

U.S. - CHINA SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE

Editor's Note: In the spring of 1980, a cooperative agreement was signed between the Ministry of Forestry, People's Republic of China, and the University of Idaho, authorizing an exchange of faculty between the University and the forestry colleges in China, and proposing several joint research projects. For the first exchange, held in the summer, 1980, a short course on forest recreation was developed for China presentation. Gary E. Machlis, sociology project leader at the University of Idaho (ICPSU) and William McLaughlin, asst. prof. of wildland recreation, organized the course materials and lectured. Sponsors in China (Beijing College of Forestry, Nanking Technological College of Forest Products, and the Shanghai Park Service) were responsible for selecting students, providing housing, and organizing field trips.

By Gary E. Machlis

The 64 students from throughout China who attended the four-week short course during the summer of 1980 included faculty from several colleges in forestry, agriculture and architecture, as well as park superintendents, park managers and planners. The main intent of the course was to provide students with an overview of forest recreation, focusing on those materials useful for development of a national park system.

After the class, we traveled for three weeks, visiting tourist sites, scenic spots and potential national parks. Highlights of the tour included a four-day stay at Huangshan in Anwei Province, and several days at Guilin on the Li River. We gave several special lectures, including an address delivered at the Shanghai People's Hall of Science and Technology, and we collected data throughout the trip — a survey of park visitors, visitor use and scenic spots, and personal journals.

National Parks in China

China presently is organizing a National Park System, and there are many areas that will qualify for such status. Huangshan is an excellent example for it occupies a central spot in China's artistic, cultural and environmental heritage. The provincial park is located in southeast China, in the Anwei province. It is approximately 154 square kilometers, and at its highest peak is 1870 meters above sea level... a mountainous area, a natural botanical garden, and rich in wildlife (including 13 endangered species). Trails provide access from park headquarters, and facilities can accommodate 4000 overnight visitors. In 1979, 281,592 people visited Huangshan. Of these only 370 were foreigners.

On return from the PRC, I prepared several documents. *A Report on the Exchange Between the National Park Service and the People's Republic of China* was written for Director Dickenson and Pacific Northwest Regional Director Tobin. *National Natural Parks for China*, coauthored with Dr. McLaughlin and Yen Lin-Chang, a Chinese park professional who recently studied at the University of Idaho, was prepared for the PRC government. Both documents



Trail to Heaven: (left) For untrained legs, this trail to the Heavenly Capital City at Huangshan must seem more like "the other place." The Chinese evidently do not believe in switchbacks. Their straight-line philosophy is even more impressive in the light of the Heavenly City's supply problems; namely, that every mouthful of food and drink for the nearly 300,000 visitors per year and all the sewage they generate is carried on the shoulders of human bearers (above) up and down this trail — the same trail used by all visitors going into and out of the park.

Li River near Guilin: (below, left) Karst topography (a limestone region marked by sinks and interspersed with abrupt ridges, irregular protruberant rocks, caverns and underground streams) makes up the spectacular landscape through which the Li River flows.



argue for an active exchange program between the National Park Service and the People's Republic of China. Such a program is likely to be a significant part of a wider cultural exchange, for national parks are important components to national identity, cultural pride, and worldwide cooperation.

Longterm Information Exchange

During the reign of the Gang of Four, scientific information was not disseminated in China. Therefore, most natural resource agencies and universities are in need of current scientific reports, publications and so forth. This project would set up an on-going information exchange on park-related research (biological and social).

In addition, an exchange of experts is clearly called for. Chinese scientists could be invited to work, train and present papers in the U.S., and NPS scientists could be loaned to the PRC for specific research projects. A similar program could be established for resource management specialists.

Several of the design and engineering problems facing Chinese parks are similar to NPS situations. A sharing of experiences and exchange of professionals would aid the Chinese in choosing among alternative design solutions and would suggest innovative solutions for American situations. Examples would be the sewage disposal problems at Huangshan, and the unique trail designs prevalent in Chinese parks.

Training Program

There are no courses in outdoor recreation management in China, although several universities are contemplating such a program. A special session of the ranger skills course at Albright Training Center could be combined with academic training at an American university. The University of Idaho recently had a Chinese professional studying wildland recreation management in the college of forestry, wildlife and range sciences; she briefly attended the ranger skills course at Albright and found the combination rewarding. Another alternative would be to provide a traveling training program throughout China.

A Cooperative Science Program

The parklands of China and the U.S. represent a natural laboratory for comparative research, matching similar park ecosystems. In the case of parks that serve as biosphere reserves, this approach may be useful in longterm monitoring of impacts.

A variety of other scientific studies present themselves — ecological description of park flora and fauna, analyses of environmental change due to rapid development, sociological research concerning visitor behavior, and so on.

The national heritage, the beauty, and the potential of parklands in China suggest a sense of mission — a worthy contribution on the worldwide scene to the national park movement!