



Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



Innovative Community Actions in the LH-GB Watershed

November 24, 2021
www.bpba.ca

BOO SMITH

Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



Mandate

**Building community capacity and
commitment while achieving concrete goals in**

- Conservation and
- Sustainable Economic Development



Stokes River

Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



Community

- Rural coastal community of 4,000 people
- 40% are 65 years and older
- 87% have English as their mother tongue
- Small commercial base
- Economic drivers: tourism, construction and agriculture



Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



	Research	Plan	Educate/ Engage Awareness & understanding Skill building Motivation Supporting actions	Demonstrate Demonstration Projects	Monitor Baseline/ Ongoing	Restore	Evaluate
Rivers and Inland Lakes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wetlands Coastal and Interior	✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓	
Shorelines			✓	✓		✓	
Nearshore (through land based activities)						✓	
Forests	✓	✓				✓ (2017)	
Alvars		😊					
Night Sky	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



How to Fund the Association's Operations?

- Analysis of revenue sources showed an over-reliance on grants as a % of revenue
- Funding administrative costs is most challenging (versus projects)
- Examined opportunities to grow existing revenue sources: memberships, corporate donations, golf tournament, raffle and Easter eggs



Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association



Don't underestimate the value of small fundraisers (under \$5,000):

- Easier for volunteers to organize
- With one fundraiser per quarter, keeps organization top of mind in the community
- Can be targeted to different donor segments
- Less risk if it flops
- Can cover audit, insurance or half of yearly rent

Nonetheless, we need substantial ongoing funding to support an Executive Director position

Social Enterprise as alternate revenue generator

First, we articulated goals for a **Social Enterprise**

- Generate a profit that would support Executive Director position
- Business would align with mission to build commitment to conservation
- Attract donors and volunteers
- Contribute to area's sustainable economic development
- Revenues and profits could grow over time so as substantially cover costs of half-time ED, insurance and financial audit (\$50,000)
- Sunrise concept, not sunset
- Evidence of existing organic support

Social Enterprise

Then, we examined our organizational strengths

- Access to individuals with deep ecological knowledge
- Visually stunning and ecologically significant part of the province
- Some of the darkest skies in Southern Ontario
- Already a busy tourism destination-450,000 visitors per year
- Internal marketing and writing, business management, financial management and creative program development strengths



Social Enterprise

Created EcoAdventures: *Explore, Learn, Make a Difference*

- Fun, small group, four season, guided outdoor adventures
- Seamlessly intertwine ecological learning while having fun outdoors snowshoeing, canoeing, biking and hiking
- Equip people to get outdoors and through having fun and deepening their ecological understanding *AND INSPIRING THEM TO PROTECT*
- Volunteers conceived of and wrote the business case with some assistance from a staff member

We attracted over \$100,000 in start up funding!

Social Enterprise

Difficult to Forecast Market Appeal

- Snowshoe to the Grotto
- Brave the Caves
- Soul Stroll
- Birding by the Bay



Social Enterprise

Difficult to Forecast Market Appeal

- First adventure offered June 2017
- First three-day winter 2018
- Fee for 3.5 hours \$65.00/ person
- Shorter Adventures and lower fees now
- Reconsidering three-day Adventures with new format



Social Enterprise

Charity Advantages

- Able to obtain grants for program development, equipment and more
- Support to incubate the program
- Attract volunteers to act as sweeps, content contributors, social media, marketing etc.

Social Enterprise

Caution!

- 50% of new business fail in first five years
- Typically takes 3-5 years for a business to become profitable - to figure out a formula that works
- Tourism space requires different skill sets and knowledge than environmental work – a very tough business



Social Enterprise

Sales and cost management are challenging

- Margins are slim, cancellations due to weather are significant
- Chicken and egg: started with one part-time guide/program manager because we could not afford a full-time guide
- Very vulnerable to staff changes, succession
- Insurance can be a major make-or-break cost issue
- We almost did not survive pandemic shutdowns



The Big Canoe



- We were unable to run the canoe program in 2020 or 2021 but managed to conduct a staff shakedown trial on Isaac Lake
- **Paddle Canada Big Canoe Certification** completed in 2021



Differentiating our offerings from others

- On the Bruce there are many “free” nature tours which provide stiff competition
- We now offer equipment e.g. snowshoes, headlamps
- Staff highly trained: Advanced Wilderness First Aid, etc.
- Exclusive behind the scenes experiences not available to general public
- Partnerships with local businesses are important and benefits spill over into conservation work
- Volunteers are one of the keys to financial viability

and if you can get the formula right...

