The United Nations Conference on The Human Environment Stockholm 1972

Although the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (the Stockholm Conference) has been mentioned frequently in the national news media, various facets of this Conference are not generally known. The aim here is to provide a brief outline of objectives, participants and preparations, with emphasis on those topics of concern to foresters.

The Conference is being held this month, June 5 - 15, at Stockholm in Sweden. Its objectives are "to provide a framework for the comprehensive consideration within the United Nations of the problems of the human environment in order to focus the attention of governments and public opinion on the importance and urgency of this question and also to identify those aspects of it that can only or best be solved through international cooperation and agreement" (Resolution 2398 of the 23rd UN General Assembly). It is intended that the Conference will lead to national and international action, with emphasis upon the latter.

The status of the delegates will be at a ministerial level; there will be up to six delegates per country together with an unspecified number of advisors. Observers will be present from specialized UN agencies concerned with environmental problems, and from accredited international non-governmental organizations. Although non-governmental organizations and individuals will not be directly involved in the Conference, a forum will enable these organizations and individuals to meet and discuss their particular interests in environmental problems.

The Preparatory Committee of the Conference consists of representatives from 27 nations including Canada. The Secretariat of the Conference consists of a relatively small group in Geneva headed by a Canadian, Mr. Maurice Strong, who was the President of the Canadian International Development Agency.

A number of intergovernmental working groups (IWG's) were formed during the early part of 1971, including groups working on a Declaration on the Human Environment, Marine Pollution, Monitoring and Surveillance, Soils and Conservation.

The Secretariat invited national reports as well as basic papers and case studies on specified topics from participating countries. The Secretariat has also sought advice from invited experts and organized the drafting of a number of conventions concerned with international cooperation in conservation problems.

Conventions that will be of particular interest to resource managers are:

- 1/ The World Heritage Foundation — the main concern is with conservation of areas of outstanding value and interest to mankind because of their fauna, flora, geological structures and landscape.
- 2/ Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance — mainly concerned with the conser-

vation of migratory waterfowl in Europe, Asia Minor and Africa. From a Canadian viewpoint, it may be noted that the Migratory Birds Treaty of 1916 (made effective by the Migratory Birds Convention Act 1916) already exists for the conservation of waterfowl on the American continent.

- 3/ Conservation of Islands for Science — concerned with preservation of vulnerable islands of special value to science as locations for studies of evolution, genetics, population dynamics and many related topics.
- 4/ Export, Import and Transit of Certain Species of Wildlife and Plants — aiming at protecting wildlife by control of international movement in trade.

The Canadian government is involved in the preparation of a national report, basic papers and case studies. It is involved in developing proposals for a Declaration on the Human Environment, and for international monitoring of the environment and marine pollution. The Conventions listed above have been studied and proposals for modifications made. Federal scientists have contributed basic papers on several topics (e.g. conservation, soils, gene pools) and case studies; case studies on mercury pollution and river basin management have been selected by the Secretariat for inclusion in the Conference agenda; the basic paper on Conservation of National Resources and Historic Sites prepared by the Canadian Interdepartmental Task Force on Conservation was accepted by the Conference Secretariat as a reference document.

This document "Conservation in Canada, National Resources and Historic Sites" will be of interest to Canadian foresters. It is essentially a technical document and a basis for discussion rather than a statement of government policy. The document was coordinated and edited by the Canadian Forestry Service, and considers the conservation of a wide range of natural resources such as climate, tundra, muskeg, forest, grasslands, fisheries, water, minerals, geologic sites, historic sites and urban green belts. It also considers special problems such as the migration of mammals and birds, the preservation of evolutionary centres, the activities of the International Biological Program in Canada, the extent of different types of parks, and problems of conservation legislation. Throughout the document conservation is considered in its broad sense, including both wise use of resources and preservation of particular sites. The individual papers describe each resource and its value, consider the conservation measures taken so far and their adequacy, and make suggestions for the future. The basic paper was prepared at very short notice and the current version is for restricted distribution. At present, however, it is being revised and its scope widened with the intention of making it accessible in the near future to a wider audience.

It is expected that the Stockholm Conference will be a considerable stimulus to the development of international cooperation in resource use and conservation.

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