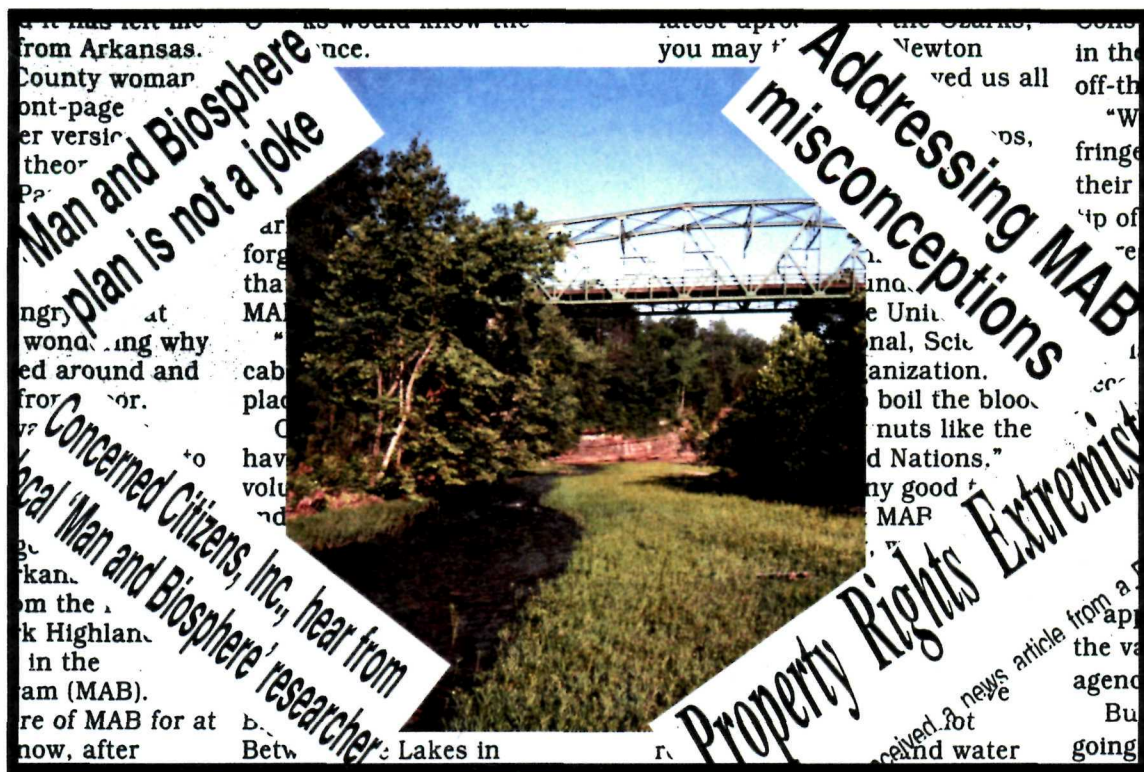


Final Report of Research for the United States Man and the  
Biosphere Program, United States Department of State

## The Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve: A Study of a Failed Nomination Effort



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College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources  
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Funding for this research was provided by the United States Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program, United States Department of State, and the Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Missouri—Columbia.

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Cover Photograph of Buffalo National River by Theresa L. Goedeke  
Cover Design by Gene Ertel, Theresa L. Goedeke, and J. Sanford Rikoon





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December 16, 1998

TO: U.S. Biosphere Reserve Managers and Coordinators  
FROM: Roger E. Soles   
SUBJECT: Ozark Case Study

Please find enclosed, "The Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve: A Study of a Failed Nomination Effort," by Goedeke and Rikoon. The research was done to assess the variables involved in the groundswell of activity opposed to the establishment of the Ozark Highland Biosphere Reserve.

The report points to the need for public participation at the earliest opportunity regarding the establishment of any new biosphere reserve, and is a reminder of the need for a constituency for the biosphere reserves.

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We would also like to thank those individuals, agencies, and organizations who contributed their time, knowledge, and understanding. In particular, we would like to thank George Oviatt of Buffalo National River and David Foster, formerly of Ozark National Scenic Riverways. We would like to express our gratitude to the following agencies and organizations for their participation during the interview phase of the research study:

National Park Service, Buffalo National River  
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission  
Ozark Regional Land Trust  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
Missouri Farm Bureau  
Take Back Arkansas

In addition, we gratefully acknowledge all of those individuals who consented to an interview or otherwise provided us with information and understanding. Although many individuals contributed insight and information to this research, we take sole blame for the interpretations and understandings described throughout this report on the Ozark Man and the Biosphere Reserve case study.



## **Executive Summary**

This research was undertaken to understand the issues and events related to the failed effort to nominate the Ozarks region as a Man and the Biosphere Reserve. Our goals were to characterize the motives, arguments, and grievances of both proponents and opponents of the OMAB nomination and to discover what about the nomination process either contributed to or mitigated the conflict. Finally, based on the OMAB experience, we formulate recommendations for future MAB nominations.

### **About the OMAB Case Study**

- Data were collected during May of 1997 through May of 1998; they were gathered via personal interviews, researcher observations, and document analysis.
- The OMAB nomination effort spanned nearly nine years, beginning in 1988 and ending amid public controversy in 1996.
- Public controversy erupted in late 1995, peaked in late 1996 through Winter 1997, and continued well into Spring of 1997. Much opponent activity occurred after the nomination process failed due to the withdrawal of support by agencies and organizations participating in the nomination.

### **The OMAB Steering Committee: Interest, Investment, and Choices**

- The OMAB idea was externally rather than internally motivated. The initial idea to pursue a MAB in the Ozark Highlands came from US MAB sponsored meeting at Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky in 1988. After this meeting the nomination began to take shape, largely at the effort of one man.
- Agencies participating in the nomination effort were not interested in a MAB per se. Rather, they were interested in facilitating cooperative management among natural resource agencies and developing holistic management strategies. Some committee members said they participated because they thought it would enhance their ability to do their present jobs, while others indicated that their participation was essentially obligatory. As a result, agencies and representatives were not ideologically committed to the MAB concept and claimed no ownership over the nomination project. It was largely viewed as a National Park Service endeavor.
- The entire nomination process spanned from 1988 to 1996. The long duration of the nomination process led to problems associated with turnover of committee representatives and loss of a key leader. The nomination suffered from losses in organizational memory and experience as representatives withdrew or were reassigned from the OMAB project. The entire effort lulled when the first committee chairman, David Foster, de-intensified his role and then retired in 1995.
- Steering Committee members reported lack of agency resources to devote to the nomination process as a primary culprit in slowing down the process. Agencies and representatives had limited time and resources to devote to the nomination project.
- Given limitations on time and resources, as well as agency rivalry, steering committee participants had difficulty in working finer details of the nomination. Participants were uncomfortable with signing on to the agreement despite controversy.
- Once controversy erupted in the Ozarks, a majority of the participating agencies and organization withdrew their support of the nomination. Many cited the negative

public sentiment as their reason for begging out of the project. The manner in which agencies dealt with the controversy differed. Some agencies attempted to address opponent claims, some tried to minimize or deny past involvement with the nomination, but most silently backed away from both the nomination and the controversy.

- Agencies experienced intense political pressure, particularly state agencies, to withdraw from the nomination effort. Arkansas agencies were explicitly ordered by Arkansas Governor Huckabee to refrain from further participation in the nomination. Congressional Representatives Jo Ann Emerson (MO) and Tim Hutchinson (AR) also demanded a halt to the already halted nomination.
- Before pursuing a nomination, it is important to make sure participating parties are “on board” ideologically and practically.
- One way to increase the efficiency of the nomination process and ensure that all issues are addressed is by adjusting the organizational structure of the nomination process. First, a facilitator might be included early in the process to aid a committee in identifying and addressing all stakeholders. Next, a nomination coordinator is necessary to ensure that all tasks are completed during the process, and in a timely manner. Further, a full-time coordinator would be able to ensure that the proper amount of community information and outreach are completed. Dividing the nominating committee into sub-committees is also desirable. This would ensure that all committee members participate and that all tasks are sufficiently addressed during the nomination process. Moreover, active participation will facilitate a sense of ownership, investment, and commitment among agencies and organizations involved in the process.
- Greater involvement from US MAB during the nomination process is recommended. US MAB has an interest in the success and reputation of US Biosphere Reserves. As a consequence, US MAB should participate during the nomination process. The implementation of formal nomination procedures and guidelines would enable US MAB to ensure that nominating committees have addressed all issues and components of the MAB program.

### **Community Role, Awareness, and Involvement**

- Official literature from US MAB and UN MAB describe the program as inclusive of the human dimensions of natural resource conservation and management, specifically the cultural and economic dimensions. Communities should realize ‘tangible benefits’ from the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve. Moreover, a Biosphere Reserve should facilitate cooperative management among government, organizations, communities, and residents.
- Considerable ambiguity surrounds the community dimension of MABs in terms of the role citizens should play in the formation, designation, and implementation of a Biosphere Reserve. When and how should communities be asked to participate in the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve?
- Agencies participating in the nomination did not report involvement in the OMAB nomination as a means to increase opportunities to engage the public in participatory or collaborative efforts. They sought the designation to increase cooperative

management opportunities among agencies, open new avenues for research funding opportunities, and to increase the exchange of scientific information.

- Benefits anticipated for Ozark communities tended to be indirect, ‘trickle-down’ benefits beginning with agency ability to more effectively manage natural resources. Such benefits were not readily visible to the public.
- The OMAB Steering Committee wanted to avoid difficulties arising from the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders early in the nomination process. Further, they anticipated local opposition to the nomination. As a result, they minimized the public’s role throughout the process and designed the feasibility research effort to circumvent the untimely rise of opposition.
- Steering Committee members reported that *The Feasibility Study for an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Reserve* was the primary avenue of community input during the nomination process. The community dimension findings were based on a sample of approximately 90 interviews with community leaders in the Ozarks region. The study proclaimed support for the Biosphere Reserve management concept, but strongly encouraged public outreach.
- OMAB opponents argued that the *Feasibility Study* was conducted in a manner so as to conceal the nomination from citizens, that the sample was not representative of all Ozark residents, and that interviewees were not actually interviewed.
- A second avenue for community inclusion and the sole source of information were a handful of talks given to select civic organizations and a conference held in Harrison, AR in 1993.
- Opponents criticized the outreach efforts of the Steering Committee in terms of public meetings arguing that not enough meetings were offered and that proper notification of the Harrison meeting was not given to the public.
- Some Committee members viewed public outreach efforts as adequate, while others were less satisfied. Opponents viewed the Committee’s outreach efforts as indicative of the Committee’s desire to exclude citizens and conceal the nomination effort.
- Efforts must be made to determine the role of local communities in MAB nominations, designations, and implementations. Communities should be included in the early stages of the nomination process in terms of participation and information.
- Nomination committees must be realistic when estimating the amount and type of community participation required, as well as the prospective benefits. Further, they should report both requirements and benefits to communities wherein a Biosphere Reserve is desired.
- Efforts must be made to seek out and engage all potential stakeholders, even those likely to oppose the nomination effort. A dialogue is critical so committees can anticipate and resolve conflict before it becomes a paralyzing factor in the process.
- General public outreach is critical to inform the public about MABs and the nomination effort, as well as to facilitate the growth of a support base within the community.

### **The Opposition: Who, How, and Why?**

- OMAB proponents and bystanders believed that most protest activity came from a core group of local people, with sponsorship from organizations such as Missouri Farm Bureau and People for the West. The public at large was believed to be either



apathetic to the effort and controversy, or supportive of the nomination. Our research indicates that most activism was concentrated among a few individuals, however, many citizens wrote letters and attended anti-OMAB meetings.

