



Global Change and Biosphere Reserve Workshop Held

By Jean Matthews

Three days that changed the world it may not have been, but the August conference in Knoxville (see article by Stephen Nodvin) left its 46 exhausted participants with the distinct impression that they had begun a process of transcendence that could end in a new level of research and management of the National Park System.

Vernon C. (Tommy) Gilbert, in presenting the Southern Appalachian MAB approach (SAMAB), returned again and again to the necessity for engaging the local populace in issue-oriented activities that would show them both "what's in it for us" and "how we're tied into and dependent on" the systems that interactively support all life on earth. The focus on global climate change, played so prominently by all the media and even appearing at the recent "summits" in Europe, seems to have captured the attention of a critical mass of people – enough to make such regional approaches as those centered around the Great Smoky Mountains and the Glacier NP Biosphere Reserves eminently viable.

It was the sense of the meeting that the U.S. public in general reacts negatively to the idea of "reserves," tending to see them as "lock-ups." Gilbert strongly urged a soft-pedaling of talk about threats to parks and buffer zones, and emphasis on critical issues that face entire regions. "These are the focal points that can bring people together," he said. "Whether or not there is a global climate change underway, the world has horrendous natural resource problems – overpopulation, loss of biological diversity, pollution, etc. We simply must do more toward making a *global response* to these conditions and our response *must* include the third world – which contains over 75 percent of the world's population."

A consensus was that biosphere reserves should emphasize issues that tie them in to the overall regional resources and problems picture at the points where people's concerns already are apparent.

"You scientists talk about peer review," said Hubert Hinote, the new director for SAMAB, "but I tell you that

MY peers are the people of this region. They're the ones who will 'review' what goes on here and decide if it's worthy of their participation and support."

One clear note about funding for scientific research in the National Parks was sounded by James Callahan, associate program director at the National Science Foundation for the Division of Biotic Systems and Resources.

"If you want money from my domain," he told the conferees, "the single biggest barrier we perceive is that the investigators in National Parks never know where they stand in relation to the parks. It's not a confidence-building situation for a long-term researcher. For this reason, NPS long-term research projects are not a high NSF funding priority."

Callahan's suggestions was that the research community would respond "rapidly and positively" to a national policy favoring extra-funded research in the National parks. "We're pleased to see that NPS looks as though it's moving toward meshing its research better with other agencies," he said. "But the Park Service should pay researchers more in *money* and less in *kind*. A little seed money would do a lot of good."

"And," he continued, "you won't ever get money from NSF for monitoring *per se*. This is a task that the Park Service should be funding itself. It's your *job*! Congress has told us 'Thou shalt not thwart the will of the Congress by funding another Federal agency' so we are limited as to what we can do in that respect. We *could* assist another Federal agency to set up its *own* research program – or fund a research project in which an NPS employee is the principal investigator if that project is offered for funding by an academic institution. However, no salary or other perk could be offered through the project to such a paid employee.

"In short," he concluded, "we won't allow another Federal agency to 'pick our pocket.' Our feeling is 'Let them fund their own research.' "

Associate NPS Director Eugene Hester told the conference that the new DI Secretary wants Interior to be involved in the study of and response to the worldwide problems posed by the threat of massive global climate change. "The new NPS Director sees parks as barometers of change in the nation and the world," he said (see Guest Editorial, page 2), and biosphere reserves in parks are key places for taking the earth's temperature and pulse. We all need to be working from the same data sets and the SAMAB project is helping us do just that. So is the Yellowstone Ecosystem work – so is the California Coastal project. (See MAB Notes, this issue).

Gary Everhardt, former NPS Director and Supt. of the Blue Ridge Parkway, declared strong support "from the management side" for biosphere reserves and observed, "I'm sorry to see only three park managers here. Managers should be involving themselves in this kind of activity. Economic development and environmental quality can and must be made compatible," he went on. "The people of Southern Appalachia believe they can be. The six agencies that formed SAMAB recognized the need to put aside individual turfs and develop a model example of what can and must be done through collaborative action to eliminate or mitigate common problems."