NOTES, NEWS & COMMENTS

Oxford Training Course on Tropical Moist-forest Resources Management and Conservation

Tropical moist-forest is a useful term to describe tropical rain-forests *plus* tropical seasonal (usually monsoon) forests, which are the closed, woody-vegetation types of perhumid and seasonally (but not excessively) dry tropical climates. These forests cover great tracts of the equatorial belt and, until not long ago, seemed virtually inexhaustible. But over the last two to three decades their exploitation has increased, and now it is widely realized that they are of finite extent, so that there is a real prospect of their exhaustion within the life-time of people now living.

Tropical moist-forests are a very valuable natural resource in many tropical countries, where the rain-forests provide timber for export, either as logs or as sawn timber and plywood—so constituting a principal source of national income in several countries. Tropical monsoon forests are also being heavily exploited—in this case mainly for fuel-wood to supply the rapidly increasing population both locally and in expanding urban areas.

There is always a conflict between the short-term gain obtained by immediate exploitation, which is sometimes followed by conversion of the land to agriculture (plantations, arable, or pasture), and the longer-term benefits which are less immediately obvious but also of great importance. Forests ameliorate climate, control water runoff rate, and minimize erosion. With careful exploitation and silvicultural treatment, they can be a sustained source of timber and much more. Thus they contain many actual and potential drug-plants and the wild relatives of many fruit-trees. They also contain many unexploited species that are able to contribute to human welfare, as the needs of mankind change in a world which is running short of fossil fuels. Countries with tropical moist-forest are aware of the competing short- and long-term pressures. They are already grappling with the problems in planning the use of their natural resources.

The Commonwealth Forestry Institute, located at Oxford University, has long been involved in tropical forestry. The focus is in the Unit of Tropical Silviculture, a group within the Institute which has active collaboration with practically all parts of the tropics. The Unit is now offering a training course on tropical moist-forest resources and their management and conservation. The course is aimed to set land-use planning and forest management in the context of conservation for the sustained use of natural resources, and to explore the ways in which these different objectives can be reconciled. It is expected that the course will be useful to people with several years' experience in planning and management in a conservation context, most of whom are likely to have a diploma in a different aspect of forestry or in another suitable subject.

The course will draw on the different fields of expertise of the staff of the Commonwealth Forestry Institute. These cover conservation planning (M.E.D. Poore), management (R.A. Plumtre and P.J. Wood), and the plant and vegetation resources (B.T. Styles and T.C. Whitmore). Other contributors from outside the Institute will include G. Lucas and A. Mence (on IUCN-recognized threatened species and their monitoring), M.J. Coe and Lord Cranbrook (on pertinent animals), and P.F. Burgess (on sustained-use forest management).

Teaching will be by lectures, seminars, and workshops, and will include detailed case-studies prepared and presented by participants. There will also be visits to institutes concerned with resource utilization and conservation (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Birmingham University, for genetic resource conservation; and the Forest Products Labouratory, Princes Risborough). The course will include a tour—in collaboration with the UK Nature Conservation Council—which will demonstrate several British examples of land-use management and conservation.

The course is planned to run for the nearly 6 weeks of 17 October to 26 November 1983, and has still some places vacant. Further details may be obtained from Mr P.D. Hardcastle, Course Organizer, at the address given below:

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Environmental Aspects of the Law of the Sea Treaty

The Convention on the Law of the Sea will create an important international framework for the protection and conservation of the marine environment and its resources. It contains a number of legal obligations of major environmental significance, including the fundamental obligation of State signatories to protect and preserve the marine environment.

States would be bound by the Convention to use the best practical means at their disposal to prevent and control marine pollution from *any* source, and would be liable for damage caused by violation of their international obligations to combat marine pollution. They would be bound to cooperate both globally and regionally to formulate additional rules and technical standards of environmental protection, and would commit themselves to promote technical assistance for developing countries in this area of concern. In addition, the Convention would bind States to adopt measures to manage and conserve living resources, especially emphasizing the conservation, management, and study, of cetaceans. The Convention would provide an innovative system of resolving ocean-related disputes, including binding international settlement of applicable environmental disputes.

In recent Congressional testimony, the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations stated: 'Although the current draft Convention is not perfect... we can say without reservation that widespread acceptance and implementation of the Convention's environmental provisions are fundamental to the preservation of the marine environment.'

At the May 1982 meeting of the Sierra Club Board of Directors, the Club hailed the treaty as 'a historic step...

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