

ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

SUMMER 2019, #1

ZERO PLASTIC

WORLD NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES



The Zero Plastic Working Group is coordinated in the 2019-2023 period by the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves -Eva Cardona (Menorca) and Aquilino Miguelez (Lanzarote)- and the Research Network Marine Sciences For Society -Juan Baztan and Bethany Jorgensen-.

The first half of 2019 has zipped by for the Zero Plastic Working Group!

But wait,

what is the Zero Plastic Working Group?

From the first steps taken as “Zero Plastic” campaign with the Lanzarote Biosphere Reserve 10 years ago, the “Zero Plastic Working Group” (ZPWG) was launched in May 2018 during the WNICBR meeting in Menorca. The ZPWG is an initiative of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves and the Marine Sciences For Society research network. This partnership between local governments and academia welcomes all Biosphere Reserves taking on the challenge of plastic pollution.

In this inaugural *Zero Plastic News*, we present a brief summary of the ZPWG’s experiences at the April 2019 EuroMAB Conference in Dublin, and hear from several working group members about the issue of plastic pollution in their Biosphere Reserves.



ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

The April 2019 **EuroMAB Conference in Dublin** (2-5 April 2019) set the stage for members of the ZPWG*, including 16 Biosphere Reserves and the international research network Marine Sciences For Society (MSFS), to gather along with other conference participants for the Tackling Plastic Pollution Workshop. Rooted in this workshop, we launched a global call for Biosphere Reserves to join us in facing the challenge of plastic pollution, with the aim of minimizing the harmful consequences stemming from the abusive use of plastic.

The participants in the Tackling Plastic Pollution Workshop outlined a set of challenges and actions for Biosphere Reserves committed to reducing plastic pollution through efforts such as collaborating with educational institutions, families, and governments. We call upon each Biosphere Reserve to lead by example and set in motion a collective local process for facing this global threat, encouraging institutions, social entities, and all citizens to contribute to answering the Zero Plastic challenge.

Additionally, the ZPWG has committed to developing web tools and a collaborative networking method for maintaining effective communication and exchange of practical actions, experiences, assessment, and results rooted in **five key principles**:

Make it simple;
Take it easy;
Lead by example;
Turn off the tap;
Enough is enough.

ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

Following the Dublin Commitment made during the EuroMAB Conference, We call for an ethical and collaborative process rooted in local community values to confront the increasing impacts of plastic pollution on biodiversity and human health around the world, in the atmosphere, oceans, freshwater, and terrestrial systems, as a direct consequence of the continued increase in plastic production. United by collective responsibility and the desire to share results from cutting-edge research and local action, we invite Biosphere Reserves individually, along with each of the existing Biosphere Reserve networks and UNESCO to raise Our voice as a global network of Biosphere Reserves to spread this emerging awareness about plastic pollution and take action: Enough is enough.



We asked working group members to answer a few questions about their experiences with plastic pollution in their Biosphere Reserve, and share some of their responses here to illustrate the challenges of plastic pollution in Biosphere Reserves and actions being taken to confront them.

Fuerteventura Biosphere Reserve (FBR, Spain)

In Fuerteventura, the presence of microplastic and macroplastic has been the subject of study by the council, NGOs and Universities for the past two years, including the following initiatives:

- The Cabildo (the promoting organization of the FBR) has financed research on evaluating the rate of accumulation of persistent chemical pollutants on marine microplastics on the coast of Fuerteventura.
- The FBR has collaborated with the NGO Association of Volunteers of Aid to Nature of Fuerteventura (AVANFUER) in the project "Creating conscience," which focused on the collection of data on microplastics from 10 beaches on the island, and received the “most innovative project of Jóvenes puntales” award from the General Directorate of Youth of the Government of the Canary Islands.
- The FBR launched the Biosferaté campaign, consisting of replacing plastic cups with refillable glasses and bottles to promote plastic-free cultural and sporting events.
- The FBR is part of the Interreg Europe project “CAPonLITTER”, capitalizing good coastal practices and improving policies to prevent marine litter.

