

Country	Canada
Region/Province/ or State	Alberta
Web Address	https://www.watertonbiosphere.com
Date Founded	1979
Size (hectares)	66,761
Distinguishing Features	the east slopes of the Rocky Mountains extending from the Continental Divide to the edge of the Canadian Great Plains to the east.
Main Industries (in terms of employment)	Tourism, Agriculture

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve is recognized internationally as a special place where people work together to demonstrate innovative approaches to conservation and sustainable use. Designated by UNESCO in 1979, the WBR was Canada's second biosphere reserve, and the first to include a national park at its core.

Located in the southwest corner of Alberta, no area of similar size in the Canadian Rocky Mountains has as much ecological diversity as the Waterton Biosphere Reserve. Here, some of the most ancient and spectacular mountains in the Rockies abruptly meet the prairie, creating a rich mosaic of habitats - from prairie grasslands and aspen groves, to subalpine forests, alpine meadows, lakes and freshwater wetlands - and an astounding variety of plants and animals.

The region is also home to many vibrant communities - Pincher Creek, Cardston, Crowsnest Pass, Piikani and Kainai Reserves, and others - each with a rich and distinct cultural history, and reliance on a wide range of economic activities. In the WBR, people are actively involved with ranching, farming, tourism and recreation, wind energy, mining, the oil and gas industry, and other natural resource-related activities.

The protected core area of the WBR is Waterton Lakes National Park [505 km²]. Established in 1895 and managed by Parks Canada, Waterton is the Canadian part of the world's first International Peace Park (Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, 1932). The peace park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995.

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve has taken a flexible approach to zonation. The 'three zone plan' is essentially a theoretical concept. What is most important is choosing an innovative, cooperative approach that works for the people and environments in the WBR area.

Extending beyond the protected core area of Waterton Lakes National Park is a broad buffer zone of surrounding public and private land, and a flexible transition zone that supports many people in a wide range of economic activities.

Currently, the transition zone is loosely defined. In the WBR, the area of interest extends at least as far as the M.D. of Pincher Creek, Cardston County and Crowsnest Pass, including the Piikani and Kainai Reserves, and a portion of the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve. Here, the goal of sustainable resource use is explored and encouraged through research, education, and community-based planning.

UNESCO has no authority or regulatory powers within a biosphere reserve. The protected core area is subject to the legal restrictions of the organization responsible for its management. However, the buffer and transition zones, which often make up the majority of the reserve area of interest, are not regulated or restricted in any way by having biosphere reserve status. Government jurisdictions and private rights remain as they were before designation.

The Waterton Biosphere Reserve is also nested within a much larger landscape known as the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, internationally acclaimed as one of the largest remaining intact ecosystems in North America. Geographically, the Crown of the Continent is centered on the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and stretches along the axis of the Rocky Mountains between the Canadian Central Rockies and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The Crown of the Continent covers approximately 44,000 km² and includes treasured places like Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Montana, the Highwood Pass and Waterton Biosphere Reserve in Alberta, and the Flathead River Valley in southeastern British Columbia. This ecosystem provides a secure core of connected land and critical wildlife travel corridors extending north-south from Canada into the United States.

Two other neighbouring biosphere reserves are also located in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem:

Glacier Biosphere Reserve, with its core in Glacier National Park, Montana

Coram Biosphere Reserve and Experimental Forest [Flathead National Forest near Glacier National Park, Montana]

The Crown of the Continent ecosystem is divided by national and provincial borders and is managed by a number of provincial, state and federal agencies and First Nations with an array of mandates to oversee preservation, tourism, forestry, mining, oil and gas extraction, energy developments and stock grazing. Commercial developers and local citizens further diversify land administration.

As one of North America's largest ecologically intact areas, many people work together to

raise public awareness and understanding of how environmental, social, and economic components of ecosystems interconnect and support each other.

Reference: <https://www.watertonbiosphere.com/about-waterton-biosphere-reserve/>