



Working to Improve Livelihoods and Conserve our Natural and Cultural Heritage

The Congaree Biosphere Region (CBR) represents the beauty and productivity of our special region of the South Carolina Midlands. We bring people and organizations together to improve local livelihoods and conserve the valuable benefits that healthy lands and waters provide to our region.

Local Pride, International Recognition

The beauty and value of the CBR was first recognized internationally by the Man and the Biosphere Program's (MAB) designation of Congaree National Park as a Biosphere Reserve, which "protects, studies, and interprets the resources, history, stories, and wilderness character of the nation's largest remaining tract of southern old-growth bottomland forest and its associated ecosystems." The CBR is one of 28 sites in the U.S. Biosphere Network and one of 701 sites in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, all working toward a prosperous and environmentally secure future. The CBR was expanded in 2017. Stretching from downtown Columbia to Sumter and Camden to St. Matthews, the CBR includes 466,000 acres (Figure 1) and recognizes the important contributions of the wider region to our natural resources, cultural legacies, and economy.

Foundation in Dialogue

The biosphere concept relies on community involvement and open dialogue. Throughout 2018 and 2019 the CBR hosted a series of

outreach meetings to give voice to the community and invite stakeholders to collaborate on planning potential biosphere activities. Recommendations from a wide range of participants encompassed conservation, education, tourism, scientific research, engagement with both urban and rural residents, and interest in building sustainability and prosperity.

Organization, Purpose and Goals

A CBR Advisory Council with diverse membership is being established under a memorandum of understanding between the Central Midlands Council of Governments, South East Rural Community Outreach, and Congaree National Park. The Advisory Council is a voluntary, nonregulatory landscape collaborative that works towards the CBR mission to "foster a future that celebrates, values, and sustains the rich natural and cultural legacies of the SC Midlands in concert with opportunities to promote healthy, vibrant, and prosperous communities." We invite all individuals and organizations to bring your perspectives and share your values with the CBR. In a collaborative, non-regulatory framework, we seek to find ways for our region to thrive in harmony with our environment.

CBR Goals

- Conserve CBR natural resources, including environmental (e.g., water, air, and soil) quality, biodiversity, natural forest cover, and ecosystem services
- Conserve CBR cultural legacies, including community sites, stories, institutions, and traditions while remaining accountable to local voices and stakeholders for guiding CBR initiatives
- Support sustainable community planning, infrastructure engineering, collaboration, and economic development to simultaneously promote ecotourism, heritage tourism, small business, agriculture, silviculture, local industry, and commerce
- Promote scientific research, scholarship, monitoring, and education that can inform and inspire decisions regarding conservation and sustainability
- Remain positive, proactive, and vigilant to forces and trends that challenge the long-term integrity of the CBR's natural resources and cultural heritage

Invitation to Participate

The CBR Advisory Council is seeking partners to build approaches for conservation and sustainable development in our region. The CBR is a voluntary organization built on the power of public and private collaboration. It has no regulatory powers or legal land management authorities. Individual citizens and organizations are both entitled to join.

Value of Membership

Our livelihoods and quality of life depend on the benefits that healthy rivers, floodplains, agriculture, public lands, and urban areas provide; benefits including crop pollination, water supply, natural flood control, wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism, and carbon sequestration. A secure future depends on maintaining these vital services for our people,

economy, and environment at a regional level. Challenges to our environmental well-being can only be met at a broad landscape level. The CBR believes that local collaboration built on knowledge and respect for the beauty and productivity of nature, can drive innovative solutions for people and nature to thrive together sustainably. By aligning around our shared values, and combining our complementary yet diverse skills and programs, we all gain more capacity to accomplish our mutual goals.

For More Information...