Contributed by Tony Gallardo C., Fuerteventura BR.

**Commander Islands Nature and Biosphere Reserve
(CINBR, Russia)**



ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

We on the Commander Islands were very inspired and decided to reignite our project “Green Commander Islands”. This project is not only about plastic, as it targets all sorts of dangerous wastes, such as fishing gear, batteries, lamps and many more. To speak about this issue freely and creatively we have created a small Waste Museum in our visitor center. The exhibits are constructed of waste found on Bering Island (the major island of the group) and show alternatives of how it can be recycled and why recycling is a good idea.

We do not know exactly when plastic pollution was first registered on the Commander Islands. It just was there and has grown with time. It is partially produced by a relatively large village and partially comes from the ocean with tides and currents. The increasing amount of plastic waste is clear to see because of the contrast between pristine nature and this accumulating sign of human impact. As the CINBR is the main way for people to address the issue we started conducting cleanings, but soon realized there is no location of major plastic build-up. So our main activity today is to prevent pollution from the village by education and providing healthy ecological alternatives.

We cannot say that many people understand the threat of plastic pollution or believe it can be avoided. Another major challenge is lack of infrastructure. For example, to recycle waste we have to arrange for it to be transported to other cities, which can be really far away depending on where it is going. The third challenge is the fact that we are just at the beginning of our efforts to make headway on this issue, and we lack local infrastructure for waste collection and management.

We hope to use educational events and materials to gain local support and build strength to fight these challenges.

Contributed by Anastasia Barsukova, Commander Islands BR.

Jeju Island Biosphere Reserve (JIBR, Republic of Korea)

Plastic pollution is a devastating problem for the world's oceans and marine life and a substantial amount of plastic washed up on the beach is also detrimental to the environment of Jeju Island.

What is being done?

(1) Clean House

The Jeju Government has set up a policy called "Clean House". Since early 2017, Jeju residents have only been able to throw out certain types of trash on certain days. This was to increase the amount of trash that gets recycled. Plastic collected at beaches are being incinerated, buried or recycled, too. Since 2015, Jeju Island has been compressing paper and PET, which is used to make plastic bottles, to send it to solid-recovered fuel (SRF) sites. The capacity for managing plastic waste at the Hoecheon-dong Recycling Center, however, is limited. Therefore, Jeju Island has invested 207 billion KRW to construct the Environmental Resource Circulation Center, the landfill (210,000 m²) and incineration facilities (47,000 m²).

(2) Ban on single-use coffee cups and plastic bags

Major supermarkets have been banned from using plastic bags in an effort to reduce plastic pollution and encourage the reuse of recyclables.

ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

The ban was introduced as part of an amendment to an existing law by South Korea's Ministry of Environment, and has applied to the whole Korean peninsula as well as the JIBR. According to the ban, supermarkets should be required to offer customers alternatives such as cloth or paper bags that can be reused or recycled. Those who violate the ban could face fines of up to 3 million KRW.

The Ministry of Environment has introduced the rule banning the use of plastic cups for in-store customers at all cafes in Korea. Under the new regulation, plastic cups must be used for take-out drinks only in all cafes in South Korea.

What challenges are we facing today?

The population of Jeju Island has been drastically increasing, along with the number of tourists, jumping from 5 million to 15 million in just 10 years. Thousands of Jeju residents have expressed their concerns about this. The island is already suffering from an overwhelming number of tourists and more visitors are likely to destroy the beauty that attracted them in the first place.

Contributed by Kwang Sub Jang, Jeju Island BR.

Isle of Man Biosphere Reserve
(IMBR)

**480 BILLION
PLASTIC BOTTLES
PRODUCED
EVERY YEAR**



ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

Plastic pollution was firstly acknowledged in the IMBR around the year 2002 when sporadic beach cleaning events began around 2 or 3 times a year. Serious attention was paid in 2007 when my organisation - Beach Buddies - highlighted the problem and started volunteer sessions and started to raise awareness and educate in schools.

