

Joint US-USSR Research Proposed For Beringian Sites

Eighteen months of cabled exchanges between the U.S. and the Soviet Union culminated June 19-July 24, 1987, in a trip to the USSR and Poland by a six-member U.S. delegation and could lead, eventually, to establishment of a Beringian Heritage Conservation and Management project. A Russian team completed the exchange by visiting the U.S. in October.

Headed by Denis P. Galvin, NPS Deputy Director, the U.S. team was composed of three others from the National Park Service – Richard Cook, Division of International Affairs; Robert Chandler, Olympic NP superintendent, and William Brown, Alaska Regional historian, plus Destry Jarvis, vice-president of the National Parks and Conservation Association, and Dale Guthrie of the University of Alaska.

"As a result of talks with the Russians when they were here in October," Cook said, "we anticipate as our near-term objective a series of joint studies leading toward possible park designations on both sides of the Bering Strait and an international designation of two or more sites to commemorate the international significance of the Bering Land Bridge."

The longer range objective would be to foster collaboration on studies relating to research and conservation of Beringian sites in Siberia and Alaska and eventual establishment of an International Beringian Peace Park on both U.S. and USSR territory.

Cooperative and shared studies by the two nations already have confirmed the shared resources and the indissoluble ties between the Beringian segments of Siberia and Alaska in all major fields of earth, biological, and anthropological sciences, Cook pointed out. Established and monitored reserves of various kinds already exist on both sides of the Bering Strait and bilateral agreements are in effect relating to migratory birds and sea mammals.

Once the results and recommendations of the first-stage study were ratified by the two nations, a carefully designed series of scientific studies and evolved management techniques could be developed and implemented.

"To encourage the further gathering of scientific data and development of derivative conservation and management policies to the benefit of both nations, the proposal states, "this project might initially field a

joint, broad-scope scientific team to inventory, evaluate, and recommend a system of representative sites and zones suitable for Biosphere Reserve designation, with a mutually defined geographic framework adequate for the purpose."

The exchange trips and their follow-up were made under the general auspices of the Joint U.S.-USSR Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection. The Soviet and U.S. teams, on their exchange visits, took part in seminars on design, organization, and management of the national parks in both countries.