



Megiddo Regional Council

Megiddo Regional Council was founded in 1945, during the British Mandate Period, and is one of the first regional councils established in Israel.

The Megiddo region's jurisdiction is an area of about 280 square miles, some of which is in the Jezreel Valley, but is mostly in Ramat Menashe. The region is bordered by the Jezreel Valley, Gilboa, Allona and Hof Carmel regional council jurisdictions, and by the town of Yokne'am Illit.

Since its early days, the Megiddo region has served as a vital "security-settlement bridge" between the valley and the mountainous Carmel region and the coastal plain. The first communities were built along the outskirts of the Jezreel Valley, from Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek (1926) to Kibbutz Ein HaShofet (1937), one of the first "stockade-and-tower" settlements. Between the founding of the state and 1952, more new settlements were established in this region.

Today there are 13 agricultural communities: 9 kibbutzim, 3 moshavim and 1 moshava. The local population totals 13,000 and is expected to grow in the next few years.

In 2011 UNESCO declared the area a biosphere reserve. The unique attributes of this region include the rural character of the communities and the wide variety of landscapes: natural forests and

woodlands, scenic routes, streams, picnic areas, hiking and biking trails, agricultural spaces, open landscapes, rolling hills and pasture areas.

The Megiddo Regional Council works to promote the quality of life of its residents and encourages the partnership of the residents in deciding their life style. Such decisions include: the expansion of the settlements, promoting the development of industrial and high-tech zones and developing employment opportunities for residents; upgrading infrastructure and building public and educational institutions.

The body responsible for formulating education policy in Megiddo is the **Educational Leadership Forum**, whose membership includes all the principals and directors of formal and informal education and the education coordinators from each community. The forum sets goals and focus topics throughout the school year and votes on joint projects and the development of educational initiatives.

The Megiddo education system is spearheading a unique curriculum based on the principles of the biosphere reserve – a biosphere education program built in conjunction with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and the Ministry of Education.

Adama, an educational ecological farm recognized by the Ministry of Education, has been built in the Megiddo high school compound.

In the belief that all forms of culture mold the present and future of the region's community and strengthens its identity and social robustness, the regional council sponsors a variety of cultural endeavors, including: adult education courses, enrichment classes in music, theater and dance and song concerts with local talent. The council also supports the Megiddo Choir, a string orchestra, a Yemenite dance troupe and museums in the settlements.

Each year the council sponsors several main cultural and sports events, such as: the Menashe Forests Festival, the Daliyya Dance Festival, the Megiddo Research Conference, bicycle races, and running and navigation competitions for all age groups.

In recent years the various communities have undergone many changes: The basic structure of the moshav and kibbutz cooperative farming communities is evolving; some of the kibbutzim have made structural and organizational changes and started privatizing; new residents have moved into the expansion neighborhoods of the kibbutzim and moshavim; the general population has been growing from year to year.

The council works hand in hand with these communities and participates in a forum of community leaders and officials to build joint development programs.



Biosphere Reserve

In 2011 UNESCO declared the Megiddo Region a "Biosphere Reserve."

A biosphere reserve is a defined area established by administrative and economic authorities and recognized by UNESCO's Man and Biosphere program.

This program is one of the vehicles for promoting sustainable development based on local community involvement activities and scientific and environmental protection activities throughout the region.

A biosphere reserve is operated by a regional administrative authority that prioritizes the development and coexistence of man in his environment, through a major commitment to preserving the natural resources and landscape for future generations. A biosphere reserve is managed in accordance with the zoning of areas within the region as core, buffer and transition areas, and defining the development, conservation and management regulations applicable to each zone.

