

are presently available in adequate, although minimal, strength—and that a framework must be developed within which they can function.

To create this framework we advocate the establishment of a non-mission-oriented, neutral, independent organization which, through the development of a national network of research centers would:

- (1) Develop an integrated foundation of knowledge in ecosystem science, with emphasis on society and its total environment.
- (2) Establish an ecological information storage and retrieval system.
- (3) Stimulate education and training in ecosystem science.
- (4) Perform advisory services regarding the ecological impact and consequences of proposed action programs affecting man's environment.
- (5) Disseminate ecological knowledge as a basis for the harmonious development of human society and its sustaining environment.

It is to be stressed that only with independence can the resources that exist in the universities and private sector be fully utilized and the all-important goals of synthesis and objectivity be achieved.

One working model for the creation of an organization meeting these standards has recently been proposed by the Ecological Society of America (ESA) in its testimony and submitted statement before this Subcommittee. The Smithsonian Institution agrees in principle with the concepts outlined in this presentation, but believes that the ESA proposal must be developed and expanded, particularly in terms of integration between the public and private sectors.

If a regional pattern of university-based consortia is to be successful, it will inevitably require substantial financial and technical assistance from both the federal and private sectors. It is therefore necessary that the organizational structure provide for intimate cooperation among universities, federal agencies, industry, private foundations, and other relevant organizations. Cooperation of this nature is essential for the rapid advance of ecological knowledge which must underlie the quality control of our environment.

We are convinced that the programs and resources of the Smithsonian are extremely relevant to the objectives of a national program in ecosystem ecology. Throughout its history the Smithsonian has played an important role in the genesis of many new organizations. It has served as the spawning ground and home in adolescence for many undertakings, which upon reaching sufficient maturity came to stand on their own strength; the Weather Bureau, the National Bureau of Standards and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries are all examples. The Smithsonian has no desire to see an organization of this nature centralized and inserted as a Bureau of the Institution. However, there is merit in considering that the Smithsonian (1) serves as the initial home of such an association on a temporary basis and (2) participate as a permanent and integral component through affiliation and partnership in a "consortium" approach. Through these means the Smithsonian Institution could contribute valuable and possibly otherwise unattainable assets.