- The public controversy over the OMAB began sometime in early 1995, most probably in Missouri. Arkansas activists joined the protest in the Fall of 1996 and Winter of 1997, when the controversy seemed to peak in both states.
- There was no one anti-OMAB group or organization. Activism against the nomination was comprised of loosely networked individuals and organizations. Local activists enjoyed the support of organizations from outside of the Ozarks, namely the People for the West and Missouri Farm Bureau. However, many local folks were active opponents of the nomination. Several individuals took the lead in protest activities serving as speakers at anti-Biosphere Reserve meetings, writing letters to the editor, contacting officials and politicians, and intensively networking with other activists.
- The goals of opponents were to collect information and then inform local residents and politicians about the OMAB and MABs in general. Five central strategies were employed to accomplish this task:
  - a) contacting Steering Committee and US MAB representatives;
  - b) holding public and town meetings;
  - c) writing letters to the editor;
  - d) setting up information websites on the Internet;
  - e) and contacting local, state, and federal politicians.
- Opponents effectively involved local residents. They encouraged citizens to seek out information and become involved in protest activities. Local opponents were convincing and successful in that they elicited concern among fellow residents. Their intensive outreach activities served to put Steering Committee members and US MAB officials on the defensive.
- There were some very extraordinary claims associated with the OMAB controversy including connections to a UN/environmental world conspiracy, military invasion of the Ozarks, forced evacuation of Ozark residents, and the destruction of community infrastructure to return areas to wilderness.
- In general, opponents claimed that the OMAB would have had far-reaching, negative implications for property owners and resources users in the Ozarks. Opponents feared that the Biosphere Reserve would bring increased regulation and laws for private property and natural resource use. Also, opponents feared eminent domain land seizures as a consequence of a Biosphere Reserve.
- Ozark citizens have a distinct individual and cultural identity linked to place. They believe themselves to be independent and more capable of managing natural resources on an individual basis without outside intervention. Place is also an important factor in terms of site history. Opponent fears of increased regulation and land seizures were rooted in the social and political history of the Ozarks. Opponents often cited historical eminent domain takings and past resource management efforts as proof of negative consequences of a Biosphere Reserve in the Ozarks. This was an ominous historical foundation for the OMAB nomination effort.
- Opponents relied on a variety of sources as evidence of the negative implications of a local MAB, as well as MABs place in the wider UN/environmental globalist

conspiracy. They relied on national conspiracy experts, secondary documents such as *Earth in the Balance* by Al Gore, and primary sources such as UN and US MAB documents and publications. Opponents also relied on information contained in the OMAB *Feasibility Study*. This was likely a source of confusion for concerned citizens because both opponents and proponents often recommended the same sources of information to citizens trying to investigate the issue.

- Opponents often quoted sources out of context and in tandem with a variety of other source documents. They read between the lines for latent and hidden meanings contained in primary sources and made sweeping conclusions about the meaning of terms, phrases, and passages within those documents. Opponents saw links between MAB and other programs, projects, and publications because of shared scientific jargon. MAB was equated to the Wildlands Project because both use the concentric circle reserve design. Opponents consolidated all information regardless of what entity published it and where. No distinctions were made between programs, agencies, or policies. This made it very difficult for Steering Committee members to address opponent claims and concerns.
- US MAB and future nominating committees should note the insurmountable confusion and angst that scientific jargon and other terminology could lead to during a nomination effort. Efforts should be made to understand the vernacular usage of terms used. Further, it may be helpful for US MAB to include new or additional terms that better communicate the multidisciplinary goals of the program.
- Future nominating committees should take care to do extensive outreach and education regarding the MAB concept and the local nomination effort. Given the tactics of anti-MAB activists, effort must be made to explain the program early in the nomination process, in a manner that effectively communicates the goals of MAB and the local nomination effort. Personal attention to citizens concerns will ensure that they are given an opportunity to hear and understand proponent views of the MAB program, rather than relying on opponents for information.
- Efforts should be made to identify and understand any local or regional historical events that might impact contemporary efforts. Such knowledge can inform nominating committees on the need to distance contemporary efforts from this legacy and be suggestive of how new efforts should be organizationally structured. Also understanding the cultural and political history of an area will help committees to identify issues of local concern, as well as individuals and groups most likely to hold those concerns.

### **The OMAB Legacy**

- The OMAB case study highlights the fact that citizens are demanding inclusion in the decision making process. They are no longer content to bend to the will of scientific experts and politicians. The question of who decides about environmental policy is becoming important.
- In the Ozarks, OMAB opponents successfully recast the focus of public and political discourse over environmental issues from concerns for natural resources and sustainability, to concerns for individual rights and political process. Moreover, the perceived victory in the Ozarks has proven to those who disagree with institutional

environmentalism that ordinary people can successfully dictate both state and federal environmental policy through grass-roots activism and organized political lobbying.

- Because of these developments in the social, political, and cultural contexts of natural resource management, increasing efforts must be made to understand and incorporate the human dimensions of natural resource management. This incorporation must be practical as well as theoretical. Communities and citizens must be given a voice to define their own place in the ecosystem.
- MAB nominating committees must explain the risks and benefits of a MAB clearly to the public and political leaders to avoid widespread confusion and, further, should provide meaningful opportunities for interested citizens to participate in the process. Providing opportunities to understand and participate in the formation and implementation of a MAB will foster a sense of community and citizen ownership over the program. Or, conversely, it will serve as an early indicator that citizens are not receptive to the program thereby saving time and resources in pursuing a program that will not enjoy public support.
- Future nominating committees will likely find themselves up against creative opponents. Therefore, efforts must be made to understand source and nature of opponent claims, no matter how fantastic. Committees must be proactive in soliciting public opinion throughout the process. This is necessary to ensure the timely notice of public concern and conflict, which will enable the committee to immediately address such issues.



# **Chapter 1**

## **About The OMAB Case Study**

### **Introduction**

In 1996 an almost nine-year effort to establish a Man and the Biosphere Reserve in the Ozark portions of Missouri and Arkansas was abandoned under a storm of public controversy. The Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve (OMAB) was thwarted by local residents who purportedly stood to benefit most from the honorary designation. Amid wild rumors of UN invasions, government conspiracies, and environmentalist plots, some Ozark citizens took the OMAB Steering Committee by surprise, turning the uneventful, drawn-out nomination process into a public battle over competing interpretations of MAB goals, objectives, and consequences. The controversy left officials and citizens alike wondering what happened and why.

This research was undertaken to flesh out the issues and examine the events that turned the Ozarks into a hotbed of controversy over MABs, the United Nations, and property rights. To accomplish this task, we undertook this project with several goals in mind. First, we wanted to chronicle the history of the nomination and the resulting controversy, noting key participants and pivotal events. Our second goal was to characterize the motives, arguments, and grievances of both proponents and opponents of the OMAB nomination. Finally, we wanted to discover what about the nomination process either contributed to or mitigated the conflict and, knowing that, to determine what lessons might be learned for future MAB nominations.

The study took approximately one year to complete. The present report is a reflection of our efforts to understand the Ozark MAB nomination attempt and the

resulting public condemnation of both the local nomination effort and the MAB program in general. To effectively report our findings, this report is divided into five chapters. The remainder of the first chapter is devoted, first, to a description of the research methods. Also, to quickly familiarize the reader with the Ozark MAB experience, we spend some time generally describing the OMAB nomination and also provide a chronological description of the nomination process and controversy.

Chapters Two through Four each deal with a particular aspect of the OMAB nomination experience. Chapter Two, entitled “The OMAB Steering Committee: Interest, Investment, and Choices,” focuses on the strategies and the efforts of the OMAB Steering Committee. Here we describe the nomination process from the proponents’ perspective, particularly the motivations, participation, and the strategies of the nominating group’s Steering Committee and its participants. We highlight those factors that likely contributed to public dissention and protest against the proposed Biosphere Reserve. Recommendations are made about how the committee structure and nominating process may be improved in the future.

Chapter Three, “Community Role, Awareness, and Involvement,” is in many ways a continuation of the discussion on the OMAB nomination process. In this chapter, however, we focus primarily on the community or public dimension of the nomination process. We address those aspects of the MAB program meant to incorporate the interests of local citizens, as well as to benefit them. The community dimension of the OMAB nomination specifically addresses those aspects of the nomination meant to include, inform, and address local communities and residents. This chapter presents a summary of opponent critiques of Steering Committee public outreach efforts and

concludes with recommendations for community inclusion in future MAB nomination efforts.

Chapter Four, “The Opposition: Who, How, and Why?,” focuses on the individuals and groups in the Ozarks who worked against the OMAB nomination. This chapter describes the extent and nature of opposition activism, opponent strategies, and the central claims and grievances espoused by anti-OMAB activists. Great attention is paid to describing opponent beliefs and concerns, as well as to tracing the social, historical, and cultural roots of those beliefs. Finally, we draw several conclusions about what the opposition in the Ozarks means for the MAB program in general, along with future efforts to establish Biosphere Reserves in the Ozarks.

In the final chapter, “The OMAB Legacy,” we summarize the case study and draw broad conclusions about the source, nature, and implications of this public controversy over a MAB designation.

## **Research Methods**

Data for this research were collected during May of 1997 through May of 1998. We employed three research strategies: personal interviews, personal observations, and content analysis of written documents. Our research goal was to gain a sense of the history of the nomination and controversy, as well as to develop a clear picture of the problems, issues, and experiences of persons both for and against the OMAB nomination.

Our objective in interviewing was to talk with the key players in the controversy, as well as individuals who could provide outside perspectives. We used snowball sampling to identify potential interviewees. During interviews, we asked for the names of other critical actors in the controversy and later pursued these leads. Persons



recommended as important interviewees were sent a letter explaining the research and intentions to contact them for an interview. The letter was followed by a phone call to answer their questions and set up an interview. After the initial letter, we made three attempts to contact prospective interviewees by telephone. If they could not be reached on the third attempt, no further attempts were made.

Due to the controversial nature of the OMAB issue at the time interviews were conducted and for the convenience and protection of informants, each interviewee was assured anonymity in his or her responses. Unless informants agreed to waive an assurance of anonymity, pseudonyms are used in this report in lieu of interviewees' real names. George Oviatt of National Park Service-Buffalo National River and David Foster, formerly of National Park Service-Ozark National Scenic Riverways, both graciously agreed to waive anonymity. Aliases are used for all other interviewees. Aside from Oviatt and Foster, the only true names appearing in this report are those considered a matter of public record, such as names published in newspaper articles or appearing on government documents.

A total of twenty-two in depth, open-ended interviews were conducted, lasting approximately one hour each. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded and field notes were taken for those interviews not recorded. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify central themes and issues.

Nine interviews were conducted with individuals representing agencies and organizations associated with the OMAB Steering Committee, including three representatives from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), two individuals with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AG&F), and one representative each

from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC), Buffalo National River (BNR), Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR), and Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT). This group included the two National Park Service employees, David Foster and George Oviatt, who each led the nomination effort as Steering Committee Chairman during different phases of the nomination process.

In addition to Steering Committee members, several journalists familiar with the issue were interviewed. Interviewees included a newspaper reporter who covered the story in southern Missouri and a newspaper editor from a small southern Missouri paper that devoted pages to stories and letters on the OMAB issue. A reporter from Northern Arkansas who talked with OMAB opponents and wrote a story on the Biosphere Reserve controversy was also interviewed. Finally, we talked with three individuals on the staff of *Rural Missouri*, a publication with statewide circulation that contained many letters to the editor regarding the Biosphere Reserve issue.

In terms of OMAB opponents, one representative of Take Back Arkansas and two individuals from Missouri Farm Bureau were interviewed specifically about the OMAB issue. In addition, to broaden our understanding of the property rights issue and to gain a greater understanding of the wider conspiracy OMAB opponents often alluded to, representatives from several property rights oriented organizations within mid-Missouri were later interviewed.