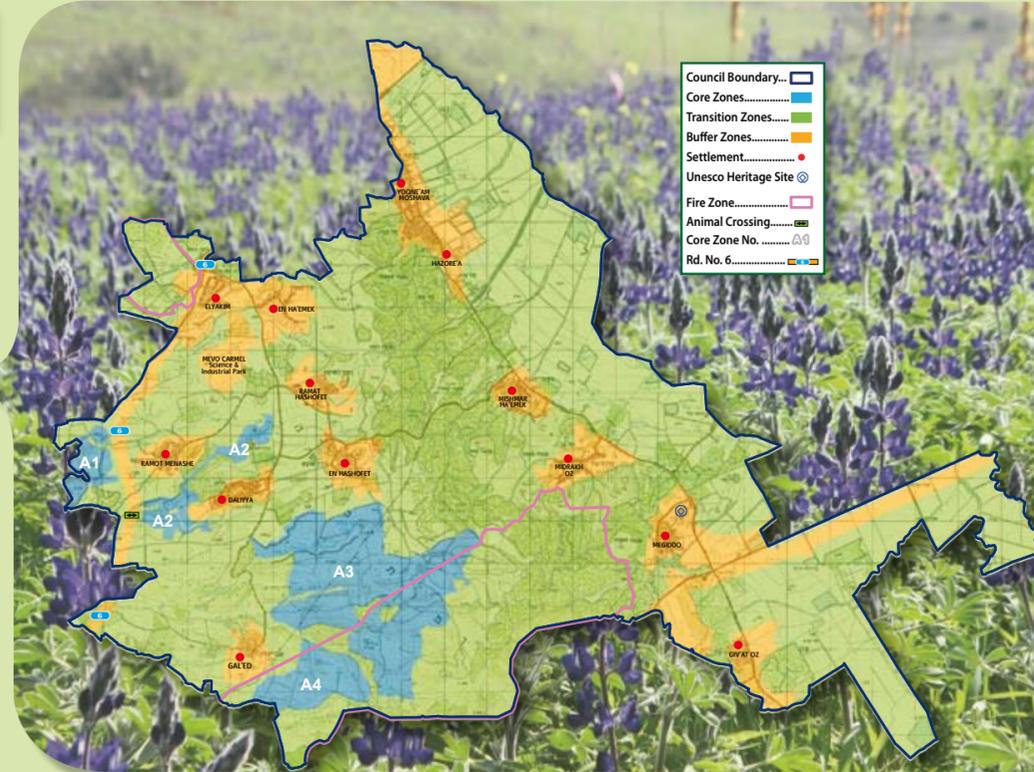
The Megiddo Regional Council is a partner in the management of the Ramot Menashe biosphere reserve, jointly with area residents, economic organizations, environmental protection organizations and government authorities.

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The biosphere reserve has a public forum in which the local residents and various authorities formulate policy for the region. A coordinating committee oversees the ongoing management of the reserve and ensures the implementation of the policy set by the public forum.

The guidelines and management concept for the management of the biosphere are:

The preservation of the balance between development and conservation – providing solutions to the present and future needs of the residents and communities while preserving the geography and ecology and the historical-cultural and community character.



The local application of the Israeli government's national planning policy, in accordance with the national master plans.

Creating a long-term planning process based on conflict management and long-term public partnership.

A biosphere reserve is a means for protecting and preserving ecosystems and ecology, and guaranteeing their long-term sustainability.

The biosphere reserve regulations are based on a geographical division into three regions, with varying levels of use and preservation:

Core zones – for ecological preservation with minimal human interaction.

Buffer zones – adjoining the other two zones, to protect the core zones and allow limited interaction.

Transition zones – Sustainable human development (residential, infrastructure, etc.)

A successful biosphere reserve is a region with a vibrant, flourishing and developed community that of its own free will accepts restrictions and practices that will facilitate full sustainability in all aspects of life.

Places of Interest in Megiddo Region

Juara F/5

On a hilltop half a kilometer from Kibbutz En HaShofet, on the road between En HaShofet and Mishmar HaEmek. This building was the first home for the settlers of En HaShofet, while the kibbutz was under construction in 1937.



After the kibbutz members moved into their permanent homes, the building at Juara was used as a training base for officers of the pre-state Palmach strike forces, the precursor to the Israel Defense Forces, and after the establishment of the state, the building became a training school for IDF officers. Today it is a base of Gadna pre-army youth training programs and houses a museum for the history of the Hagana pre-state army. The roof of the building offers a spectacular view of the surrounding settlements.