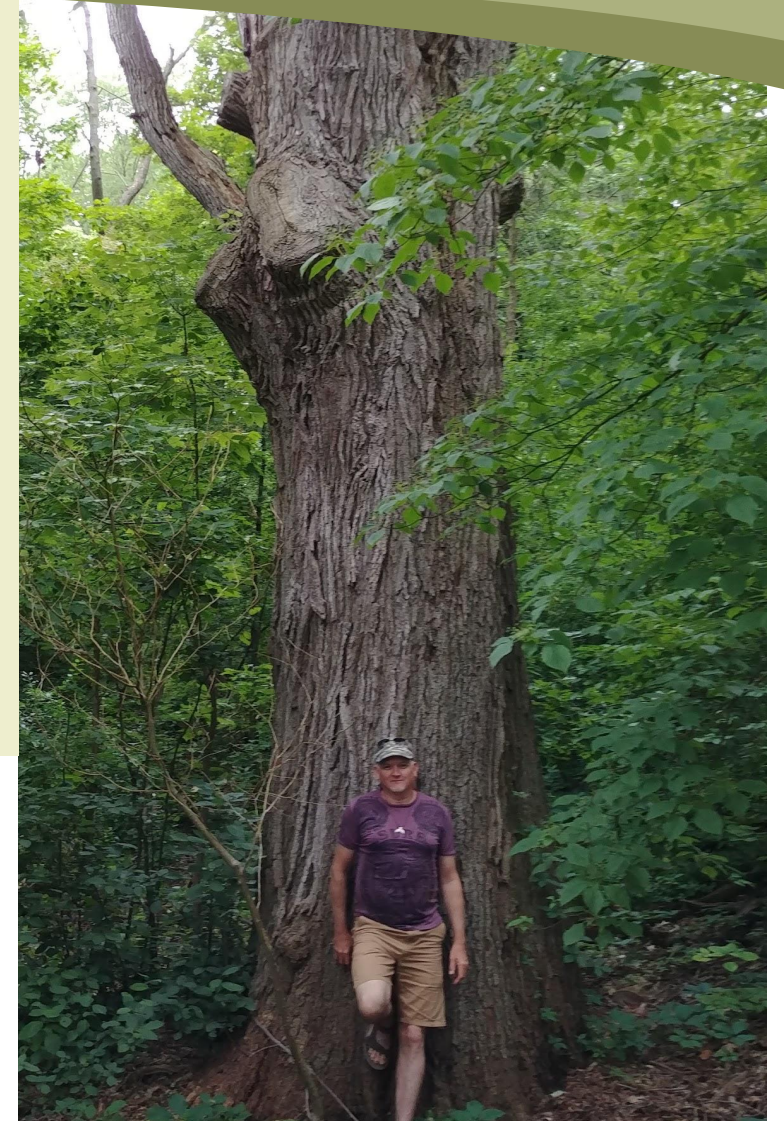


If you get the formula right...

- Awarded “Amazing Experiences” grant- Greenbelt
- Social media following continues to grow
- New Forest Escape, Brave the Caves, Forest to Shore hike
- Merchandise launch for 2021 (toques, etc.)
- New “Bike and Hike to Cabot Head”