In collecting data on the broader property rights issue, three in-depth interviews were most applicable to the MAB research. One interview was conducted with a member of the Missouri Republican Assembly, an ultra-conservative political organization that promotes private property rights as one of its signature political issues. A second

interview was conducted with a representative from People for the West,<sup>1</sup> a national activist group working to impede or reverse environmental regulations that affect property rights or land use in the United States. Finally, a project researcher spoke with a member of Citizens for Private Property Rights, a watchdog organization formed in the late 1980's in response to a statewide initiative geared toward addressing water quality in Missouri. Although data from these three interviews do not directly appear in this report, findings from these supplemental interviews and experiences contributed to the report in terms of providing background on factual information, an understanding of the broader issues, and refining the overall conclusions and recommendations.

Lastly, a University of Missouri Extension agent working in southern Missouri was interviewed. Although University of Missouri Extension was not involved with the OMAB nomination, this representative was able to provide reflections and opinions from an agency perspective.

Three property rights conferences between November of 1997 and April of 1998 were attended by either Sandy Rikoon or Theresa Goedeke. One observation was completed in November of 1997 at the First Annual Conference of Take Back Arkansas<sup>2</sup> (TBA) Chapters hosted in Harrison, AR. This meeting provided an opportunity to meet local property rights activists, as well as hear about and view documentation presented as

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<sup>1</sup> People for the West was recently renamed People for the U.S.A.

<sup>2</sup> Take Back Arkansas is based in Fayetteville, AR. According to a TBA membership pamphlet, TBA is a non-profit, grass-roots organization composed of citizens who are concerned about private property rights in Arkansas and the United States. Their goals are to monitor the impact of law and regulation on private property, lobby for laws protecting private property rights, and seek "redress for abuses" of private property rights in Arkansas (Take Back Arkansas, membership pamphlet). TBA was a key opposition organization during the OMAB controversy.

proof of a United Nations-environmental conspiracy by many who had actively participated in stopping the OMAB nomination.<sup>3</sup>

The remaining two property rights seminars were sponsored by the Missouri Republican Assembly. One seminar, called Private Property Rights in Peril, took place in February of 1998 in Columbia, MO and the other, simply called Private Property Rights, was held in April 1998 in Festus, MO. At these conferences we were able to interact with conference attendees and some speakers, and heard key environmental/United Nations conspiracy experts, such as Henry Lamb publisher of *éco•logic*, talk about their beliefs and present their evidence.<sup>4</sup> Field notes were taken at conferences and were later transcribed and analyzed.

Information gathered through interviews and observations may have been impacted by timing of the research and the situational context. Our data were collected many years after the onset of the OMAB nomination process, and a short time after the height of the controversy. Therefore, both time and events likely had some impact on interviewees' memories of the experience and their ability to recall details. Further, interviewees' willingness to speak or speak candidly may have been affected by the ongoing political and social fallout, which continued well into 1997.

For these reasons, content analysis of documents was conducted to augment data collected from interviews and observations. Specifically, we collected and analyzed popular print media, correspondence/memorandums, Internet documents, official MAB

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<sup>3</sup> The OMAB nomination and Biosphere Reserves were important topics at this conference. Speakers at this conference included: Betty Beaver of Hot Springs, AR; David Bright of Harrison, AR; Arkansas State Senator Fay Boozman; Ed Manor of Jasper, AR; and Dan Lahrman of Gamiliel, AR.

<sup>4</sup> Other speakers included: Marge Welch of People for the U.S.A.; Ray Cunio of Citizens for Private Property Rights; John Robb, a farmer/land owner in Illinois; Norm Davis of Take Back Kentucky; Jack

publications, and a medley of papers, documents, and publications cited and recommended by OMAB proponents and opponents.

We sampled newspaper media coverage of the issue from May of 1997 to approximately October of 1997. From newspaper and magazine publications we collected articles, advertisements, and letters to the editor dealing with MABs, the OMAB nomination, or other issues related to the controversy. Print media materials were collected in several ways. Most materials were either provided to the researcher by interviewees and research contacts or obtained from newspaper publishers.

Our media collection focused on local Ozark papers in Missouri and Arkansas, but also included publications with regional, state, or national circulation. We gathered approximately 200 articles/published letters from 32 publications. For a complete list of newspapers sampled, see Appendix A.

Newspapers in Missouri in Arkansas were identified using the 1997 Press Association directories for both states. We selected newspapers published in regions where the controversy was the greatest, particularly Central-Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas. We wrote or called newspaper editors to inquire about whether they had published articles or letters associated with MAB. If they responded positively, we requested copies of the papers containing the stories or photocopies of the published materials. In some cases editors indicated that they could not easily gather and send such materials. When possible we traveled to those newspaper offices and gathered the information.

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Walters of the Missouri Republican Assembly (Columbia, MO); and Joel O'Connor of the Missouri Republican Assembly (Festus, MO).



In many cases, interviewees provided a quantity and variety of documents and publications pertinent to the Biosphere Reserve issue. We were fortunate in being allowed access to the accumulated files of correspondence, notes, memorandums, and clippings compiled by individuals connected with the nomination or interested in the controversy.

Internet documents were also examined in this research. From May to August of 1997, the Internet was periodically searched using key words and phrases associated the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program and, specifically, the Ozarks nomination attempt. Pertinent documents were downloaded or printed for analysis. Also, key Websites were identified and marked for periodic inspection to check for new postings. A list of URL's periodically accessed is found in Appendix A of this report.

Official US and UN MAB publications and documents were analyzed to gain an understanding of the official theoretical and practical meanings, intentions, and uses of a Biosphere Reserve. Such documents were also consulted to examine opponent claims and accusations regarding the OMAB and local implications of a designation. Finally, a variety of documents, publications, and videos were consulted because they were cited or recommended by OMAB opponents. See Appendix B for a list of opposition resources and materials.

### **The OMAB: A Brief Description and History**

In the following section we furnish background information on the nomination and process, and provide a brief timeline punctuating important events in both the nomination process and the ensuing controversy. The following overview of the OMAB issue is described with brevity by design. Here our goal is simply to familiarize the reader

with the places, times, and events of the Ozarks experience. Later chapters provide the reader with greater detail on critical events.

At this point it is important to note that, although attention to the history of the OMAB experience is necessary, it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a disinterested and exhaustive historical account of the issue. Instead, we focus on those factors, events, and circumstances especially related to the problems and controversies of the case study.

The OMAB nomination process, from idea inception to the demise of the nomination, spanned almost nine years. Much happened during those years both in terms of proponent planning activities and, later, opponent resistance. Because this research began after the demise of the proposed nomination, details surrounding the early history of the nomination process and, in some cases, the controversy were often lost to lapses in memory or turnover of steering committee representatives. However, drawing from interviews, documents, and publications we have tried to piece together an accurate history of both the nomination and the controversy.

The proposed bioregional boundary of the Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve was based on existing estimations of the Ozark Plateau physiographic province which includes extensive portions of Missouri and Arkansas, and, to a lesser extent, Oklahoma and Kansas (Faulkner and White 1991).<sup>5</sup> Within that larger region, the Steering Committee focused on two areas referred to as “study areas” or Biosphere Reserve sites, with boundaries defined in terms of the Buffalo, Current, and Eleven Point

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<sup>5</sup> According to Faulkner and White (1991:25) the exact boundary of the Ozarks was determined by consulting “natural divisions” maps. Such maps integrated a variety of criteria, such as “geologic substrate,

River watersheds (Faulkner and White 1991). Figure 1, taken from page twenty-nine of the *Feasibility Study for an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Cooperative* (hereafter *Feasibility Study*), shows the defined boundaries of both the Ozark Plateau and the proposed study areas.

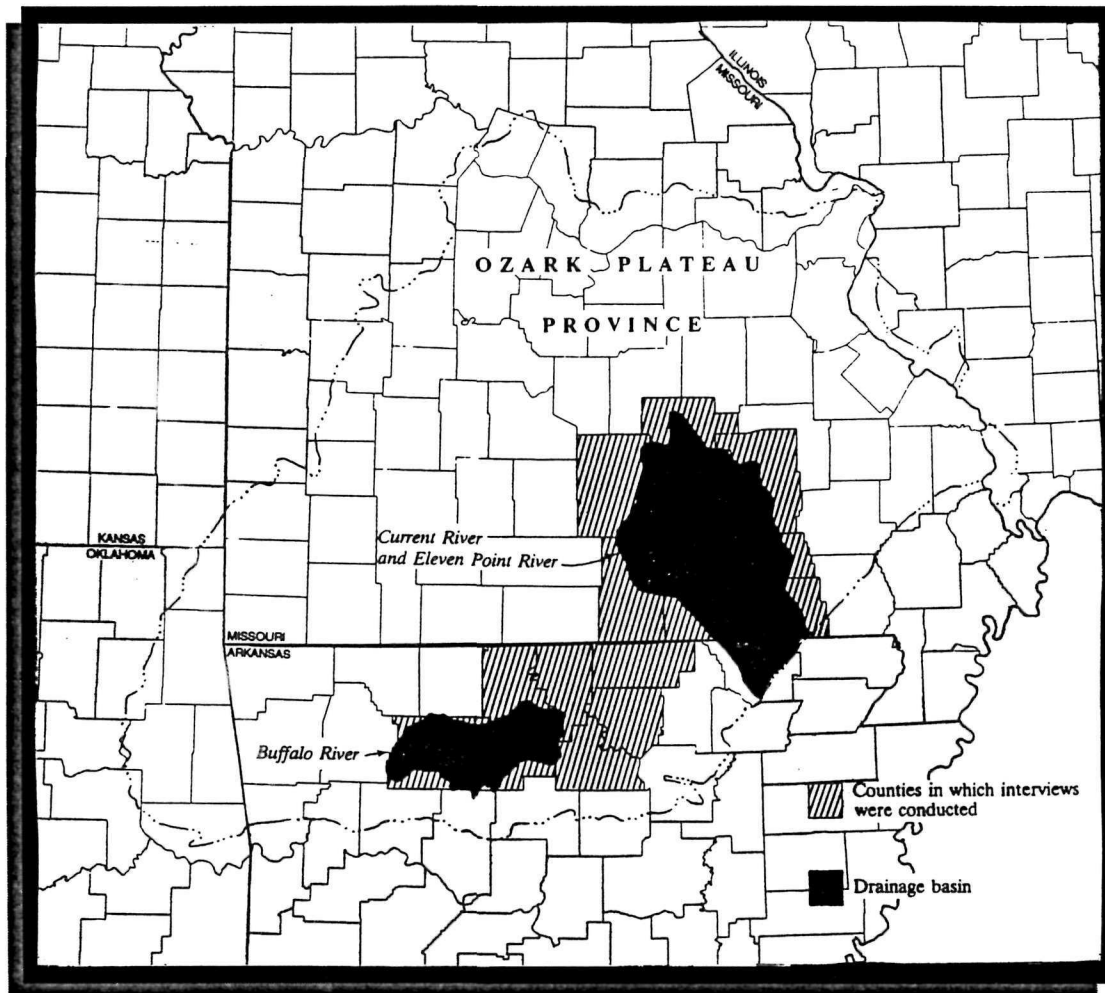


Figure 1: Boundary of the proposed Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve, including the study sites. [Reprinted from page 29 of the *Feasibility Study*.]

physiography, soil, vegetation, and distributions of native flora and fauna,” to determine the natural boundary of the Ozarks (Faulkner and White 1991).

According to a 1994 draft of the nomination proposal, some 82,840 hectares of land, including 79,772 hectares of publicly owned land held in trust by state and federal agencies and 3,068 hectares owned by the Nature Conservancy, would have been included in the OMAB core areas.<sup>6</sup> The zone or area of managed use, sometimes called the buffer zone, would have included 616,136 hectares of lands owned by both federal and state agencies.<sup>7</sup> According to the *Feasibility Study*, as well as Steering Committee members we spoke with, no privately or publicly held lands would have been included in either the core areas or manage use areas unless a landowner or manager chose to participate voluntarily in the MAB program (Faulkner and White 1991). Finally, the zone of cooperation or zone of transition would have included 13,545,576 hectares of mostly private lands. This area, according to the *Feasibility Study* (Faulkner and White 1991:15), would have focused on “education, training, and application of sustainable, conservation-minded resource development and use.” Steering Committee members we interviewed agreed that the zone of cooperation would not have been subject to additional laws or regulations as a consequence of the implementation of a Biosphere Reserve.

