

Three reports appear on these pages, covering various aspects of the Fourth World Wilderness Congress held Sept. 14-18, 1987, at Estes Park, Colo. Parsons gives a general account from the NPS point of view; Shelton (in his MAB Notes) describes the Biosphere Reserve symposium, and Baron reports on the acid rain symposium.

Fourth World Wilderness Congress Links Protection and Development

By David J. Parsons

A major theme of discussion throughout the Fourth World Wilderness Congress at Estes Park, Colo., Sept. 14-18, was the idea of linking environmental protection in the third world to the development process, including international banking decisions. Wilderness purists feared that such a union would compromise ideals, while others argued that it was the only alternative left. Consensus was not reached, and the topic promises to be a major one for debate in future forums.

The international gathering of representatives of governmental agencies, private interest groups, and academia represented one of the largest such meetings of its kind. The participants' list read like a who's who of wilderness and environmental cognoscente: Edgar Wayburn, David Brower, Rupert Cutler, Garrett Hardin, William Penn Mott, Jr., Joyce Kelly, Raymond Dasmann, etc. Spirited debate highlighted long days of plenary sessions, technical presentations and roundtable discussions.

Plenary sessions included panels on Wildlife and Protected Areas, Wilderness Land Use Planning, Biodiversity and Tropical Forestry, Natural Resource Management, Conservation Activism, and International Banking. Technical scientific sessions addressed Acid Rain Impacts on Wilderness, Parks and Nature Reserves (co-chaired by David Parsons of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks), The Man and Biosphere Program (co-chaired by William Gregg, WASO), Designation and Management of Park and Wilderness Reserves, The Use of Wilderness for Personal Growth, Therapy and Education, and Population and Environmental Stress. In addition, workshops were held on topics ranging from Conservation Leadership to Wilderness Fire Management and Conservation Issues in Alaska.

A highlight of the Congress was the keynote address by Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development. She discussed the Commission's recently released report "Our Common Future," concluding that sustainable development is absolutely vital if we are to halt poverty and suffering as well as arrest environmental degradation. This presentation was followed by discussion of how Canada is addressing world environmental concerns. Thomas McMillan, Canadian Minister of the Environment, emphasized the environmental problems unguided development can cause as well as the need to better address the rights of all living organisms.

The Congress adopted a series of resolutions on 50 different topics. Each called for specific action to be implemented by groups attending the Congress. Resolutions called for the creation of an International Conservation Banking Program, establishment of a World Conservation Corps, and support for international cooperation and communication of non-governmental organizations. Additional resolutions called for preservation of specific wilderness or natural areas throughout the world.

The National Park Service was well represented at the Congress. In addition to Director Mott, attendees included representatives of the International Affairs Division, Alaska Regional Director Boyd Evison, a number of superintendents, resource managers, interpreters, and scientists. Rocky Mountain NP provided regular tour bus service and special interpretive programs for the delegates.

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