Best of the Best



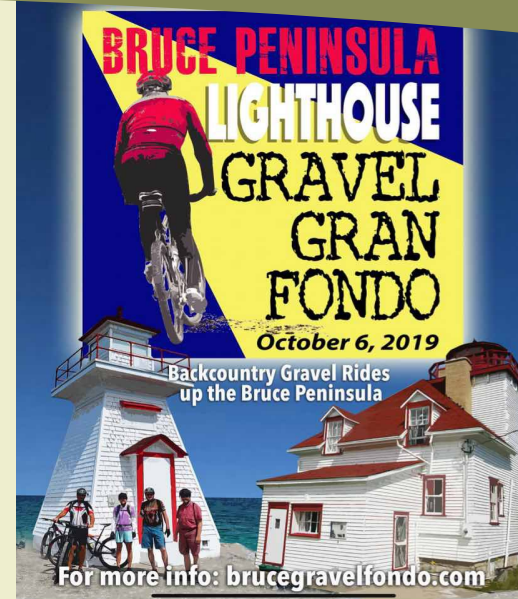


Couchiching Conservancy Passport to Nature Model is Different

- Volunteer guides have expertise in topics like mushrooms or shore birds
- Annual booklet describes the offerings
- Program schedule offers many guided experiences on Couchiching properties - often free, but sponsored by businesses
- Advertising/sponsorships sold for being featured in booklet – substantial revenue this way; \$20,000(?) but we do not know costs
- Clouds on the horizon: dropping interest in print-based advertising

Bruce Peninsula Gravel Gran Fondo

- Conceived by a Board member very involved in cycling
- Volunteer marketing and management
 - no staff costs
- First year - major effort on concept, sponsorships and relationships
- Goal - business sponsors to cover \$20,000 cost to run the event



Gravel Gran Fondo (EcoAdventures branding)

- 30, 50, 80 and 110 km scenic routes
- Trail monitors and safety back up
- Food stations with homemade goodies, beer tent and lunch at finish line
- 250 cyclists in 2019 and 400 in 2021 - sold out, primarily by word of mouth!
- \$40,000 raised to support conservation
- Showcased Biosphere work to cyclists, including an EV car show related to our Climate Change efforts



Biosphere Environmental

Genesis...

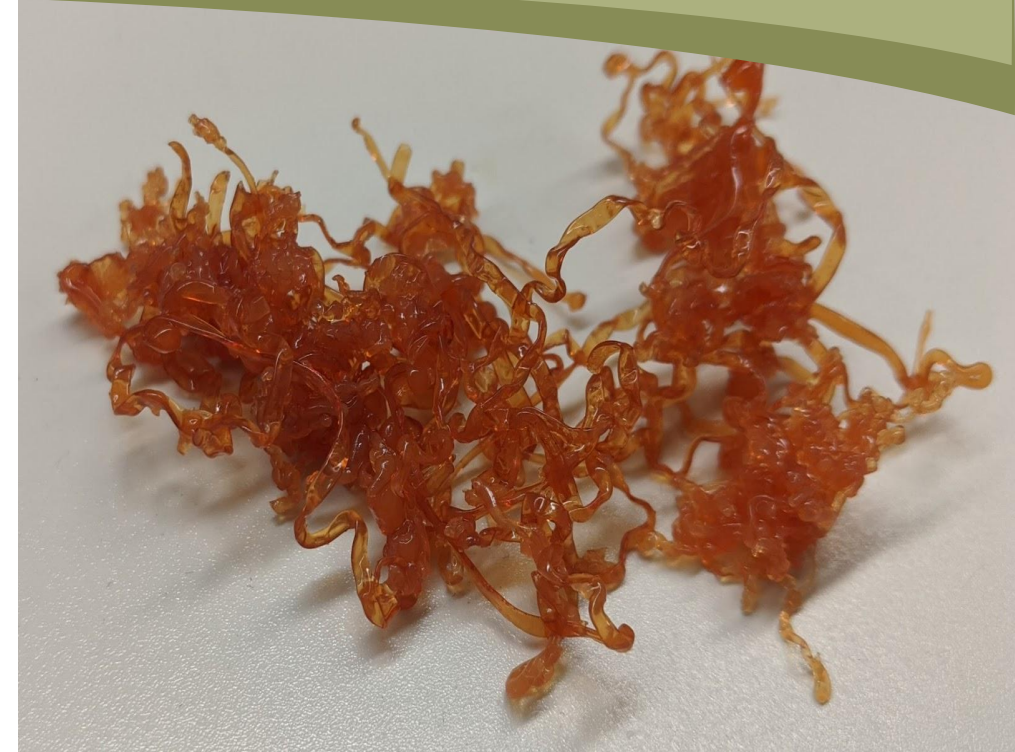
- We believe strongly in collaboration among academic, farming community, business and charitable sector (us)
- 2016 - we approached a professor identified at a conference who was working on a new bioremediation of phosphorus approach
- 2017 worked with farming community on field testing at a manure site
- Further research has yielded two new types of biofiltration media
- 2020: 500 kg of media for field testing, graduating from lab to tonne scale
- Created ***Biosphere Environmental*** - a social enterprise