The idea of implementing an Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve (OMAB), occasionally referred to as the Ozark Plateau Man and the Biosphere Reserve, was first conceived in 1988 at a meeting sponsored by US MAB at Land Between the Lakes National Park in Kentucky. At this meeting, the “Man and Biosphere Selection

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<sup>6</sup> The proposed core areas would have included various land holdings of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, the Missouri Natural Areas Committee, the National Park Service, and the United States Forest Service. Federal Research Natural Areas and Federal Wilderness Areas would also have been included (Faulkner and White 1991:38-39).

<sup>7</sup> The proposed areas of managed use would have potentially included State of Arkansas lands, State of Missouri lands, Mark Twain National Forest, Ozark National Forest, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Buffalo National River, and private conservation and preservation lands (Faulkner and White 1991:39).

Committee was reviewing potential areas that might fit into the program (David Foster, personal interview).” According to David Foster, the first Steering Committee chair and the impetus for local action on the nomination,

[T]he U.S. Man and the Biosphere Program invited a number of different agencies in to talk about the potential of nomination of some areas or what the potential was in the interior highlands, which includes the Ozarks Highlands. (personal interview)

Foster, then with the National Park Service (NPS) at Ozark National Scenic Riverways, attended this meeting as the NPS Ozark region representative. He indicated that at the conclusion of this meeting,

[T]hey (US MAB) decided that it looked like the Ozarks Highlands should pursue [a nomination]. It looked like [the Ozarks] would fit well in the program. They didn’t have an area that represented this particular region at all within the program. That was their objective overall, to get a spread of areas that represented all the major natural regions of the country. (personal interview)

US MAB thus instigated the choice of the Ozarks as a potential candidate for Biosphere Reserve designation. After returning to Missouri, Foster began to ask natural resource agencies and environmental organizations about interest in establishment of a Biosphere Reserve in the Ozarks. He began to enlist the support of state and federal agencies, as well as some environmental organizations.

After the 1988 meeting, a steering committee formed. According to Foster, for four or five years after the inception of the nomination effort, committee members focused on gathering information and gaining knowledge necessary to carry out the nomination. Foster stated that tasks toward the completion of the nomination were completed intermittently, only as participants had time to devote to the nomination. He noted, “it was four or five years before we got to a point where we had enough

information, knowledge, and readings under our belts to sit down and say this is the kind of program that we think we should put together (David Foster, personal interview).”

During this period, the Committee spent a great deal of energy trying to hash out the details of the nomination. They focused on such tasks as articulating the overall mission and objectives of the program, agreeing on language and definitions used in the cooperative agreement, and determining the lands to be included in the Biosphere Reserve. In addition to meeting several times during this period, the Steering Committee kept the process going through correspondence and phone contacts.

Part of the information gathering process included the sponsorship of a feasibility study in 1991. Partially funded by US MAB, the purpose of this study was to determine the possibility and potential benefits of establishing a Biosphere Reserve in the Ozarks. When the *Feasibility Study* was commissioned, 28 individuals representing 16 agencies and organizations, or divisions within the same agencies, were listed as nomination sponsors. Participating agencies and non-governmental organizations were: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Buffalo National River, Mark Twain National Forest, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service-Midwest Region, National Park Service-Washington Office, Ozark National Forest, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Pioneer Forest, The Nature Conservancy-Arkansas, The Nature Conservancy-Headquarters, The Nature Conservancy-Midwest Region, The Nature Conservancy-Missouri, and Winrock International (Faulkner and White 1991:114).

The study declared the OMAB a possibility, concluding that the

...establishment of an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Cooperative is recommended. Private citizens and public agencies should become members of a



coordinating committee to establish and oversee the program and to identify the priority issues to be addressed. Participation by local residents will be key to such a program. (Faulkner and White 1991:6)

The Steering Committee embraced these positive findings and moved forward toward a nomination.

After completing most of the information gathering, the Steering Committee began to solicit the involvement of additional agencies and organizations they believed would be beneficial additions to the nomination process and established Biosphere Reserve. They wanted to include agencies and organizations having an interest in the OMAB and those that might further the goals of the program, including organizations managing natural resources and/or controlling land in the Ozarks. In 1992 the Committee invited Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT) to join the nomination effort. ORLT is a non-profit organization that manages donated Ozark land in order to conserve land and resources in the region. ORLT accepted the invitation and became the only regional, non-governmental organization to participate in the OMAB nomination.

In November of 1993, ORLT and Winrock International<sup>8</sup> sponsored the Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Bioregional Conference held in Harrison, AR, the headquarters of Buffalo National River National Park. At this meeting, speakers described the MAB program and discussed the proposed OMAB nomination.<sup>9</sup> This was

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<sup>8</sup> Winrock International is an international organization focused on "increasing agricultural productivity and rural employment while protecting the environment (Thompson 1998)."

<sup>9</sup> Speakers included: Dave Foster of the National Park Service, Ozark National Scenic Riverways; Hubert Hinote of the Southern Appalachian Biosphere Reserve; Tom Foti of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission; Dr. Donald E. Voth of the Department of Rural Sociology, University of Arkansas; Dr. Milton Rafferty of the Department of Geography, Geology, and Planning, Southwest Missouri State University; Dr. Robert Flanders of the Center for Ozark Studies and Professor of History, Southwest Missouri State University. Panel discussants included Andy Anderson of Ozark Scenic Rivers Partnership, Loring Bullard of the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, Gary Valen of the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Gregg Galbraith of ORLT, and Marck Van Patten of the Conservation Federation of Missouri.

the only public forum conducted in the region about the OMAB effort. Some Steering Committee members also reported giving talks about the proposed Biosphere Reserve to private groups and at other natural resource conferences during this period.

A draft of the *Biosphere Reserve Nomination Form* was completed in 1994. This document detailed the technical specifications of the OMAB, inventoried the natural and cultural assets of the region, enumerated proposed activities within, and described the benefits of the Biosphere Reserve. Agencies listed as contributors to the nomination were Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Buffalo National River—National Park Service; Ozark National Forest; The Nature Conservancy; Mark Twain Nation Forest; Missouri Department of Conservation; Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Ozark National Scenic Riverways—National Park Service; and Pioneer Forest (the land holdings of a private landowner in Missouri).

However, while awaiting feedback from Steering Committee members about the content of the nomination proposal and other documents, the process got off track. During the final stretch of the nomination process, Dave Foster, the Committee's first chairman and the driving force behind the nomination, retired. After Foster's retirement in late 1995, the nomination effort lullled for several months. George Oviatt of Buffalo National River took over the nomination effort the following year. According to Oviatt, the nomination proposal, OMAB mission statement, and the cooperative agreement document were all completed by the time he took over as chairman. All that was necessary to complete the nomination was a final review of these documents by OMAB Committee members and, if all was in order, signatures on the cooperative agreement. In an effort to see the project through to fruition, in July of 1996 Oviatt sent a letter to

participating agencies and organizations to inquire at to their interest in completing the nomination.

While the nomination lulled, opposition began to emerge and grow. Opponents in Missouri discovered the OMAB nomination after noting a citation to it in a Missouri Department of Conservation publication about the Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) program. By late summer of 1996, controversy over the nomination was well underway in Missouri and had spilled over into Arkansas. By fall of 1996, opponents in both states were fully engaged in writing letters, calling officials, and organizing community meetings to protest the proposed Biosphere Reserve.

Due to the controversy, most participating agencies responded to Oviatt's letter by declining further participation in the nomination process. In a letter to the editor published in November of 1996, in a variety of local newspapers, John Linahan, Superintendent of Buffalo National River, publicly stated "the program is not going forward due to controversy and potential impacts to ongoing programs (Linahan 1996)." Thus, by the close of 1996, the nomination was officially dead.

Although, for all intents and purposes, the nomination had been officially surrendered by late Fall, opposition efforts to stop the nomination intensified during this period and remained steady well into 1997. Publication of letters to newspapers and regional journals peaked in the Fall of 1996 through the Spring of 1997. Also, opponents continued to send letters to agency officials and lawmakers demanding that the nomination be halted. These efforts paid off in political arenas when federal, state, and local politicians took steps to stop what was already a deceased nomination effort.

Opponents held a series of public and town meetings during this time. The largest public meetings took place in Missouri in February and April of 1997, again long after the actual demise of the OMAB nomination.

In response to the continued rise of the anti-MAB fervor, officials from Buffalo National River and US MAB began to publicly address citizen concerns about the OMAB nomination. Attempts to alleviate concerns and address allegations about MABs and the OMAB nomination effort, however, were not very successful.

The whole Ozark experience left Steering Committee members and US MAB officials perplexed, frustrated, and amazed. Conversely, it left opponents angry, distrustful, and, most importantly, empowered. Fallout from the Ozarks experience was extraordinary. After successfully thwarting the OMAB nomination, opponents then turned their attention to various other natural resource programs, initiatives, and efforts, some of which were also abandoned by sponsoring agencies, such as MDC's Coordinated Resource Management Program. Also in the aftermath, local and state legislation was proposed, and in some county jurisdictions passed, banning Biosphere Reserves and other international and national natural resource programs. The MAB program was abandoned in the Ozarks with a tainted image amid a haze of unresolved questions and intensified resentments among some Ozark citizens.

In winter of 1996, Roger Soles, the US MAB Executive Director, contacted Dr. Sandy Rikoon of the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Missouri to enlist our help in determining what had happened in the Ozarks and, most importantly, to address why it happened. The goal of this research was to answer these questions.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The OMAB Steering Committee: Interest, Investment, and Choices**

Organizers must be committed if a program is to be successful, particularly when multiple agencies and organizations come together. Inter-agency cooperative efforts are never easy and difficulties are compounded when non-government organizations are added to the mix. Organizers of the OMAB nomination faced problems that arose from, and were magnified by, lukewarm support and tenuous commitment from sponsoring agencies and organizations.

#### **External Motivations and Internal Needs**

It appeared that the impetus to establish a MAB was externally, rather than internally motivated. The first Steering Committee Chairperson, David Foster, indicated that he and other agency representatives from various states were invited to attend a conference sponsored by the United States Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program. The 1988 meeting was held at the Land Between the Lakes recreational area in Kentucky. At this meeting US MAB officials pitched the MAB concept and Foster, then a representative from Ozark Scenic Riverways National Park in Missouri, was receptive to the idea. With the blessing of US MAB he began to scout for interested agencies and environmental organizations in Missouri and Arkansas. Largely through his efforts alone, the nomination effort began to take shape.

In the Ozarks, no agencies, organizations, or communities actively sought out the US MAB program of their own initiative. Many agency representatives we talked with reported limited familiarity with all aspects of the program. They had perhaps heard of

MAB in passing from time to time but had not actively investigated the program. It is not surprising then that the MAB program, specifically, was somewhat of an afterthought.

As one committee representative stated:

You have to understand, in 1990 and even in 1988 when this was established, the agencies weren't looking into [a] Man and the Biosphere. They were looking for a way to share data and they were looking for the vehicle that they could cooperatively work together. ... None of the, to my knowledge, agency heads started out saying let's meet and have a Man in the Biosphere.  
(George Oviatt, personal interview)

Agencies joined the nomination effort for various reasons, but for many the MAB designation was not a primary goal. Rather, MAB appeared to be an available and convenient way to further agency cooperation in management of local natural resources. OMAB participants wanted to focus on adopting the principles of sustainability. Most agencies wanted an opportunity to apply a holistic concept of management and to integrate socioeconomic and physical factors. Moreover, participants each had their own visions of how the MAB should work and what it could do for them in terms of improving their ability to successfully manage natural resources. For example, a Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) representative indicated that the Biosphere Reserve effort was essentially a way for the Park Service to develop a watershed based management strategy in order to improve water quality in the national parks (Ken Smith, personal interview).

