
mab notes

Global biosphere activity these days puts greatest emphasis on improving the functions of existing reserves, but new units continue to be added. At the meeting of the MAB International Coordinating Council (ICC) held in October, nine new biosphere reserves were approved, bringing the total to 261 in 70 countries. Four new countries joined those having biosphere reserves: Algeria, Burkina Fasso (née Upper Volta), Sweden, and the Netherlands. The U.S. added no new ones this year, but with the current and recent flurry of study panel activity we should see some next year. A Californian Biogeographical Province selection panel, chaired by Harold Mooney of Stanford University, met in November; and an Acadian-Boreal Coastal Region panel, chaired by James Broadus of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, was to meet in December.

The guiding document for international biosphere reserve activity is the *Action Plan for Biophere Reserves*, adopted by the MAB ICC in December 1984. At its meeting in La Paz, Bolivia last August, the Scientific Advisory Panel for Biosphere Reserves recommended that each national committee be requested to develop a national strategy to implement the Action Plan, and the ICC has endorsed the recommendation. U.S. MAB will be considering ways to act on this recommendation. At the same meeting, results of a questionnaire on management of biosphere reserves were reported. They showed that U.S. biosphere reserves are strongest in research, monitoring, and conservation, weakest in local participation and involvement in regional planning. BRs in developing countries appear (from the small number of responses) to be strongest in local participation and regional planning.

Bill Gregg, NPS MAB Coordinator, attended an impressive, encouraging meeting on biosphere reserves in India in September. He reports that this meeting was unprecedented in that it was the first national conference to discuss at a high level a national strategy for implementing the Action Plan. India is planning to establish a network of biosphere reserves that will integrate conservation with development. They will seek to conserve wild relatives of economic species and traditional land uses of local people, to improve the health, education, and economic life of these people, and will conduct applied research as well as protect wild species and their environments. Bill feels that India, which has many problems common to the Third World but also enjoys advanced technology, has a good chance to achieve these goals in its biosphere reserves.

At the same meeting, U.S.-Indian cooperation in developing a model biosphere reserve in India was discussed. Special interest was shown in a number of topics recently proposed by the NPS as areas of potential cooperation – notably a biological survey, a conservation data center, a geographic information system, long-term ecological monitoring and research, applications of landscape ecology, and conservation education. Coordination at the U.S. end would be handled by the National Park Service.

U.S.-West German cooperation moves forward with a statement of intent signed in October by the chairmen of the respective national MAB committees. Initial effort will be on environmental monitoring, with emphasis on biological indicators of chemical pollutants; applications of landscape ecology; and environmental education, with emphasis on atmospheric pollutants and their effects. The goal is to begin projects in 1987.

Bill Gregg, a contract designer, and I are producing an international brochure on biosphere reserves to be published by the MAB Paris office in 1987. This brochure explains what a biosphere reserve is and what it is intended to do. We will proceed next to a brochure on U.S. biosphere reserves tailored to the situation and audiences in this country.

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