...on the Congaree Biosphere Region:

<https://www.nps.gov/cong/learn/cbr.htm>

...on other examples of biospheres:

www.biospherenetwork.org

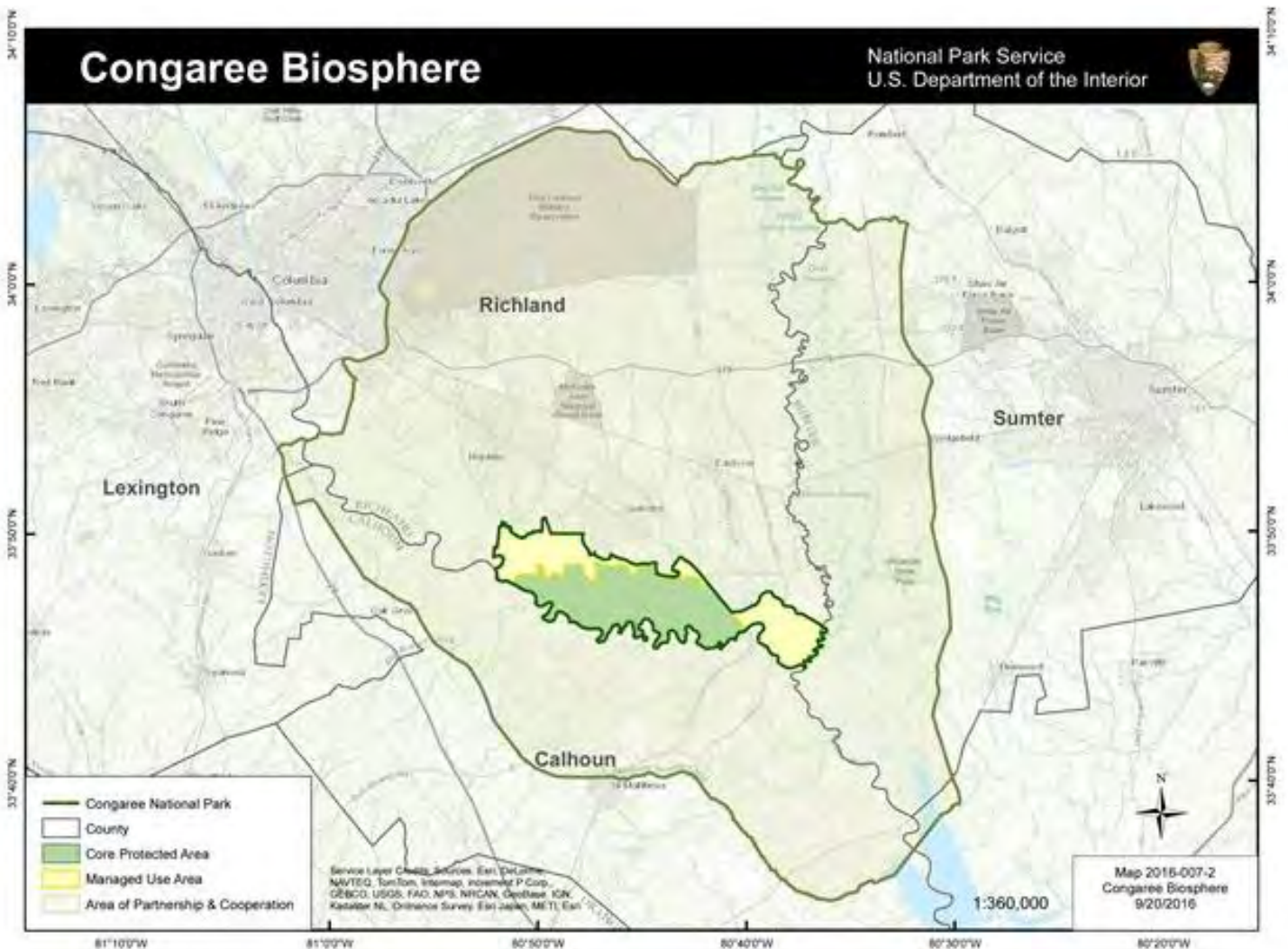


Figure 1: Map of the CBR from <https://www.nps.gov/cong/learn/cbr.htm>.