In some cases, agency representatives stated that agency participation was largely non-voluntary. This was the case with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AG&F) who, by most accounts, were only half-hearted in their participation. A representative of AG&F reported that they became involved because they were obligated by state policy. He said,



Anything that will affect our responsibilities, which is managing fish and wildlife resources of the state, we always try to look in to. We're required really, to look at any kind of activities, projects, proposals, or whatever that will effect our operation. (Brent Connor, personal interview)

As the first Committee Chair confirmed, "Arkansas Game and Fish were invited [and], from the beginning, they were players off and on through the whole process. They were interested, but they weren't interested enough to have someone at every meeting (David Foster, personal interview)." Judging from conversations with AG&F representatives, the agency had no real ideological commitment or enthusiasm for the MAB program or the nomination effort.

In essence, agency participants regarded the prospective OMAB as something they could do to enhance their ability to manage resources. Or they viewed the nomination as yet another task they must do as a consequence of mandated responsibilities. In either case, the implementation of the OMAB was essentially a matter of agency business. The nomination had little to do with local communities and residents in terms of impact or benefits. They were simply passive beneficiaries of agency efforts to more effectively manage natural resources. The nomination was nothing extraordinary.

### **A Long Time in Coming**

The lengthy process of the nomination was a source of frustration for several committee representatives, and for many lay people. The considerable amount of time it took to put the nomination together contributed to troubles down the line. Organizations and agencies participating in the nomination process seemed to disappear from the picture between the time of initial activity in the late 1980's and the resurrection of the

nomination effort in 1996. Many agencies and organizations that sponsored the initial *Feasibility Study* did not continue as active members of the effort or took on negligible roles.

The vast span of time the process engulfed also made turnover of representatives an issue. Over the nomination's tenure, key committee members were lost and agency representatives were often replaced with new representatives unfamiliar with the MAB program and the history of the OMAB nomination. This turnover proved disruptive to the nomination effort in two ways: first, loss of organizational memory and experience; and second, loss of the key organizer.

In some cases, newly appointed agency representatives had only limited knowledge and understanding of the MAB concept and the OMAB nomination effort years after the nomination effort had been in full swing. Because most activity on the nomination process, including meetings and correspondence for example, occurred before 1994, representatives who came on board after this time had limited opportunities to participate fully. For example, the AG&F representative assigned to the OMAB in 1996 had never attended a Steering Committee meeting. During the course of our conversation, he remarked that "I'm not completely up on the program myself. I don't know all the little details. I'd like someone to explain the whole thing to me too (Brent Conner, personal interview)."

This individual's lack of familiarity with the program became a liability when the public controversy began. At that time he recommended that his agency hold off on signing the OMAB agreement until he could, "...look a little bit closer [at the program]. Because I wouldn't have gotten that many calls if there wasn't something, some problem

that we needed to know about (Brent Conner, personal interview).” Later in the interview he explained why he felt compelled to further investigate the MAB after the onset of controversy. When asked, “You were looking at the program? Looking to see if there was some sort of regulatory power that your agency hadn’t seen before?” He responded:

Yes, because if there were something, even [if it was] a federal agency trying to take private property. [Our] properties are for specific purposes. We as an agency hold these lands in public trust [and] we wouldn’t want the government, even the federal government, taking our lands for some other purpose. (Brent Conner, personal interview)

Representatives involved during the first five years of the effort had more opportunity to become familiar with the MAB concept and the OMAB nomination. Others were left to piece together an understanding and history from informal conversations and historical documents; that is, if they had the time and motivation to do so.

A second difficulty arising from the long duration of the nomination was the loss of its first leader. From the project’s inception, leadership in the nomination effort rested entirely with David Foster of Ozark National Scenic Riverways (ONSR). Participating agencies relied on Foster to motivate others and to keep the process going, a role that Foster maintained until his retirement in 1995. Even before his retirement, however, Foster de-intensified his role in the midst of the long nomination process. He was no longer the driving force committee members had grown accustomed to. Oviatt, the second Committee chairman stated,

My observation is the effort kind of waned from Dave Foster’s standpoint, given his increased workload. You have to realize he was given this job just like most others are. You know that’s not his primary focus. It kind of waxed and waned for about another year and then in late 1995 he announced his retirement. So,

from the time of his retirement to the time I picked it up there was really nothing done. All the agencies were just sitting back. Nobody was contacting anybody saying 'Where is this going?' (George Oviatt, personal interview)

The nomination effort suffered greatly with his retirement. Devin Shaw, a Southern Missouri journalist who covered the OMAB issue, suspected that Foster's untimely retirement "put the whole thing in limbo (personal interview)." In Shaw's opinion, if Foster had continued as Chairman "things would have either come to a head sooner or he would have done some PR stuff. [With] the proper kind of public notice to get people familiar with the program, ...it might have turned out differently (personal interview)." Steve Wright, a reporter for the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, conveyed this same sentiment to his readership writing, "If someone hadn't dropped the ball on this process, the Ozark Highland would be part of the MAB. And I promise you, no one in the Ozarks would know the difference (1996:B6)."

### **Agency Commitment**

The duration of the process and the retirement of its first chair, however, may not have proven problematic if the participating agencies and organizations had been more enthusiastic and committed to the nomination. Committee members were not strongly committed to, or intensely invested in, the project themselves. They participated when necessary, but relied on Foster to keep the nomination moving. Shaw observed,

Dave Foster was pretty much spearheading it and the others would just come to the meeting and just give their input. When Foster retired, these other agencies weren't picking up the ball. It was just something they were going to [do because] the Park Service asked them. (personal interview)

Committee representatives we talked to expressed no ownership of or responsibility for the OMAB effort. As though Foster were the only driving force, one

MDC representative commented it was Foster who “dropped the ball” in 1993 or 1994 when the OMAB nomination was coming together. Similar sentiments were expressed by an official from AG&F who remarked, “...my perception was that there was a waning of activity among the pushers [of the Biosphere program] (John Hunt, personal interview).” As the years passed and the pusher stopped pushing, the process fell dormant. Participating agencies, being bureaucratically ambivalent about the nomination, chose not to make any efforts to move the process along. As the nomination effort waned, agencies and organizations either tabled the effort or turned their attention to other concepts or programs.

Why did the process drag on so slowly? Aside from the general ambivalence from most participating agencies, lack of human resources and agency disagreements were culprits in lengthening the process. The stock answer given by agency informants dealt with lack of resources. Agencies and their representatives were participating in this effort while trying to continue meeting existing responsibilities of their own agencies and positions. For all involved, the OMAB effort was another responsibility on an already full plate. Foster remarked that the length of the nomination was not an indication of lack of interest, rather “[it was] by necessity a slow process. Nobody had resources to assign a person to it for six months and say ‘you guys sit down for six months or a year and crank this out (personal interview).’” The practical consequence of this situation was the difficulty in making time to work out the philosophical and technical issues. To complicate matters further, representatives present at meetings were often not those with decision-making or negotiating authority.

Differences in agency mandates and interagency competitiveness were additional obstacles. Shaw, an outsider to the nomination process, observed that “there was a lot of disagreement among the agencies [about] your agency-type concerns (personal interview).” Affirming this observation, a representative from the Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT), the only local, non-government organization involved with the nomination effort, cited agency disagreement and politicking as a hindrance toward a nomination.

He stated,

There’s a certain competitiveness and territorialness among government agencies. They all want to be the first to do anything. They want funding, they want recognition, they want political positioning. It’s a miracle this thing ever even happened in the Ozarks because they seemed to be holding back [saying], ‘but we got our own thing’ [and] ‘what’s in it for us to get involved.’  
(Ben Johnson, personal interview)

Agencies had difficulty working out the finer points of the nomination. There were difficulties surrounding issues of funding, coordinating, and staffing. Conflict also surrounded discussion over geographical inclusions of agency holdings, language of documents, and agency commitment and responsibility regarding management of resources within their jurisdiction.

Finally, participating agencies were concerned about their own reputations and standing with constituents. As one committee representative remarked, “there’s... fear that they (the agencies) [will be] guilty by association. ...[If one agency does something that draws criticism,] is that going to bring bad publicity for innocent agencies because they are associated with others (Ben Johnson, personal interview).” All of these concerns, coupled with limited resources, drew the process out. Agencies were uncomfortable with signing on to the cooperative. Inability to agree amongst themselves



and to efficiently work together toward a nomination surely contributed to the lack of commitment to the program once controversy began.

### **Who's In and Who's Out?**

Regardless of who 'dropped the ball' and why, nomination enthusiasm had certainly waned by the onset of opposition in 1996. In July of 1996, George Oviatt attempted to revive the stagnant process by sending letters out to determine if committee members were still interested in pursuing the nomination. Around this time, intense public opposition began to appear in regional print media and reports circulated through agency networks about the brewing storm. As opponent allegations and criticisms began to echo in the Ozarks, committee members sat up and took notice of these developments.

By late summer 1996, committee enthusiasm was nearly nonexistent. Most agencies and organizations involved with the nomination found the idea of defending the nomination against a storm of public criticism less palatable than abandoning an effort that had spanned nine years. Committee members had become very cautious. The decision to withdraw support from the project was not a difficult one according to Johnson from ORLT. He stated,

A lot of them were on the fence anyway. When the opposition started coming down, it pretty well slowed things down. ...Most of them said we [had] better wait and see where this goes. I think most of them just signed on it, and when [they] saw that opposition wasn't going away and [was] getting worse, they just declined. (Ben Johnson, personal interview)

Agencies and organizations offered a variety of reasons and rationales for their non-interest in continuing with the nomination effort. Some agencies cited bureaucratic issues and difficulties. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), for

example, opted out because they believed “...there are already mechanisms and programs in place to facilitate partnering and information sharing in this area of Missouri” and added that participation in the OMAB could not be a priority in the wake of recent staffing and funding declines (Moriarty, USFWS. Correspondence 9/5/96).

Many members, however, pointed directly to the growing presence of public and citizenry opposition. An official at the Ozark and St. Francis National Forest offered this reply to Oviatt’s inquiry,

[W]e felt it (a cooperative agreement) would only be successful if state and local governments along with interested citizens supported the effort. As you know we mutually funded a “Feasibility Study for an Ozark MAB Cooperative” in 1991 and it indicated support from the community and state leaders that were interviewed. In the 4 or 5 years since the study, there have been a lot of changes. Today, that support appears to be very weak to nonexistent (Neff, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests. Correspondence 9/12/96).

Similarly, the Nature Conservancy withdrew support due to the controversy saying:

[I]t is becoming clear that many people who live in the Ozarks do not now agree with such a broadly coordinated approach. They speak of “collusion” among agencies, fear of “outsiders” running their affairs, and fear of the United Nations oversight of local decision-making. The Nature Conservancy of Missouri does not share these concerns, but they are none-the-less real among many who live in the Ozarks and who will be most affected by MAB designation. Because of these feelings and because significant cooperation can still be achieved even without the MAB program, we have decided not to become a signatory member of the proposed cooperative. (Weier, Missouri Nature Conservancy. Correspondence 8/27/96)

Some agencies were concerned about retaining a positive agency image with local constituents and, rightly so, the potential risks to future and existing programs. MDC, for instance, openly expressed concern about maintaining rapport with constituents. This was probably of particular importance at this time because of agency efforts to establish their own cooperative management program, Coordinated Resource Management.

Regarding agency concern about maintaining relationships with constituents, an MDC official wrote,

Until local citizens in the Ozark region embrace such a concept [MAB], we feel it would be counter-productive for MDC to fully participate. We have slowly gained ground in working with local groups and community leaders in the Ozark region. Anything that would jeopardize these relationships and the progress made is not in the best interest of the agency or resources we are responsible for managing. (Zekor, MDC. Correspondence 8/2/96)

Similarly, AG&F openly reported being concerned about unwanted impacts to other agency business at the time of the controversy. Specifically, they were concerned about the 1/8 cent sales tax initiative going to Arkansas voters later that fall. Monies from the tax initiative, which ultimately did pass, were to benefit natural resource management and conservation efforts in the state.

