

mab notes

The *Biosphere Reserve Coordinating Committee*. (BRCC) held its first meeting March 26-27. The BRCC was established by the US/MAB National Committee in January to coordinate planning and development of the US Biosphere Reserve (BR) program. Seven federal agencies, the five MAB directorates, the Southern Appalachian MAB program, and The Nature Conservancy are represented on the committee. It agreed to convene a workshop later this year to bring together Committee members, BR managers, and outside scientists to develop a strategic plan for the US/BR program. It deferred consideration of a national workshop of BR managers, pending completion of the strategic plan.

The first and, so far, only institutionalized MAB regional program in the US, the *Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Cooperative* (SAMAB) continues to stretch its wings. Although the IRS has not yet formally approved the SAMAB Foundation's nonprofit status, the Foundation has a bank account and is accepting contributions. The goal is eventually to fund most SAMAB projects through this Foundation.

The Cooperative has numerous projects underway or on the drawing board. A commission with local citizen input is studying ways that Pittman Center, a small community on the northwest border of Great Smoky

Mountains NP, can develop economic alternatives to the strip development that has afflicted other tourist centers in the area. Land ownership, soils data, and other information are being entered into a geographic information system (GIS). North Carolina State University has agreed to do a computer analysis of viewsheds from various strategic points under various development scenarios, and the local planning commission has recommended prohibiting any new billboards and phasing out old ones.

A workshop, held at Asheville, NC, reviewed the state of knowledge about native economic plants of the region and discussed protection measures. Establishment of a local industry to grow these plants commercially is one possible way to conserve wild populations, but workshop participants felt that much more information on the present situation is needed before alternatives can be explored.

Late this summer a meeting will be held to educate public officials and others about the rapid spread of dogwood anthracnose, a fungal disease causing high mortality for which no effective control has been found. Flowering dogwood grows throughout most of the East and provides a spectacular spring show of white blossoms in the southern Appalachians. It is the basis

of numerous "dogwood festivals."

Our Backyard Biosphere Reserve, a teacher's manual, is being used to develop an environmental education curriculum in public schools in Sevier County, TN. With assistance from SAMAB and the Alliance for Environmental Education, schools in the county are joining Econet, a satellite computer network that will allow exchange of information on EE programs with schools in California, Michigan, and elsewhere in the US. Links with European countries may become possible through the OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development).

Big Bend BR sees great potential for applying MAB/BR concepts both in association with the other two Chihuahuan Desert BRs and in the immediate Big Bend region. Managers from Big Bend, the Jornada Experimental Range in New Mexico, and Mapimi BR in Mexico met at Mapimi in February to discuss mutual interests and possible projects. After a meeting at Jornada next November they expect to produce concrete proposals.

Already, however, evaluation of proposed restoration of the endangered Bolson tortoise to Big Bend is underway. This large (up to 45 pounds) tortoise ranged much more widely during the Pleistocene but now is restricted to the Mapimi region of Mexico. It is speculated that aboriginal man hastened its demise over much of the original range, and capture for food has continued to decimate the population in Mexico. Suitable habitat in Big Bend has been identified and enough captive animals apparently exist in Arizona and Mexico to provide stock without depleting the wild population. The main issues remaining are to alleviate Big Bend area ranchers' concerns about burrowing and grass-eating by the tortoises, and approval by various Mexican and US agencies.

Phil Koepp, chief ranger at Big Bend, says he is excited by the possibilities of working with park neighbors to develop a BR approach to many other environmental issues. Nearby are a Texas wildlife management area of 100,000 acres and a state natural area that will reach 300,000 acres, besides some ranchers who are "ardent conservationists." Across the Rio Grande, Mexico contemplates creating a large national park or biosphere reserve. The land base and human attitudes seem favorable for cooperation.

At MAB/UNESCO in Paris, Jan. 23-26, 12 scientists from the USSR, China, Czechoslovakia, UK, USA, France, West Germany, and Canada discussed ways of setting up an *international network of sites* in BRs to study global change. They recommended selecting 20 to 40 BRs and initiating pilot projects to test the abilities of the network to conduct scientific research. Ray Herrmann, NPS; Caroline Bledsoe, National Science Foundation; Guillermo Mann, Conservation International; and Paul Risser, University of New Mexico, represented the US.

The international *biosphere reserve brochure* has been reprinted with an updated list of reserves. Copies may be had from the GPO Bookstore, 941 N. Capitol St., NE, Washington, DC 20401; (202) 783-3238. Stock No. 044-000-07277-0. \$3 each. No bulk rate is available, but the MAB Secretariat hopes this can be arranged if orders show enough demand.

Dated March 20, 1990, a *status report on biosphere reserve programs* in each of the 24 biogeographical provinces and 12 coastal regions represented in the US is available from David Figlio, NPS Wildlife and Vegetation Division, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; (202) 343-8135 or FTS 343-8135.

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