

mab notes

The National Aeronautical and Space Administration has joined the MAB program as a funding agency. NASA recently launched Global Habitability – a program intended to expand the use of remote sensing and related technologies to identify and assess causes and effects of changes in air, water, and land components of the biosphere. As in MAB, particular emphasis is on those changes that affect human habitability. NASA has expressed interest in the use of biosphere reserves as sites for systematic collection of ground truth data in conjunction with data provided by satellite and aircraft-based platforms. Proposals should be directed to the MAB coordinator, Bill Gregg, National Park Service Washington Office.

A potential study this fiscal year involves use of aircraft and satellite imagery to quantify land use changes in the vicinity of biosphere reserve areas during the period of record – several decades in most areas – to give an idea of the location, nature, and rate of encroachment.

Selection of Biosphere Reserves

Selection panels will be convened this year for the California biogeographic province (chaparral and Central Valley grassland regions) and the Lake Forest Biogeographic Province (mixed hardwood forest region from Minnesota to Maine, including adjacent areas of Canada), the latter in cooperation with MAB Canada. Kheryn Klubnick, environmental specialist at Santa Monica Mountains NRA, is coordinating the effort in California, and Glen Cole, research biologist at Voyageurs NP, is assisting with the Lake Forest initiative.

Testing of the 1981 MAB guidelines for selection of coastal area biosphere reserves is nearing completion, under Susan Bratton and Monica Turner of the NPS/CPSU at the University of Georgia's Institute of Ecology. Candidate sites have been identified and information for evaluating them summarized for the selection panel which is convening in January 1984 at Cumberland Island NS.

Death Valley and Joshua Tree NMs have been recommended as units of a Mojave and Colorado Deserts biosphere reserve by a selection panel chaired by Norden H. Cheatham of the University of California Natural Land and Water Reserves System. The sites were approved for nomination by US/MAB at the December meeting of the Directorate on Biosphere Reserves, pending NPS concurrence.

Status of MAB

On June 30, 1983, the MAB Secretariat was administratively transferred from the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs to the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. State funding and staffing levels were maintained.

In the aftermath of the April 1983 congressional hearings on MAB, a small executive committee was established to plan the future of MAB, replacing the large MAB National Committee of former years. The committee's new chairman, Dr. Paul Baker (chairman of the Penn State Anthropology Department) has sparked congressional interest in a line item appropriation in State's budget for MAB in FY 1985. MAB now is developing plans for a \$2 million program for that year. The Life Sciences Committee of the National

Academy of Sciences has agreed in principle to have the Academy assume a substantial role in MAB. A recent NSF evaluation of the UNESCO science programs underscored the effectiveness of MAB and its many benefits to the United States.

First International Conference on Biosphere Reserves

The First International Congress on Biosphere Reserves was held in Minsk, Byelorussian S.S.R. from Sept. 26 to Oct. 2, 1983. Eight individuals from the United States attended, with the U.S. Government represented by NASA. Fifty-two nations sent representatives. The Congress developed an action plan for biosphere reserves, soon to be available in final form. Papers prepared by Lloyd Loope (NPS research biologist from Haleakala NP), Ray Herrmann (NPS Water Resources Lab director,) and MAB Coordinator Bill Gregg, were read at the Congress.

Virgin Islands Marine Research

An integrated, multi-year program of marine ecosystem studies was launched in October by the NPS in cooperation with MAB in the Virgin Islands NP biosphere reserve. The research will provide a comprehensive description and evaluation of marine ecosystems and fisheries of the region, including nearby areas in the British Virgin Islands, and will develop the basis for long-term monitoring to support effective management. The work of investigators from six regional institutions is being coordinated through the Virgin Islands Resource Management Cooperative, established in 1982 to marshal the region's capabilities for addressing problems affecting the VINP biosphere reserve.

Symbolism Studied

Dr. J. Ronald Engel, associate professor of Social Ethics at the Meadville Theological School (University of Chicago), plans a year's sabbatical to study the role of symbolism and human value systems as factors in establishment and effective use of biosphere reserves in different parts of the world. Biosphere reserves represent a new dimension in global conservation, the master integrators of many functions performed individually or severally by existing kinds of protected areas, and symbolic as well as practical focal points for cooperation to improve the well-being of people through sustainable conservation of the world's ecosystems.

The success of the reserves will depend on willingness of people and their institutions to cooperate in a spirit of service to make the reserves dynamic centers for developing knowledge and practical skills for effective ecosystem management. Dr. Engel will look at how the symbolism inherent in the reserve concept is perceived by key decisionmakers and institutions, how these perceptions promote or constrain development of the reserves, and what actions MAB and others might take to foster enthusiasm and constructive work in building the global network. Dr. Engel is author of *Sacred Sands*, which assesses the role of symbolism and human value systems in the half century of efforts leading to establishment of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Dr. Engel worked for the NPS as a seasonal ranger/naturalist at Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs and Isle Royale NP.