Wilfrid Israel Museum C/5

The Wilfrid Israel Museum for Far East Art and Knowledge, founded in 1951, is one of the oldest museums in Israel. The museum is located in Kibbutz HaZore'a and began with the exhibition of the collections of Wilfrid Israel, the son of a wealthy German Jewish merchant and the great-grandson of the first Chief Rabbi of Britain. During the stormy years of the Nazis rise to power, Wilfrid fostered connections with members of the "Werkleute" (Working People) movement, which eventually founded HaZore'a. During the war years Wilfrid devoted himself to helping Jews flee Europe, and successfully saved tens of thousands, but eventually paid with his own life: on one of his missions in 1943, his plane was shot down by the Germans. He bequeathed his collection of artifacts to his friends on the kibbutz. The museum displays Wilfrid's collections and runs a variety of

museum activities. Other exhibits at the museum include a collection local archaeological findings from excavations headed and researched by kibbutz member Ezra Meierhof. There are educational activities for children and adults, such as guided tours of the permanent and temporary exhibits, gallery lectures with exhibiting artists, enrichment classes and activities in the museum's creative workshop.

Palmach Cave E/6

Mishmar HaEmek Forest and the Palmach Cave, on the outskirts of the kibbutz, were used as one of the first permanent bases of the pre-state Palmach strike forces, the precursor to the Israel Defense Forces. In the 1940s, the site was used for training, courses, conferences and officers' meetings. Today the cave is a tourism site that uses role-playing simulation scenarios to teach Palmach lore, while the surrounding area has been converted into a site for team-building sessions, outdoor cooking and scouting lessons and sports competitions.



Tel Shush E/6

A large ancient mound rising north-west of Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek. A number of archeological digs carried out in the 1980s revealed several sites scattered the length of chalk terraces; burial caves, part of a colorful mosaic, escape tunnels, an oil press and an old quarry. A beautiful ancient Tabor oak tree towers over the cave.

Tel Megiddo G/9

Megiddo, a fortified city and battle site dating from the beginning of the 4th century B.C.E., is located at a crossroads of ancient highways. Archeological digs here revealed some 20 layers and many artifacts:

walls and gates, Canaanite temples, ivory ornaments, stables, granaries and a waterworks. The "roaring lion" seal inscribed "Shema, servant of Jeroboam" was discovered at the Megiddo excavations and was incorporated into the logo of the Megiddo Regional Council.



Nahal HaShofet (stream) Trail D/5

The Jewish National Fund built a hiking trail in Nahal HaShofet (stream) in the Menashe Forests Park. The trail is handicapped-accessible, suitable for everyone including parents with strollers and seniors with motorized carts. The trail runs along on the banks of the stream and follows the route of its flowing waters and alongside a small waterfall that feeds into a beautiful pool among the unique vegetation of ulmus trees, with their serrated and asymmetrical leaves. There is also a thicket of raspberry, reeds, willows, and oleanders. Cypress, pine and fig trees have been planted along the way. Shady rest areas, mainly of willow trees, are scattered along the route, and there are small caves and the ruins of an ancient flour mill and a large cave located on the other side of the stream channel. At the end of the trail is the En Emi Spring, (En Hashrat), which flowing from its source into a pool carved into a slab of white rock. From here, an accessible, partially paved and partially boardwalk path, with benches and picnic tables all along its length, leads back to the starting point (HaHaruvim parking area). The trail is about 1,500 meters long and is a quick half-hour stroll or an easy-paced hour-and-half walk. Near the stream are Emek HaShalom (Valley) and HaZore'a parking area, which has restrooms and a children's playground.



How to get there: Enter Park Ye'arot Menashe from Route 66 (Yokne'am-Megiddo), and follow the signs to HaHaruvim car park. The trail begins near the sign for Nahal Shofet (stream).