Regardless of concerns about continued citizen support, many agencies had to contend with intense political pressure. Opponents aggressively lobbied local, state, and federal politicians to take measures to halt the OMAB nomination. Due to opponent efforts, state and federal agencies experienced direct political pressure to withdraw from the OMAB nomination effort. For example, a letter sent by Arkansas Governor Huckabee to Linahan, Superintendent of Buffalo National River, informed Linahan that,

Overall, I do not support this concept. I feel the citizens of Arkansas, especially those in Northwest Arkansas, were not given enough information and opportunity to participate in the discussion and planning of such a concept. I have serious concerns about private property rights and believe that this project is not in the best interest of the citizens of Arkansas at this time. (Huckabee, Governor of Arkansas. Correspondence 11/4/96)

As opponent voices reached government officials, politicians from both states and at all levels of governments jumped on the 'stop the OMAB bandwagon' by publicly denouncing the program and the effort. On the federal level, most notably, Congressional

Representatives Jo Ann Emerson and Tim Hutchinson became politically and publicly involved in the controversy. In response to citizen complaints, Emerson publicly vowed to fight against the OMAB and other threats to the Constitution, sovereignty, and Ozark private property rights (Emerson 1997). Both Emerson and Hutchinson wrote letters to MAB and/or National Park Service Officials denouncing the program and demanding a halt to the already dropped nomination. After discovering that the nomination process had come to an end, Emerson was quoted as saying,

[A]fter a groundswell of opposition and strong grassroots on the part of property owners throughout our region, the proposed Ozark Highlands Man and Biosphere has been dropped. However, that is not to say that future proposals will not emerge that could again potentially pose problems for private landowners throughout my Congressional district and the nation. (*Standard News* 1997:1)

State agencies were particularly vulnerable to opponents' anti-OMAB conquests in political spheres. In fact, Arkansas agencies ultimately had no power to decide if they would participate in the OMAB nomination. The governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, in response to citizen complaints, issued a memo to State agencies ordering them to refrain from involvement in the OMAB effort until his office staff could investigate program. Rusty Garret, a reporter for the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, reported to readers that "Apparently the news of growing unrest over the plan got to Gov. Mike Huckabee, who early this week ordered state agencies to hold off on signing letters expressing their support for the application (1996:A1)."

For obvious reasons, the political nature of the growing controversy would have made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for agencies to continue supporting the nomination effort. Opponents had the ears of politicians who either sympathized with opponents' assertions or who saw an opportunity to use a high-profile issue to either

placate or win the hearts of potential voters. In any event, as the controversy became intensely political it was no surprise that members begged out, remained silent, or tried to distance themselves from the effort. Those agencies having the most to lose in a political firestorm, primarily state agencies, fled the scene leaving only those who had less to lose.

The manner in which some agencies retreated, however, was not very flattering to either the agencies themselves or the OMAB nomination effort in general. While most OMAB Committee members dropped the effort without a word, at least two agencies tried to minimize, or arguably deny, any previous involvement in the effort. For example, opponents pointed to the withdrawal of AG&F as proof of guilt regarding a government conspiracy surrounding the nomination. Anyone who visited the Take Back Arkansas Web Page could read agency correspondence that allegedly indicated a government cover-up of the OMAB-UN conspiracy.<sup>1</sup>

Opponents triumphantly pointed to an internal AG&F office memorandum that allegedly proved agency intentions to purposely lie and mislead the public about the OMAB nomination. The memo stated in part:

The Game and Fish Commission was invited to the meeting, and a staff member attended. He listened, returned home, and that was the only participation of Game and Fish in the Biosphere idea. We have never considered, proposed, projected or even thought of joining something along the line of this Biosphere. Anyone trying to tie us to it is just barking up the wrong tree. Again, it's just a rumor. (Wilson, S., Arkansas Game and Fish interagency memorandum 10/23/96)

This memo was circulated after the agency had already sent one letter to Buffalo National River supporting the program, and then three weeks later sent a second letter requesting the return of the first. This memo taken in conjunction with the letters written to Buffalo

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<sup>1</sup> The URL for Take Back Arkansas is: <http://www.users.nwark.com/~tbark/mab/mab.html> At this site the user can view a series of correspondence between Buffalo National River, Arkansas Game and Fish, and

National River seemed to indicate the agency's desire to deny any participation in the OMAB nomination effort. An employee of AG&F indicated that the October memo, although "too flippant," was simply a way of notifying employees that the agency was no longer involved in the OMAB nomination (John Hunt, personal interview).

Unfortunately, the general public's perception of this seemingly absurd response to public controversy attributed one of two motivations for such behavior. Either the agency lied and tried to cover-up their involvement because they had something to hide, which is what most opponents perceived, or, as expressed by an Ozark journalist, agencies were "cowering in the corner because of some off-the-wall theory (Wright 1996:B6+)."

AG&F was not the only agency that attempted to publicly distance itself from the controversy by minimizing its involvement in the OMAB. In a press release responding to opponent accusations, the new director of MDC, Jerry Conley, was quoted as saying, "While we've been well acquainted with the MAB program from public documents, meetings, and communications over the years, we've never endorsed it (Conley 1997)." Without debating the meaning of the word 'endorse,' it suffices to say that the MDC's motivation to publish the press release was much the same as that which motivated other participants to back away. They wanted the politically hot issue off their plate and as far away from the table as they could reasonably expect it to go.

Backing off from the nomination may have alleviated some difficulties faced as a result of public and political pressure at the time of the controversy. However, agencies may ultimately have to pay a higher price in terms of future credibility with local

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the Governor of Arkansas (Mike Huckabee). These documents allegedly show the activity and subsequent government cover-up of OMAB.



communities. As indicated earlier, the manner and rate of participant withdrawal from the nomination was continually cited as proof that agencies were hiding something and that the program was detrimental to local citizens. One vocal OMAB opponent crowed, "When the public and elected officials started taking a look at this program, it was dropped like a hot potato. Why? Obviously it can't stand the scrutiny (Middleton 1996b:4A)."

Despite the controversy, two private organizations and two federal agencies chose to stay. Continued support stemmed from a dedication to the MAB program concept, a desire to see cooperative efforts established in the Ozarks, and a desire to avoid setting precedence of effortlessly giving in to opposition pressures. Ozark Regional Land Trust and Buffalo National River, both expressed this third reason for continued support of the nomination effort. A letter from ORLT stated,

It would appear that the fate of MAB in Missouri is in doubt or at least facing rough waters. The ORLT board feels very strongly that we should not back down from what is right just because the issue is too hot. While we do not intend to take a public platform in the debate, we do believe we should not give ground to the wise use movement (Ozark Regional Land Trust. Agency Correspondence to Buffalo River, 5/5/96).

The undaunted support of a few groups was not enough, however, to continue the nomination effort. The effort failed as committee members withdrew and distanced themselves from the MAB program. Perhaps as one committee representative put it, the OMAB project was "a well intentioned endeavor that may have been doomed to failure because there simply [was] not [enough] invested in it...desire, money, and people (Mark Birk, personal interview)."

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Agencies and organizations participating in the OMAB nomination effort lacked interest and commitment to the MAB concept in general, and the OMAB effort in particular. The idea to form an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Reserve originated outside of the region. Perhaps participants continued to view the effort as external to them; there was no sense of ownership and investment. This lack of commitment manifested itself as ambivalence toward the nomination process. Participants failed to actively work toward a nomination in the absence of a motivated leader. Further, they readily abandoned the effort when opposition erupted.

Agencies pursued or, perhaps, went along with the MAB program primarily because they perceived it as a vehicle to enhance cooperative management efforts. They were focused on how an Ozark MAB could make their jobs managing resources easier, more efficient, and more effective. These goals are, of course, both logical and legitimate. However, we were left with the impression that most committee members were interested in the MAB program only insofar as it accomplished existing management goals. Such management-type goals could, however, certainly be accomplished through other programs, efforts, and initiatives. Ozark natural resource managers did not necessarily need an OMAB to achieve them.

There was no substantial commitment to other critical components of a MAB, particularly the social, economic, and community components. For these reasons, it was no surprise that participating agencies were ambivalent about the nomination effort from its inception to well after its demise. The only surprise comes when one contemplates why the effort took nine years and a public controversy to fail.

What could have been done to avoid the outcome of the OMAB insofar as agencies and organizations were concerned? An obvious recommendation is, of course, for participating agencies and organizations to be on board ideologically and practically. It is critical that a vast undertaking involving multiple public and private participants begin with members committed to both the MAB concept and the process necessary to achieve it. Agencies, organizations, *and communities* must want a MAB in their area. More important, they must each be willing to work toward that end separately and as a collective.

Participating agencies, groups, and organizations should appoint agency representatives that are authorized to speak with authority and meaningfully participate in nomination activities and discussions. If representatives are not able to negotiate and act on behalf of their agency, group, or organization without continually following a bureaucratic chain of command, the process becomes drawn out and decisions are made by those who are not actively involved in the process. However, commitment and enthusiasm are only helpful if the effort is well organized and directed. To this end, a facilitator would be helpful during the initial stages of the process and after the committee and agenda are successfully defined, the guidance and dedication of a nomination coordinator could see the process through to fruition.

When agencies, organizations, and communities come together to pursue a MAB designation, it might be beneficial for a newly established committee to seek guidance from an outside facilitator. At the nomination's inception, a facilitator would aid participants in identifying critical players and stakeholders, forming unified goals and objectives, and, finally, choosing a nomination coordinator. The facilitator can ensure

that critical activities are completed in the early stages of the process, thereby avoiding complications down the road.

The facilitator should be impartial to participants and neutral toward the region and effort. The facilitator must help participants identify all critical players and stakeholders so that they may be included or represented in the nomination. If, for example, community, business, or special-interest groups within affected areas were not present, the facilitator would point this out to the committee. Also, an impartial and unimpassioned facilitator can help participants articulate their own agendas at the outset and then mediate negotiations as the committee establishes goals and objectives. This is necessary so that no one participant is able to dominate the process by single-handedly shaping the nomination. Participants will take more ownership over the effort if they are able to contribute to articulation of the goals and objectives, rather than perceiving it as someone else's effort.

The MAB program is complex organizationally and conceptually and, therefore, a facilitator must be knowledgeable about its conceptual and pragmatic dimensions if she or he is to provide guidance and advice. This is particularly true if participants themselves are unfamiliar with the program and concept. Moreover, cooperative efforts on this scale are laborious and can be daunting to participants that have never attempted them. A facilitator can ease difficulties by advising the committee and pointing out potential problems or issues and establishing a schedule of tasks and activities.

The final contribution a facilitator can make is in guiding a process for selection of a nomination coordinator. The role of the facilitator is temporally limited to the formation of the committee and early steps of the process. If the facilitator does not

continue as the nomination coordinator, she or he would help the committee choose someone to serve in that capacity and then, perhaps, act as a consultant during later stages of the nomination. Regardless, the appointment of a nomination coordinator would greatly improve the chances of a nomination being successfully completed.

There are practical limits to what a group can do if each participant has extensive obligations and responsibilities outside of the targeted activity. Agency representatives often stated that it would have been ideal to have a full-time OMAB coordinator. A project of this magnitude was difficult for agency personnel to coordinate and keep up with. The OMAB Committee heavily relied on Foster and then Ovaatt to keep the process moving. Unfortunately, these individuals were unable to devote even a majority of their attention to coordinating the nomination. Like other committee members, they took on this project in addition to their regular positions and responsibilities.

One lesson drawn from the OMAB experience is that such an effort requires the dedication and energy of at least one individual to guide the process. A coordinator is necessary to ensure that a MAB nomination is effectively and efficiently coordinated, planned, and executed, and all in a timely manner. The presence of a coordinator, however, should not encourage or justify passivity in participants. As indicated earlier, it is very important for participants to be involved and invested. However, a coordinator could pay attention to the details of the program and process, do the proper community outreach, set timetables and deadlines, and divvy up tasks and responsibilities among participants. With one individual focused solely on a MAB nomination, critical efforts to include, represent, and inform citizens, local governments, and communities would,

hopefully, not be overlooked or put off due to pragmatic constraints. This attention to process might have made all the difference in the world for the OMAB nomination effort.

