

EABRN-7 Proceedings

1. Country reports
2. Presentations by FEB/RAS, SABR and other Russian organisations
3. Field Evaluation of SABR
4. Presentations and discussions on special topics
5. Next EABRN meeting
6. Excursion to Far Eastern State Marine Reserve

1. Country reports

The representatives of all member states reported their activities of the MAB programme carried out after the EABRN-6 meeting and the conditions and prospects for development of the national networks of biosphere reserves. R. Korea was working on nominating Jeju Island and DPR. Korea on nominating Mt. Kuwol as the second biosphere reserve in the country respectively. In Russia, Katunsky Biosphere Reserve had been designated and three more areas were waiting for approval for new biosphere reserves by ICC of the MAB programme.

2. Presentations by FEB/RAS, SABR and other Russian organizations

Through the meeting, particularly during the field trip, there were many academic and introductory presentations made by PIG, other institutes of FEB/RAS, SABR, other nature reserves (5 including Kronotsky Biosphere Reserve), state university and NGOs. PIG made three presentations on geo/ecosystem study and monitoring in and around SABR to evaluate the influence of human activities, pollution in particular, on the ecosystems. For SABR, the Director introduced the history and present status of the reserve and their current activities. In addition, there were five presentations for study and monitoring on fauna, flora and ecosystems in SABR. The Directors of other reserves emphasized in their presentations that international cooperation and nomination of the areas as biosphere reserves, including cluster and transboundary ones, were required to reinforce the conservation and management.

3. Field Evaluation of SABR

Two field visits to the core area of SABR were carried out on 9th and 10th September. The first visit was to observe the altitudinal change of vegetation from the sea level to about 1,200-m level: from oak/birch forest to Korean pine/spruce forest. The second visit was to see coastal meadow and brackish lake that was important as a stopover site for many migratory birds. The field trips included visits to monitoring sites, demonstration of research activities and a series of interpretation for flora, fauna and ecosystems.

Based on the field visits and presentations, the evaluation of SABR was made in line with the three functions of biosphere reserve (conservation, sustainable development and support function) and zonation. The participants recognized the high value of SABR for biodiversity conservation in the Far Eastern region and its high ecological linkage with China, Korea and Russia. The participants were very impressed by the high level of ecological research and monitoring carried out in the strictly protected area, the core area of the biosphere reserve, for many years. However, they also expressed their impression that the SABR activities were inclined to the nature protection and study in the core area and thus, more attention and effort should be

made to the resource management and sustainable development in the buffer zone and the transition area. Particularly emphasized are local community involvement, environmental education and ecotourism development. It was suggested that the concept of cluster biosphere reserve could be applied to this area to conserve the regional biodiversity more effectively. The Director of SABR acknowledged the critical but useful comments and suggestions by the participants and mentioned that the outcome of the evaluation would be reflected to develop a reserve business plan for 2002.

4. Presentation and Discussions on special topics

(1) Transboundary conservation cooperation

There were six presentations on this topic and four areas were focused in East Asia: Four Islands of the Kuriles (Japan, Russia), Korean DMZ (R. Korea, DPRK), Altai Mountains (Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, China), Lower Tumen River (DPRK, Russia, China).

- Kuriles Islands: MAB-Japan held a workshop for the nature conservation cooperation inviting Japanese and Russian scientists in February 2001 and issued a joint resolution on a new approach to this territorial issue;
- Altai Mountains: Germany was deeply involved in this initiative and negotiating with China to promote the cooperation;
- Korean DMZ: R. Korea presented interim results of a study on the transboundary cooperation, showing their intention to work on it with DPR. Korea. However, DPRK showed a negative view on this issue, stating that it should be handled by the state level, although they agreed the value of conservation and the necessity of study;
- Lower Tumen River: Korean National Commission for UNESCO held the second workshop for an environmental peace network in Northeast Asia in August 2001.

MAB-Russia mentioned that Russia was very interested in all these developments and wished to proceed the cooperation with the relevant countries. It appeared that China's cooperation and active involvement were indispensable to break through the situation. UNESCO Jakarta recommended the meeting to initiate a pilot project for EABRN transboundary cooperation and to publish a comprehensive document for all the cooperation in two years.

(2) Capacity building for sustainable management

UNESCO Jakarta presented a project proposal "Training Programme Development for EABRN Biosphere Reserves and Other Similar Protected Areas". It was stressed that capacity building was a cross-cutting issue for all the activities by EABRN and its training should be professional, cost-effective and flexible. It was suggested that the training programme be developed at different levels and cover subjects, such as ecotourism development, protected area design and establishment, management planning, conservation biology, socio-economy and scientific research and monitoring. The participants agreed the importance and necessity of such a training programme.

(3) Ecotourism development

The representatives of all the countries were given opportunities to report the current activities and problems concerning ecotourism development. It was recommended

that the evaluation of problems caused by ecotourism be needed by bringing both successful and failed examples of ecotourism in the next EABRN meeting.

(4) Biosphere reserve periodic review and field evaluation

It was recommended that the periodic review could apply a regional approach by holding a meeting in the field inviting UNESCO and other member states concerned. The field evaluation should be supplemental to the periodic review but a mechanism to coordinate the two schemes needed to be developed.

(5) 30 year anniversary of MAB programme

Japan briefly reviewed the history of EABRN since 1994 and stated that the member states should have more active cooperation, which would need more fund raising. R. Korea informed the meeting that they were planning to have a national seminar to publicise the MAB programme and biosphere reserves in the end of this year. Russia also mentioned their plan to make publications concerned and stressed that all the countries should participate actively in this celebration.

In line with these topics, UNESCO Jakarta, as the Secretariat, proposed to officially establish taskforce to develop new cooperative actions in EABRN and to improve the biosphere reserve management, asking some country to play a leading role for each subject. The participants generally agreed its necessity and priority and particularly R. Korea and Russia showed their intention to take some leadership. At the same time, however, R. Korea mentioned that they needed to consult this matter with organisations concerned in their country and later would inform their position to the Secretariat. At the end, it was put off to establish the taskforce but effort to promote this initiative would be continued after the meeting.

5. Next EABRN Meeting

It was agreed that a formal meeting of EABRN would be held biannually. The next meeting would be held in 2003 either in Mongolia or in Korea in the case of designation of Jeju Island as a biosphere reserve. A possible subject for the next meeting was coastal and marine conservation and management in East Asia or transboundary conservation cooperation. A delegate from Korean Ministry of Environment mentioned that the Government of Korea was pleased to continue financial support to the EABRN activities.

6. Excursion to Far Eastern Marine Reserve

On 13 September, after the meeting, most of the participants joined an excursion to Far Eastern State Marine Reserve that was owned by Institute of Marine Biology, FEB/RAS. The Director of the reserve and senior officials of the institute guided us and introduced the nature and history of the reserve. They were also interested in nominating the reserve and its adjacent area to a biosphere reserve.