En Rehaniya D/4

En Rehaniya is beautiful spring near En HaEmek. Its waters flow from the upper part of the Nahal HaShofet channel and flow down through the thick vegetation. If you walk through the reeds, you will reach a series of small waterfalls, connected by small, delightful wading pools. You can dip your feet in the water or even enjoy a shower under the large fall. The whisper of the falling water, the shade of the reeds and the surrounding quiet are a wonderful place to enjoy nature. Below the spring is a comfortable bench and a wooden deck that can be used for picnics. Near the spring you can see its source and its clear waters. This site was declared a nature reserve, and visitors are asked to abide by the regulations.

How to get there: Turn south onto Route 672 at Elyakim Interchange, and about 350 meters after the turn to En HaEmek there is a left turn to a dirt parking lot. The spring is about 400 meters down the dirt trail (in a generally south-easterly direction).



Ochberg Lookout F/4

In 2011 the Megiddo Regional Council and the Jewish National Fund dedicated this site in Ramot Menashe Park to the memory of Isaac Ochberg of South Africa. In the 1930s Ochberg bequeathed a large sum of money to the JNF, which it used to purchase land in the Ramot Menashe area, and on which Kibbutz Daliyya and Kibbutz Galed were built.

The story of Ochberg's heroism began in the 1920s, when he heard of the poverty and disease and pogroms affecting over 400,000 Jewish orphaned children in Eastern Europe. Ochberg, who was the biggest donor to the JNF for the redemption of land in Israel, became a savior to these children. In 1921 he travelled to Eastern Europe, and a few months later, with the approval of the South African government, he brought 187 orphans to Capetown, where he built a home for them and took care of the wellbeing and education.



In 1937 Ochberg died at a relatively young age and bequeathed 250,000 British pounds, to the JNF. This was a massive sum at that time, and the largest sum ever donated to the JNF by an individual donor. As an ardent Zionist, Ochberg believed that the redemption of the Jewish people and the end of their suffering could only happen in Land of Israel. This lookout is at the edge of the Square Trail that connects the four kibbutzim on the mountain in the Megiddo Regional Council. Affixed to boulders scattered along this trail are 187 plaques with the names of the children that Ochberg saved. The story of the rescue of these children is also portrayed in a photographic exhibit on a rock face overlooking the spectacular view of the Ramot Menashe Biosphere Reserve.

HaKibbutzim Forest and Memorial F/6

The memorial site for the fallen soldiers of the Kibbutz Movement is on Kat Hill, about a kilometer southwest of Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek. The observation point at the top of the monument tower overlooks the Jezreel Valley in all its glory. The site is built to resemble the "stockade and tower" settlements and the memorial wall displays the names of the over 3,000 soldiers from the Kibbutz Movement who fell in Israel's wars and hostilities over the past century.

A map showing the kibbutzim throughout Israel and the stone markers all along the path to the monument tell the story of the Kibbutz Movement's contribution to Israel's security throughout the decades since the founding of the movement.

How to get there: The entrance is from Route 6953 near Juara, on the magnificent scenic route with the signs leading to Kibbutzim Forest and the adjacent memorial site.



Cyclamen Hill H/3

About half a kilometer northeast of the gate to Kibbutz Gal'ed (Even Yizhak), is a chalky hill. The northern hillside, which goes down toward Halmit Stream is planted with a pine grove, and during the winter the ground beneath the trees is carpeted with cyclamen plants. The sight of these blossoming beauties is truly amazing, and this spot has become a pilgrimage site for thousands of hikers during flower season. A ring route has been built especially for visitors.



Nahal (stream) Keni H,1/8

Near Kibbutz Megiddo, a stretch of some 700 meters along the Keni stream's route are a series of springs surrounded by thick growth of water plants, fruit trees and poplar trees. There are ruins of an old flour mill that was operated by the water from the branch of the stream that flows year-round. The source of this beautiful stream is in the Upper Lajun Springs – two springs that well up from two sides of the stream flow toward a concrete dam, where they form a small lake. Further down the channel are the two Lower Lajun Springs.