To reduce the risk of participants becoming passive and letting one individual bear the nomination process, the formation of sub-committees is a common strategy for keeping participants involved. Most importantly, with this organizational strategy nomination participants and the coordinator could ensure that all important issues and components of the nomination are adequately addressed and that none are overlooked or postponed. In the OMAB process, there were many issues that the Committee had to wrangle over throughout the nomination process, for example technical issues like wording of documents and land inclusions. Further, there were issues that the Committee should have dealt with but did not, including community participation and information.

While the formation of sub-committees would increase the workload of sub-committee chairpersons, the outcome of the OMAB case study suggests the benefits would outweigh those costs. Sub-committees could focus on specific issues or components of the nomination and process whereas a single committee can only superficially address all issues. An added benefit of a sub-committee organizational framework is creating avenues for more meaningful input and participation from interested and affected groups, organizations, or individuals--particularly those within the locality.

To further aid participants in successfully mounting a MAB nomination, regular communication between the nominating committee and the US MAB agency would be beneficial. It should be an interactive and iterative process. When the OMAB nomination was first conceived, there were no formal US MAB nomination guidelines.

To our knowledge, there are at this time no formal procedures that nomination committees must follow for development of a nomination proposal. US MAB does not officially become involved until the nomination proposal is submitted for acceptance. This is unfortunate because US MAB has a vested interest in making sure MAB nomination efforts and designations are accomplished positively and effectively for participants, regions, and communities.

The MAB concept is commendable in that it is one of the few natural resource programs that attempts to incorporate cultural, social, and economic factors in the ecosystem management equation. If, however, critical components are overlooked in the nomination process or implementation of a MAB, the effectiveness and reputation of the US MAB program in general is negatively impacted. As the OMAB experience keenly indicates the reality is that US MAB, and even UN MAB, are impacted regardless of the status or outcome of a nomination effort and level of official involvement from US or UN program entities. Therefore, it is in the best interest of US MAB to take an active role in the nomination stage of a Biosphere Reserve designation attempt.

There are several ways US MAB can become more involved in the nomination process without negatively impacting the autonomy of those pursuing nominations, negating the local vision of a MAB designation, or creating extensive involvement or oversight from the US MAB. First, US MAB could greatly improve the chances of a nomination succeeding by providing MAB hopefuls with some formal guidelines or procedures for completing and submitting a nomination. Such procedures could require certain activities be accomplished, including community outreach and inclusion.



Also, formal procedures could help nomination hopefuls set timelines and goals by requiring an initial prospectus and interim reports on accomplishment of goals necessary to ensure the successful designation of a Biosphere Reserve. Benefits of this type of proactive involvement would be twofold. First, MAB hopefuls would get the guidance they need to successfully complete a nomination proposal, in a timely manner. Second, US MAB could ensure nomination committees' adequately address all components of a MAB, thereby assuring citizens and officials that each Biosphere Reserve in the United States has been nominated and designated in the letter and spirit of the program.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Community Role, Awareness, and Involvement**

The community dimension of the OMAB nomination effort was the Achilles' heel of the Ozarks program. The OMAB experience underscores the importance of actively and aggressively including the residents of local communities in the formulation of management and conservation efforts. Two central problems with the community dimension of the OMAB nomination process emerged from this research. The first was the vagueness and ambiguity surrounding the role, responsibilities, and benefits of local communities and citizens in a Biosphere Reserve. The second and most important problem was the exclusion of local communities and citizens throughout the nomination process.

#### **The Community Dimension**

The official US and UN Man and Biosphere Reserve literature, as well as the OMAB Steering Committee representatives interviewed, described the Man and Biosphere Reserve Program as conceptually unique. In its ideal form, Biosphere Reserves are "firmly rooted in the social, cultural, and economic fabric of its associated communities (US MAB 1994:16)." As indicated in this statement released to a Fayetteville newspaper UNESCO believes that,

The human dimension of Biosphere Reserves makes them special, since the management essentially becomes a "pact" between the local community and society as a whole. Such an approach requires patience and imagination. But it will allow the local community to be better placed to respond to external political, economic and social pressures, which would affect the ecological and cultural values of the area. (*Northwest Arkansas Times* 1996:B5)

Unlike natural resource programs that exclude, ignore, or give little attention to human impacts and needs, the Biosphere Reserve program seeks to synthesize the ecological and cultural dimensions of resource management (Kellert 1986). This type of natural resource management, where the human dimension is reincorporated into management ideals, is promulgated as benefiting both the ecosystem and society (Kellert 1986).

A primary objective in establishing a Biosphere Reserve is for local communities to “derive tangible benefits” from participating in the program (US MAB 1994:16). US MAB literature offers a laundry list of tangible benefits that can be accrued by local communities, from employment opportunities to international recognition.<sup>1</sup> However, most of the enumerated benefits are abstract possibilities and leave no assurances with local communities as to how they will be achieved or realized.

Community benefits reported by Steering Committee representatives were even more abstract and, in some cases, difficult to link to direct, positive impacts. Committee members discussed community benefits in terms of improved agency ability to manage resources. This improvement would arise as a result of increased access to research funding or through the enhanced ability of agencies to participate in cooperative management. A typical scenario presented by OMAB supporters was that as a consequence of improved resource management strategies, a corresponding improvement in the quality of Ozark natural resources, water for example, might be expected. An improvement in quality of natural resources was frequently reported as the most

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<sup>1</sup> According to U.S. MAB local communities can expect to accrue tangible benefits from participation in the Biosphere Reserve Program. Those benefits projected include: “international recognition, a stronger voice in environmental management, better access to scientific information, employment opportunities, enhanced valuation of traditional uses and cultural integrity, improved access to financial and technical resources, and opportunities to create partnerships that enable stakeholders to educate each other on the benefits of integrating conservation and development (US MAB 1994:16).”

significant benefit Ozark communities would have realized from an OMAB designation.

In addition to improving the quality of Ozark natural resources, an OMAB designation would have also facilitated community education on improved strategies for natural resource use, management, and conservation. Participation in the MAB program meant new avenues of funding for agencies and, as a result, increased opportunities to consolidate and streamline research agendas. By coordinating and increasing research efforts resource managers could gather information which could then be transmitted to the public through education. A representative from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission described this potential benefit saying,

I think the direct benefit we hoped we would find for the community was an improved quality of life for people. They'd have a better understanding of their environment, the environment that they live in and the impact they have on it and it has on their lives. So that they can make better decisions about how they relate to it and interact with it... and use... utilize the environment in which they live.  
(Mark Birk, personal interview)

Whether Steering Committee members envisioned community benefits springing from natural resource enhancement or dissemination of information, they undoubtedly expressed good intentions toward the public. However, such benefits were largely indirect and perhaps not obvious to the general public.

Agencies found the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program attractive because it facilitated intra-agency, cooperative management of Ozark resources. One Committee representative stated, "...far more can be accomplished in [the] area of conservation of our resources, wise utilization of resources, and informing and educating the public if diverse agencies work together (Mark Birk, personal interview)." Although cooperative management is undoubtedly a worthwhile goal, the OMAB cooperative was focused

principally on natural resource agencies and, to a lesser degree, environmental organizations, to the virtual exclusion of private landowners and local communities.

It seems likely that Ozark citizens would have indirectly benefited from an OMAB designation as a result of enhanced agency ability to understand and manage natural resources. However, the idea that a Biosphere Reserve in the Ozarks would be the type of “pact” that would accommodate the views and needs of local citizens, as expressed by local citizens, was not borne out in this research. Rather, community benefits would be accrued principally through a type of ‘trickle down’ impact that starts with improved agency management. Consequently, the role of Ozark citizens in the nomination process was reduced to one of passive recipients, rather than active participants.

By and large, agencies did not pursue a Biosphere Reserve nomination in search of increased opportunities to engage communities in participatory or collaborative efforts. Instead, agencies sought the designation so that they could do their existing jobs more effectively. The resultant nomination process reflected this bias.

The role of local communities in the nomination effort was vaguely understood and ambiguously described by those on the Steering Committee. The clearest description of the expected community role in the OMAB nomination effort came from the 1991 *Feasibility Study*. According to this study, the seventh objective of the OMAB effort was to facilitate and promote “local participation in the management of biosphere reserves (Faulkner and White 1991:12).” In general, while it is evident that potential community benefits were expected from the establishment of a local Biosphere Reserve, it was

equally evident that community participation and cooperation should have formed a necessary component of the plan.

Literature on the MAB program and the *Feasibility Study* indicate that local communities must bear at least some of the responsibility, albeit voluntary, if Biosphere Reserve goals are to be achieved, particularly in the transition area. US MAB operationalizes the general MAB goals of conservation, development, and cooperation (logistic support) in very local ways. A 1996<sup>2</sup> US MAB publication identified the three purposes of the program:

- 1) To encourage local residents to maintain the variety of plants and animals representative of the region;
- 2) To promote economic and cultural development for generations to come and;
- 3) To foster cooperation among residents and landowners to plan research, development, conservation, and environmental education activities of the area. (US MAB 1996)

These goals are inclusive of the local community. Further, from these goals, it appears that a MAB intends to encourage citizens to take an active role in the program. Through this participation, they become benefactors of the program.

The 1994 draft of the *Biosphere Reserve Nomination Form* indicated that some 13,545,576 hectares of largely private land was to be included in the transition area or the zone of cooperation. While no regulations or laws would have mandated landowner participation in the Biosphere Reserve, the *Feasibility Study* indicated that this area would emphasize "...education, training, and application of sustainable, conservation-

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<sup>2</sup>Most of the official MAB publications examined for this research, particularly those pertaining to local communities and Man and Biosphere Reserves, were published after the inception of the Ozark Highland Biosphere Reserve nomination effort (1988). It must be noted that the OMAB Steering Committee obviously did not have access to these official U.S. and U.N. publications for most of the nomination process. However, we include analysis of these documents because they were, for the most part, made widely available to the public when opposition to the OMAB effort began to publicly surface in the media. For this reason, we assume that the information in these more recent documents is an accurate representation of official sentiments at the inception and throughout the OMAB nomination effort.

minded resource development and use (Faulkner and White 1991:15).” Such activities planned to apply “directly to the needs of local communities (Faulkner and White 1991:15).”

Although US MAB and OMAB rhetoric obviously indicates a place for local communities in the OMAB program, it remains unclear what role citizens and communities are actually supposed to take in the formation, designation, or implementation of a Biosphere Reserve or how they will be asked to participate. Moreover, it is not clear when communities are supposed to become an important component of the Biosphere Reserve, whether their voices are to be heard before or after the establishment of the Biosphere Reserve.

### **Community Dimensions of the OMAB Nomination Process**

The Steering Committee had the task of deciding if, when, and how local communities were to be included in the Ozark nomination effort. One committee member explained the complexity of such a decision and the rationale of agencies,

The government agencies basically did not want to make the MAB program inclusive because it was a hot potato. You get a bunch of citizens on this main steering committee who had votes [and] who knows what issues might come up. [The] government agencies may have issues with each other, but they're rather civil about [it]. They know each other's territory [and] only really deal with those issues when they're having direct confrontations. The citizens are not nearly so disciplined as this. They say whatever the hell they want. [If] the MAB committee [were] made of citizens and non-profits, you have [a] property rights person and a hard-core environmental activist sitting here and a governmental agency here, and they are both yelling at the agency. One [says] you should do this and the other saying you should do the opposite. [The agencies] didn't want to be in that position. So, they did want to run MAB the way it was designed, but they were going to do it very slowly, get comfortable with each other [first]. (Ben Johnson, personal interview)



The difficulties of working with stakeholders to achieve a MAB in the Ozarks did not escape the Steering Committee. As a result, they wanted to postpone community and citizen involvement until after the designation. The Committee's desire to keep the process running smoothly served to deny to Ozark citizens accessible opportunities to participate in or become informed about the nomination effort throughout the tenure of the nomination process.

