

Conferees Consider Worldwide Effects of Global Warming

The greenhouse effect is no longer a controversial subject for national debate: it is "one of the best-established theories in atmospheric science," according to Stephen H. Schneider of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo.

In response to this general recognition, "the largest gathering ever on the subject of adapting to climate change" was held last October in Washington, D.C., and attended by research scientists and a broad array of policy makers representing various levels of government, utilities, car makers, environmental groups, and the chemical, oil and gas industries.

In an article by Laura Tangley in *BioScience* (Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 14-18), the scientific attention to this phenomenon is described – beginning around the turn of the century when the massive amount of CO₂ being released by the Industrial Revolution were first becoming a cause for worry.

The article traces the accumulation of data and the organized reactions on the part of nations and the world. (CO₂ levels already have increased about 25% since 1900 and are expected to double by the second half of the 21st century. A 1985 conference sponsored by the International Council of Scientific Unions, the World Meteorological Organization, and the United Nations Environment Programme resulted in dire warnings from a distinguished international group of scientists.)

The article details present and anticipated effects on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and biological diversity and parks. Robert L. Peters of the World Wildlife Fund and the Conservation Foundation contended that an average change of just a few degrees "would create conditions that the natural biota has not had to contend with in 100,000 years."

For consideration of what this could mean to the National Park Service and System, see the editorial in this issue.