Biosphere Environmental

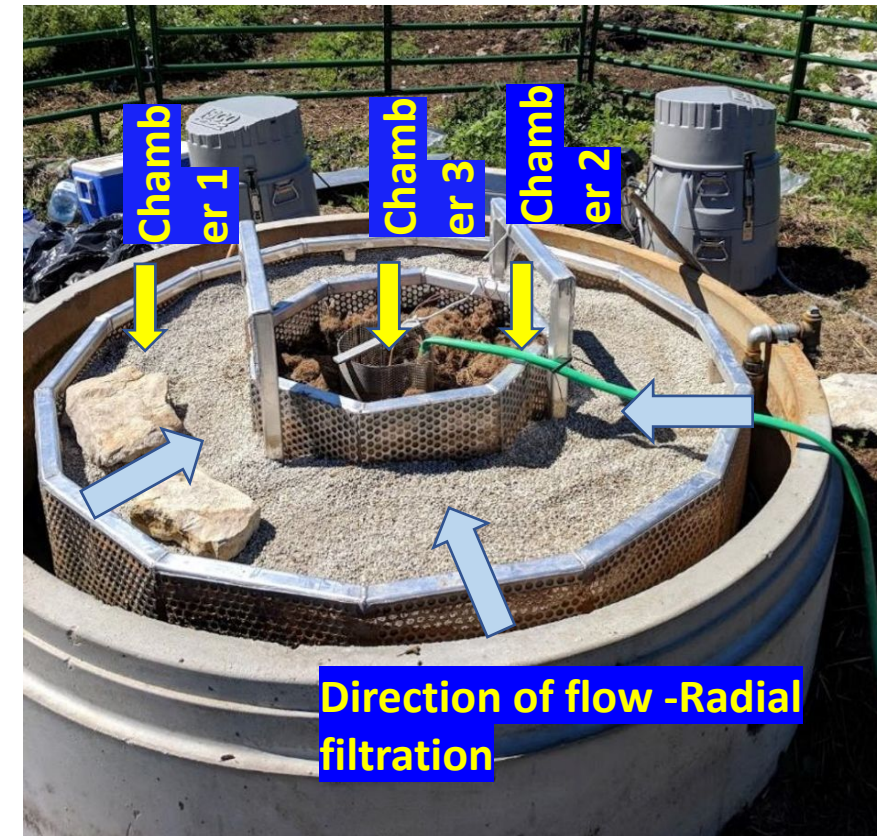
Social enterprise to generate a revenue stream for the Biosphere Association and shareholders

Long term goal: create an industry cluster on the Northern Bruce with a research centre (satellite university campus) to develop, manufacture and market sustainable agricultural products



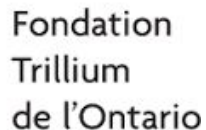
Biosphere Environmental

- 2021 developed a field tested “next generation” controlled tile drain that will hold our phosphorus biofiltration media
- Identified an industry partner who is interested in producing media once proof of concept established, to ship across North America
- Addresses both parts of the Biosphere Association mission: sustainable economic development and conservation



Thanks to all our Funders and Supporters!

- Municipality of Northern Bruce
- Bruce County
- Friends of Greenbelt Foundation
- Caframo
- ALUS - Alternative Land Use Services
- Parks Canada
- Ontario Ministry of Environment, Climate Change & Parks
- ECO Canada
- M.H. Bringham Foundation
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Bruce County Soil & Crop Improvement Association
- Community Foundation Grey Bruce
- ECCC- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Grey Sauble Conservation
- Environment Canada
- Grey Sauble Foundation
- Stewardship Grey Bruce
- Wawanesa Insurance
- Lewko Foundation
- HRSDC -Employment and Social Development Canada
- Covid Relief from Ontario and Federal Governments - ECO Adventures would not have survived





Thank you!

THANK YOU!

