

A Primer on Bioregionalism

Welcome Home

A growing number of people are recognizing that in order to secure the clean air, water and food that we need to healthfully survive, we must become guardians of the places where we live. People sense the loss in not knowing our neighbors and natural surroundings, and are discovering that the best way to take care of ourselves and to get to know our neighbors is to protect and restore our bioregion.

Bioregionalism recognizes, nurtures, sustains and celebrates our local connections with: Land, Plants and Animals, Springs, Rivers, Lakes, Groundwater & Oceans, Air, Families, Friends, Neighbors, Community, Native Traditions and Indigenous Systems of Production & Trade.

It is taking the time to learn the possibilities of place. It is a mindfulness of local environment, history, and community aspirations that leads to a sustainable future. It relies on safe and renewable sources of food and energy. It ensures employment by supplying a rich diversity of services within the community, by recycling our resources, and by exchanging prudent surpluses with other regions. Bioregionalism is working to satisfy basic needs locally, such as education, health care and self-governance.

The bioregional perspective recreates a widely-shared sense of regional identity founded upon a renewed critical awareness of and respect for the integrity of our ecological communities. People are joining with

neighbors to discuss ways we can work together to:

1. Learn what our special local resources are
2. Plan how to best protect and use those natural and cultural resources
3. Exchange our time and energy to best meet our daily and long-term needs
4. Enrich our children's local and planetary knowledge

The above statement was adopted by the first North American Bioregional Congress (NABC) in 1984 and reaffirmed at NABC II and III, and subsequently at all other congresses.

BIOREGIONALISM: Bioregionalists are lifelong students of how to live in balance with our eco-communities. We recognize that we are part of the web of the life, and that all justice, freedom and peace must be grounded in this recognition. Bioregionalism is a comprehensive new way of defining and understanding the place where we live, and living in that place sustainability and respectfully.

BIOREGIONS: “Bioregions are geographic areas having common characteristics of soil, watershed, climate, native plants and animals that exist within the whole planetary biosphere as unique and contributive parts. A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness — to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place. A bioregion can be determined initially by use of climatology, physiography, animal and plant geography, natural history and other descriptive resonance among living things and the factors that influence them which occurs specifically within each separate part of the planet. Discovering and describing that resonance is a way to describe a bioregion.” — Peter Berg & Raymond Dasmann, *Reinhabiting a Separate Country, Planet Drum*

Foundation, 1978.



BIOREGIONAL MOVEMENT: Conceptualized in the late 1970s and founded in the 1980s, the bioregional movement acts as a catalyst for social and political change, focusing on decentralization, strengthening local economies and culture, and preserving and enriching the natural systems of water, air and land in ways that foster sustainability.

BIOREGIONAL CONGRESSES: From 1984 through 2009, bioregionalists gathered in continental congresses to envision and develop a realistic, restorative way of life in the bioregions of the Americas. We set our own agendas, operate by consensus, and build a common commitment. Grand times and good friendships are only the first fruits. At congresses, we live in a ceremonial village, concern ourselves with the things that matter, and return home informed and inspired. Congresses have been held in Missouri, Missouri, the Ish region of British

Columbia, Maine, Texas, Mexico (Moreles), the Flint Hills of Kansas, and North Carolina, and Tennessee.

BIOREGIONALISM TODAY: While there are no current continental congresses planned in the United States, that's somewhat or largely because so many of the ideas and so much of the philosophy of bioregionalism have found homes in local communities and sister-movements. At the same time, bioregional approaches have caught on dramatically in Mexico and Central America, and in many other locales around the world (see the Planet Drum Foundation's site – <http://www.planetdrum.org/> – to learn more from this 40-plus-year-old bioregional organization).

Our once radical ideas about appropriate technology in such areas as solar and wind energy, alternative health, energy-efficient housing are now commonplace realities locally and globally. Bioregionalists and bioregional approaches have been at the core of the Permaculture movement, Green movement, field of deep ecology, practice of local economics and local foods, and in so many other movements, practices and communities. What many bioregionalists fostered in terms of consensus-based decision-making from the Quakers, and Ecovillage movement has been passed down into many organizations and communities around the world. And there are ample books, articles, films, and more about bioregionalism in theory and practice (check out this annotated bibliography – <https://kawcouncil.wordpress.com/bioregional-bibliography/> – for some good sources, and send us more of your own sources to add).

At the same time, there are still active bioregional groups, such as our group, the Kansas Area Watershed

Council, which holds events such as Walkabout/Talkabouts to learn more about the vitality and history and culture of the Kansas Area Watershed Council (<http://kawcouncil.org>).

Learn More about Bioregionalism

Here are some good sites to learn more:

The Living Awareness Institute:

<http://lebendig.org/bioregion.htm>

Cascadianow:

<http://www.cascadianow.org/about-cascadia/cascadia-bioregionalism/what-is-bioregionalism/>

Slow Movement:

<http://www.slowmovement.com/bioregion.php>

The Fellowship of International Community:

<http://www.ic.org/wiki/bioregionalism-community-call-action/>

Policy Innovations:

<http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000242>

The Co-Intelligent Institute:

<http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-bioregionalism.html>

Five E's Unlimited:

<http://www.eeeee.net/bioregionalism.htm>

Sapiens (on urban bioregionalism):

<https://sapiens.revues.org/1691>

Kosmos:

<http://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/human-watershed-the-emerging-politics-of-bioregional-democracy/>

Yes Magazine:

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/together-with-earth/from-watersheds-to-mountains-what-if-we-based-our-borders-on-nature>

Chaikuni Institute:

<http://chaikuni.org/permaculture-in-the-amazon/bioregionalism/>

Bioregional Mapping:

<http://nativemaps.org/node/1383>

