry to adopt sustainable land management practices. Parks Victoria and a Vegetable Industry consultant made a presentation at the meeting. A number of participants had no previous affiliation with the Watson Creek ICM Project, therefore this was their first opportunity to become involved with this project.

Watson Creek Catchment Landcare Group

The Watson Creek Catchment Landcare Group has not been active since early 2007. The Watson Creek ICM Project has worked together with past Watson Creek Landcare Group members to re-establish the group. A community engagement and information session, with the objective of raising awareness and changing perceptions within the community, drew 40 participants. The meeting combined formal presentations from the Watson Creek ICM team, the Watson Creek Landcare Group President, and a Central Coastal Board representative; and informal discussions covering catchment and water management issues affecting Watson Creek and Yaringa Marine National Park.

Water Monitoring

Water monitoring of the entire length of Watson Creek has continued as a focus of the project. Seasonal water monitoring has provided landholders with current data, highlighting that sections of the creek contain elevated concentrations of nutrients. The Project is working with individual landholders to create on-farm plans to improve the creek's water quality.

Media

The Watson Creek ICM Project is continuing to maintain its presence in the local print media, by contributing articles on the reestablishment of the Watson Creek Catchment Landcare Group, Watson Creek indigenous planting days at Inghams Chickens' Somerville site, Watson Creek's rare green comb spider orchids and swamp skinks. This particular article was also discussed on ABC Radio. The underwater photography of Yaringa Marine National Park funded through Envirofund was also utilised in the media.

The Dolphin Research Institute has supported the Project through the promotion of Watson Creek and Yaringa Marine National Park in its "*i sea, i care*"® newsletter and its regular articles in *Dive Log* magazine, and through integration of the Watson Creek Story into DRI's Communications Programs. The "*i sea, i care*"® newsletter reaches an audience of 30,000 and a *Dive Log* audience of 70,000.

Caring for our Country Community Coastcare Grant

The Watson Creek ICM Project was successful in receiving \$45,000 from the Federal Government to broaden its focus to include the urban sectors of the Watson Creek catchment, utilising:

- Community Groups – by building rapport, raising awareness, and changing perceptions through the Watson Creek ICM Project meetings and presentations.
- The Dolphin Research Institute's "*i sea, i care*"® Ambassador Community Engagement Program, to work for four local schools within the Watson Creek catchment, focusing on the issues affecting this catchment.
- Local media – to create community awareness and to change the perception of the Watson Creek catchment and Yaringa Marine National Park and their correlated issues.

Under this grant, community stewardship is also being built through the ongoing engagement of the rural sector, resulting in landholders also seeking grants for on-ground work.

The Watson Creek ICM Project is developing and achieving on-ground solutions with major market gardeners, the Vegetable Growers Association and the poultry industry, to improve sustainable farm practices that will in turn improve the water quality of Watson Creek.

Replication of the Model in other Areas

The Watson Creek ICM Project is recognised as being an excellent model for successfully integrating and addressing the spectrum of issues associated with repairing polluted waterways, and therefore seeks to influence positive outcomes for catchment management in other regions.

The Biosphere Foundation is currently holding discussions with other groups, agencies and local government with a view to deploying the Watson Creek Model elsewhere. The model is currently being refined and will be documented to provide a promotional tool for achieving improved water quality and biodiversity.

*Janet Borley, Project Officer
Watson Creek ICM Project*

BASS COAST ROUNDTABLE

The Bass Coast Roundtable has a small, but diverse and knowledgeable membership, which meets at Newhaven every two months. Roundtable activities this year continued to focus on three areas:

- Raising awareness of the Biosphere Reserve as a special place with internationally recognised values, how our lives are connected with this environment, and the need to live sustainably.
- Encouraging better collaboration and knowledge-sharing between local organisations to improve sustainability outcomes.
- Offering local knowledge, expertise and views to assist the Biosphere Foundation Board and Research Committee.

Raising awareness

The Roundtable provided displays and support for the World Environment Day Expo on 10-11 June 2009 and the Sustainable Living Festival on 13 June 2009. The World Environment Day Expo, organised by local environment groups and the Bass Coast Shire, was attended by over 600 primary school students from across the region. The Sustainable Living Festival, organised by Phillip Island Landcare, attracted approximately 250 people.

Collaboration and knowledge-sharing

The Roundtable worked to encourage the Bass Coast Shire to review the Municipal Bicycle Strategy. Our agenda included not only safety and infrastructure, but also biodiversity, sustainability, and education/interpretation aspects. The roundtable and Phillip Island Bicycle Users Group organised a meeting in February 2009 to focus on Phillip Island issues as a means of starting the review process. The meeting was hosted by the Phillip Island Nature Park and attended by a Bass Coast Shire councillor and the shire's economic development manager and infrastructure director. It included representatives from Bicycle Victoria and a broad range of businesses and community groups.

The Roundtable is represented on the project management team for the Phillip Island Landcare project, Sustaining Coastal Communities, which is funded by the Victorian Sustainability Fund. This three-year project is working with Phillip Island residents, businesses, and landholders to provide sustainability audits, workshops and events, and investigate local carbon sequestration strategies. The Roundtable was also represented at the inaugural meeting of the Energy Innovation Cooperative, a renewable energy cooperative established in the Bass Coast and South Gippsland region.

Local knowledge, expertise and views

The Roundtable provided feedback on the Education Strategy discussion paper by Research Committee member, Dr Sharron Pfueller.

*Jane Jobe, Convenor and Director
Bass Coast Roundtable,*

**MORNINGTON PENINSULA AND WESTERN PORT
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**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2009**

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