

Africa Project Stresses Conservation and Use

Vernon C. (Tommy) Gilbert, retired from NPS research administration and currently working in Nairobi, Kenya, for U.S. AID's Environmental Training and Management in Africa project, was a major shaper of the August policy level conference on "Endangered Resources for Development" – a strategy conference for the management and protection of Kenya's plant communities: woodlands, forests, bushlands, savannahs, and aquatic communities.

A letter from Gilbert, received at *Park Science* editorial offices, accompanied a conference booklet, which Gilbert said "pretty much summarizes my thinking on the reasons for management and protection of habitats in Africa, or anywhere.

"Natural resources are the engine of development," the booklet begins, "conversely, development is dependent on the continued productivity of the natural resource base. The paradox that emerges is that development is dependent on the very resource it threatens with extinction. Unless management strategies are developed that combine use with conservation, improvements in living standards and national wealth are jeopardized."

The publication examines the major ecosystems, discusses inventory, mapping, and monitoring; its authors consider education, training, manpower assessment, and collaboration in research; it discusses specialized activities supporting ecosystem management such as germplasm research, botanical gardens and sanctuaries, field books and keys, and the work of non-governmental organizations.

The booklet's concluding note warns: "Options open to us today will gradually diminish as resources are lost and claims on scarcer resources grow. Exploiting the options to preserve our environmental heritage now, however, will widen development choices in the future."