The Middle Zambezi Biosphere Reserve.

The Middle Zambezi Biosphere Reserve continues to offer services and goods to the Zimbabwe Nation. This short report briefly discusses the programmes and challenges in the management of the Biosphere Reserve.

1. Management.

The MAB committee is awaiting the replacement of the NATCOM contact point officer who retired some months ago. The departure of Dr. Guy Broucke resulted in the loss of the services of Miss Rachel Chiwara who was serving as a volunteer intern, managing the day to day running of the MAB Committee programmes, as well as representing the committee at meetings, both in the country and regionally.
2. The Kariba REDD+ project.

A private company, Carbon Green Africa, has successfully negotiated a REDD+ project for the Middle Zambezi valley, which includes the Middle Zambezi Biosphere Reserve. The Figure shows the location of the Kariba REDD+ project. Last year, the project paid $350,000 to the rural district councils in the project area. Other source of revenue to the MZBR is from the CAMPFIRE programme.

3. Education and Research

The Rifa Education Camp, located near Chirundu, is almost fully booked throughout the dry season. Last year the visitors included students from Chinhoyi University of Science and Technology and the National University of Science and Technology. Research on Climate Change and birds of the MZBR continues under Mrs. P. Gamundani of the Department of Biological Science, University of Zimbabwe. At The University of Zimbabwe Lake Kariba Research Station Mr. Lyson Marufu is investigating the impact of the invasive freshwater crayfish *Cherax quadricarinatus*, recently introduced into Lake Kariba. The crayfish is rapidly expanding its territory in the lake.

4. Some Challenges

a. The Chirundu Border Post

The Chirundu border village is the main gateway of trade traffic from Southern Africa to countries north of the Zambezi River, primarily Zambia and the DRC. The traffic congestion has lead the Chirundu Village Council to allocate land that encroached into wildlife management areas. UNESCO MAB, together with the National Hunters Association have proposed the drawing up of a Local Area Plan.
for the village such that

I. The village does not encroach into areas used by wildlife for watering

II. A recreational area for wildlife viewing be created to give the residents of Chirundu and tourists wildlife viewing opportunities. The cost of this is close to US$200 0000.

b. Feral dogs in Kariba.

During the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe, some residents of Kariba took to poaching for bush meat. Though this is still a problem it is now aggravated by dogs that now hunt on their own. An agreement has been reached with the Kariba Town authorities that dogs seen in the wild will be shot, and that dog owners must ensure their animals are vaccinated against rabies and kept within their properties.

c. Education

There is need in Kariba for a resident education officer to educate both adults and children on how to coexist with wildlife, which is a unique tourism asset for the town and the nation as a whole. Children mob elephants to chase them away from residential areas. Last year crocodiles fatally wounded two children when they went swimming unsupervised. The Kariba Animal Welfare Fund Trust has been very active in educating the residents on animal movements in the town, as well as combating poaching.

d. Hunting pressure

There is evidence that some of the Buffer Zone hunting areas are being hunted unsustainably, due largely to the country’s state of economy. Unless the economy improves, this pressure will persist.

e. Signage

The MZBR is desperately in need of signage, to inform travellers that they are entering a BR. In Ghana, we noticed that the signage for Songor BR had been supported by UNESCO.

5. Other proposed.

a. The Harare Wetlands Biosphere Reserve.

Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, suffers from water shortage. All the rivers of Zimbabwe originate from wetlands. The proposed Harare Wetlands Biosphere Reserve is designed to safeguard the water supply of the city. However, though the Environmental Management Authority is keen on the project, it is
mired by political intrigues by politically connected developers who want cheap land.

b. The Honde Valley Biosphere Reserve.

The Honde Valley is in the Eastern Districts of Zimbabwe. It is drained by the Pungwe River system, which flows into Mozambique. This would be a community run BR, as the community in the area already derive their livelihoods from sustainable exploitation of their natural resources assets to make crafts and to produce agricultural products.

6. Statutory State of BRs in Zimbabwe

The MZBR was established using the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority Act. There is no statutory provision recognising Biosphere Reserves as land use categories in their own right. The author learnt at the recent AfriMab workshop in Ghana that South Africa has enacted a Biosphere Reserves Act. The committee has made proposals to the Zimbabwe Government to establish a statutory instrument to elevate the BRs as a statutory land use category. As Zimbabwe’s environmental management ethos evolves, other land use categories, such as the Ramsar sites, will emerge. Unlike other land use categories such as Ramsar or World Heritage land use categories based on international conventions, the BRs are not. Therefore, it is necessary that each country constructs statutory instruments to recognise BRs as statutory land use categories.