What is being done?

In the Isle of Man we have a unique situation. We started in 2007 and we are a long way ahead of virtually every other nation in the world in beach cleaning. We believe we have the cleanest beaches in the world with 14% of the population directly involved. However, the real key to making changes is to educate in schools. We have done this with exceptional success and it has led to a change in attitudes where people now clean their own streets, parks, glens, footpaths, hiking trails etc. We have changed the way people think, which was not the original intention, but is a fantastic bonus.

What challenges are you facing today?

In the Isle of Man we have shown what can be done. The biggest challenge is to spread the word around the world that this can also be achieved elsewhere, at low cost and with immediate results. We need a world known figure to endorse what we are doing, or a wealthy person to provide serious financial backing to enable this idea to go around the world and to approach the world's governments and media to engage.

Contributed by Bill Dale, Beach Buddies NGO, Isle of Man BR.

**Península de Guanahacabibes Biosphere Reserve
(PGBR, Cuba)**



ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

Ever since our biosphere reserve was established by UNESCO in 1987, we have detected plastic pollution. From the beginning, we initiated several coastal management programs to detect plastics and other waste arriving on our coasts transported by marine currents, which are particularly intense and complex in the southern region of our biosphere reserve. Since then we have noticed the increasing volume and variation of plastic pollution.

What is being done?

In 2002 we started taking action to clean beaches along the southern coast of our biosphere reserve. This initial work was focused on turtle nesting beaches and other beaches of tourist interest. At the end of 2017, we planned the Costa Limpia initiative for the study and management of oceanic waste, using citizen participation to determine the volume of oceanic waste reaching the biosphere reserve and clean the coasts. Plots were delimited to evaluate the volume of waste. Cleaning is done by manual collection with the support of university and pre-university students and residents of local communities. Students from the United States and the United Kingdom also participate as part of their school practices. It has been found that approximately 70% of the waste that reaches the coasts of our biosphere reserve is plastic.

The initiative includes an educational component to raise awareness among citizens and to train volunteers through conferences, workshops and practical training. In order to draw attention to the problem, we have made two short films for television with the support of well-known actors in Cuba, with which we ensure that the message reaches a broad audience and we can attract more volunteers to participate in the cleanup campaigns.

ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

The collected waste is classified and weighed by types and used for different purposes. In the last two years we have worked with local communities on small-scale artisanal recycling of this plastic. In 2019, we started a joint effort with a recycling cooperative that will use part of the plastic we collect to make furniture and other functional objects. During 2018 and 2019, the work of collecting waste was widely reported at the national level in two reports presented on the Cuban television news.

What challenges are you facing today?

Manage funds to guarantee the logistics for conducting cleaning campaigns in response to the plastics arriving on our coasts.

Manage funds to promote a community enterprise that will ensure the recycling of collected plastic, making use of the collected materials and generating jobs and income sources for the local population.

Learn about other experiences, successful cases and relevant results that have contributed to reducing the proliferation of plastics in other biosphere reserves, which can be replicated as good practices to face the problem in our territory.

Expand the scope and depth of dissemination actions, using written media, television and social networks.

Capacity building for the staff managing these efforts through the exchange of experiences, knowledge and good practices.

Contributed by Lázaro Márquez, *Península de Guanahacabibes BR.*

ZERO PLASTIC NEWS

The inaugural Zero Plastic Working Group members include the following Biosphere Reserves: Archipelago Sea Area, Blekinge Archipelago, Cat Ba Archipelago, Commander Islands, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Isle of Man, Jeju, La Hotte, Lanzarote, Menorca, Ometepe, Palawan, Península de Guanahacabibes, Terres de l'Ebre and Urdaibai.

If your Biosphere Reserve would like to become involved in the Zero Plastic Working Group, please contact Us at: zero.plastic@islandbiosphere.org

To learn more and watch as We evolve, visit our website: <http://zeroplastic.islandbiosphere.org>

That's it for now from the Zero Plastic News
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ZERO PLASTIC

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