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The International Biological Program is largely a program in environmental biology. Hence, ecologists have been intimately involved in its planning and they see more clearly than any other professional group the urgent need for this program and its importance to our people and to the peoples of the world. Now (as projected under IBP), for the first time in the history of man on this planet the pertinent scientists of nearly all countries are joining together for a unified and coordinated look at man and his environment on a world-wide basis. The objectives of this program are several fold:

(1) to understand the functioning of the complex ecosystems (on land, in fresh water, in the seas) of which man is a part and on which he depends for food and other necessities.

(2) on the basis of this understanding to be able to predict the effects of specific human activities on the quality of these ecosystems. The question is, can we provide for this and for future generations the kind of baseline information that will enable them to maintain environmental quality at a level that will make life worth living.

(3) to identify, around the world, representative stands of ecosystems and unique biota so that samples of these may be preserved for posterity. This is an important aspect of the program, but it does tend to confuse some people about what ecologists do. Ecologists are not people who just want to maintain the environment in a natural condition; instead, they aspire to provide the kind of information that will permit the human population of the world to live in the greatest harmony with the world's ecosystems. Ecologists deal constantly with change and with systems in dynamic equilibrium and which can have their values shifted by change in the pressures on the system. It is the aim of ecology to predict the effect of these changing pressures on ecosystems and hence provide man with a scientific basis for his use of and interactions with these ecosystems. The alternative is continued haphazard alteration of the earth's environments and acceleration of the present trend toward deterioration of the quality of these environments.

(4) to increase the manpower pool in ecological biology, and as a part of the over all picture of international cooperation to increase the competence in environmental biology in developing countries.

It seems unthinkable that the United States, as the technologically and scientifically leading nation of the world could abstain from participation in this program and from taking a position of leadership in it. And, in fact, the United States biologists have taken such a position in the planning stages. Now that the program is approaching the action phase, it is essential that it receive commensurate support from our Federal government if our U.S. biologists are to continue to play an important role in this international undertaking. The reasons why it is in our national interest to participate vigorously in this program are simple and straightforward.

(1) Only the kind of programmatic research such as that being planned under auspices of the PT and PF subcommittees of IBP will be able to provide answers concerning the functioning of ecosystems and hence will provide baselines for assessment of the effects of man-made changes on the ecosystems. Under this particular project all of the complex interrelations of a whole watershed will be studied by many scientists; such an undertaking is beyond the capabilities of any one individual or any single institutional team.

(2) The cooperation of various biologists in diverse countries of the world will permit solutions of basic biological problems that transcend national or continental lines and that would be insoluble without such cooperation. There are plans for inter-continental studies of the adaptation of man to various kinds of environments. There are plans for intercontinental studies of the attributes of the various species of plants and animals (weed species) that are able to colonize many parts of the world and hence become pests from man's viewpoint. There are plans for intercontinental studies of convergent evolution under similar environments to better understand the processes acting to form and maintain the characteristics of ecosystems and of their component species.

(3) The cooperative programs involving advanced countries, such as the United States, and developing countries, such as many in Latin America, will permit the export of scientific "know-how" to countries where it is desperately