OMAB opponents became aware of the scantiness of Steering Committee public outreach efforts and viewed efforts made to inform and include the public as feeble and not in good faith. Opponents expressed the belief that they had been ignored and disenfranchised by those pursuing the nomination, claiming they had been purposely excluded from the process. One opponent wrote, "Mr. Linahan and MAB supporters tried to slip this program in without the knowledge or consent of the citizens or elected officials of the state of Arkansas. We were never given the opportunity to volunteer or cooperate (Middleton 1996c:4A)."

Ozark citizens who voiced opposition to the OMAB were angry at having been ignored and excluded from what seemed to opponents to be a rather substantial natural resource program. One representative of Take Back Arkansas remarked that opponents of environmental programs are not anti-environmental or anti-government. Rather, they resent being excluded from decisions on if and how environmental programs are implemented in their communities. Such top down policy is particularly provoking if new programs or initiatives are believed to carry regulations or mandates for property owners and resource users.

The OMAB nominating committee did solicit some public comment. From the perspective of the agencies on the steering committee, the initial feasibility study and the 1993 Harrison conference were the major vehicles for community inclusion during the nomination process. The *Feasibility Study for an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Reserve* was viewed as the primary avenue of incorporating community interests and needs during the nomination process. The decision to continue with the nomination was based on study findings.

Early in the nomination process Committee members expressed concern about the possibility of opposition to what might be perceived as “another government program” in the Ozarks (White and Faulkner 1991:42). They anticipated opposition from Ozark locals who harbored anti-government sentiment. The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission representative stated, “we were concerned that before we got very far along that opposition to the project would develop. Uninformed, but early opposition (John Hunt, personal interview).” In spite of these obstacles, the Committee was desirous of gauging community support of the MAB program and its concepts. However, they wanted to do it in a way that avoided the untimely expression of opposition sentiments and conflict over a program that may or may not be pursued. The *Feasibility Study* was designed to accomplish both goals, to gauge the possibility of establishing a Biosphere Reserve, while minimizing the risk of early opposition.

The research was conducted by Ecological Services, a private research and assessment organization located in Urbana, Illinois. In relation to community linkages, the *Feasibility Study* was to accomplish two tasks. The first task was to determine the needs of local communities, and assess the ability of an OMAB to fulfill those needs.

Second, it was deemed necessary to determine the receptivity of Ozark citizens to the OMAB concept.

The *Feasibility Study* indicates that 90 community leaders were interviewed in Missouri and Arkansas, although the study lists the names of only 86 interviewees (Faulkner and White 1991:43). The study sample was compiled by the OMAB steering committee and supplemented by the researcher. It was considered representative of the various community interests in the Ozarks including: political, conservation and development, private landowners, business, and recreation and environmental protection interests (White and Faulkner 1991:42.) The interviewer met face-to-face with fifty-two individuals and interviewed another thirty-four by telephone.<sup>3</sup>

The research strategy was to discover attitudes toward the ‘components’ of the MAB program concept. That is, the interviewer’s primary goal was to record respondents’ opinions toward the general concepts “embodied” in the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program rather than impressions of the program itself (White and Faulkner 1991). Unfortunately, it is unclear from the *Feasibility Study* which MAB concepts were described to which respondents and how they were presented.

The interviewer asked questions centered on the general philosophy of MAB, but only named the program or an intention to nominate the Ozarks if she believed the respondent would not “overreact to the program (White and Faulkner 1991:42).” This strategy was considered necessary by the Steering Committee to get an unbiased sense of potential public support of the program. One Committee representative stated:

We tried to devise a way to identify the public’s views on what we were proposing to do without tagging a name on it. Instead of going in and biasing

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the research methods see pages 42 and 43 of the *Feasibility Study for an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Cooperative*.

someone automatically by saying, ‘We are considering a Man and Biosphere Project, what do you think of it?’ (Mark Birk, personal interview)

Therefore, Ecological Services personnel were asked to generally address program intentions and possible accomplishments, while trying to “get feedback from people, citizens, businesspeople, politicians, and community leaders about the communities and what should be done to help [them] (Mark Birk, personal interview).”

In addition to not labeling the MAB program in interviews with unreceptive respondents, Ecological Services, in conjunction with the Steering Committee, opted to not hold public meetings during the period of the *Feasibility Study*. Public meetings were avoided because they “tend to polarize views of the public and may capture negative attention from the press (White and Faulkner 1991:43).” Again, this precaution was taken to avoid arousal of anticipated local opposition while trying to assess the possibility of pursuing the MAB designation in terms of appropriateness and general public receptivity.

The *Feasibility Study* findings were considered indicative of positive community sentiments toward an OMAB. The study concluded that there was “almost universal acceptance of the concepts embodied in the Man and Biosphere Program (Faulkner and White 1991:6).” Many people had expressed support for MAB concepts, and the name of the program had even been disclosed to some individuals interviewed. Because the program had not necessarily been disclosed during the study, researchers recommended that the Steering Committee immediately begin public outreach, soliciting public support (Faulkner and White 1991).

Efforts to avoid or postpone the rise of early and uninformed opposition worked against the nomination in the Ozarks. While it may have hindered opposition in the early

stages of the nomination, it complicated matters when citizens finally came out against the proposal. Opponents' claimed that strategies employed by the Committee were evidence of intentions to conceal the program and deceive the public.

OMAB opponents attacked the *Feasibility Study* on three fronts. First, opponents viewed the Committee decision to not conduct public hearings as indicative of the agencies' desire to keep the public unaware of the nomination project. In a letter to the editor in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, Ed Manor (1997:8B), a fairly visible OMAB opponent, indicated that Committee efforts were secretive and calculated and he used as evidence the fact that public meetings were intentionally avoided during the period of the *Feasibility Study*. The nomination process was seen by Manor as taking place in the "back room" while citizens were kept in the dark (Manor 1997:8B).

David Bright, another OMAB critic cited text from the *Feasibility Study* accusing the Steering Committee of intentionally avoiding notification of local citizens. He called on agencies to "hold public meetings to answer questions about MAB in each of the counties targeted in the "*Feasibility Study*" (Bright 1996:2)." The Committee's effort to avoid large public forums in the course of the nomination served as proof of intentional non-disclosure of the OMAB plan by the Steering Committee.

The second front OMAB opponents attacked the program on was more than likely born out of the Committee's research strategy of not naming the MAB program specifically in interviews unless the respondent was considered receptive to the idea. OMAB opponents claimed that a number of county officials allegedly interviewed for the *Feasibility Study* had denied participation in such an interview or did not remember

supporting the OMAB when confronted by opponents. In a letter to the editor, Everett Middleton (1996a:2) stated,

The effort to place our lands under MAB designation was characterized by dishonesty. An interview of 90 persons supposedly took place and resulted in a near unanimous approval by the interviewed. While it has been impossible to contact many of those interviewed, many persons contacted state they were never interviewed and that, indeed, they would not be in favor of such a designation. I enclose a letter from Kenneth Jefferson, county judge, whose name appears on the list of interviewed people. He states he was not interviewed. He certainly does not favor such a program.

There are several possible explanations for interviewees' denying knowledge of the *Feasibility Study* interview. It is possible that these respondents were among those who were not informed of the OMAB program proposal during the interview. As a representative of Buffalo River indicated,

[F]or them ( local judges) to say, 'no we were never in contact with them specifically about Man and the Biosphere,' may have been the truth. Because if they were one of those judges that professed animosity towards any kind of big government, the interview did not go on and say, 'well, we need to know this is Man in the Biosphere.' So, it's very possible that they don't ever remember ever being contacted. What you have to do is you need to take the judge's name and go to the *Feasibility Study* and see if they were interviewed and if they were told about Man and the Biosphere. (George Oviatt, personal interview)

The consequence of this strategy is that some interviewees claimed they were never aware that they had provided input into the OMAB nomination effort. If the project was never disclosed to them, they would have no recollection of ever having contributed to the OMAB feasibility study.

Alternatively, it may simply be that the interviewees did not recall being interviewed. The *Feasibility Study* was completed in 1991 and the controversy was not in full swing until approximately 1995 or 1996. In this gap of time it is possible that interviewees forgot about being interviewed or could not recall specifics about the

interview session. Contact was not maintained between the OMAB Steering Committee and interviewees after the completion of the *Feasibility Study* research. The extensive time period between study completion and the emergence of controversy, coupled with a failure to maintain contact with respondents would explain their inability to recall interview details or, perhaps, the entire interview.

A third possibility is that these community leaders were practicing a political survivalist strategy by denying knowledge and support of a program that was reeking havoc on the political stability of officials and agencies throughout the Ozarks. Finally, the possibility remains that perhaps not all listed individuals were interviewed.

The third allegation leveled at the *Feasibility Study* by opponents was the sample, that it was too small and biased. A *Northwest Arkansas Times* article that shared “a woman’s” discovery of the OMAB nomination reported that officials at Buffalo National River told the woman that “residents from across the region expressed support for the program (Garret 1996:A1+).” The article went on to say, however, that only 86 persons were actually interviewed in Missouri and Arkansas. Discrepancies within the *Feasibility Study* regarding the sample size notwithstanding, the point of opponents regarding the sample was that 86 or 90 people hardly represented the attitudes of a majority of Ozarks residents. *Feasibility Study* conclusions were further criticized as being biased because some interviewees were associated with natural resource, environmental, or government agencies and organizations.

Committee members we spoke with universally cited the *Feasibility Study* itself as the major avenue of community involvement and participation. Most perceived the study itself as a legitimate effort to include the community, despite the fact that the



research was designed primarily to gather information on community needs and gauge attitudes toward a sometimes unidentified Biosphere Reserve concept.

While some Committee members were satisfied with the level of community inclusion required for the completion of the study, some believed that more outreach was needed. Some representatives agreed that study findings merely suggested that the public was receptive to the Biosphere Reserve concept and, though such findings were encouraging, they believed there was a need to make a concerted effort to explain the program clearly to citizens and communities.

The belief that more outreach was needed seemed to be consistent with the findings of the *Feasibility Study*. Throughout the report the authors discussed the sentiments, beliefs, and feelings of local people with regards to past, present, and future government efforts. In the document summary, the authors indicate that,

Attitudes toward government agencies in the Ozarks vary widely. Private citizens and civic leaders in some counties report all-round good cooperation, but many people are upset about government regulations and land condemnation, especially for federal scenic river corridors and reservoirs. (Faulkner and White 1991:5)

The *Feasibility Study* alluded to lingering feelings of ill will still existing toward the National Park Service due to past land takings issues and government programs. Festering anger rooted deep in Ozark history and lingering fears of future government takings were themes visible in the *Feasibility Study* findings and, later, echoed by opponents of the nomination.

In addition to local concerns about past violations, the study found that residents continually felt ignored and discounted by government agencies in program planning, development, and implementation. The report warned,

People are angry when they perceive the agency to be taking away their freedoms, traditional uses of certain areas, or traditional activities. If an agency appears to have made a decision before asking for input, the local citizens feel powerless and feel that the agency has not listened to them. (Faulkner and White 1991:71)

At several points in the conclusion of the *Feasibility Study*, the authors recommended the immediate involvement and inclusion of the public in the OMAB process (see Faulkner and White 1991: 89, 95, and 96).” The gist of the recommendations made with regards to the public was that the Committee should immediately begin meaningful community outreach by personally informing and communicating with citizens and local groups. Specifically, study authors encouraged the immediate inclusion of the public via small group meetings and presentations about the MAB. The Study stated,

[T]he purpose of these meetings is to begin informing the public about the MAB program. *There should be NO press conferences or large public meetings* because they encouraged polarized views before the story can be told in an objective, non-threatening manner [emphasis original]. (Faulkner and White 1991:100)

Organized presentations were a second avenue for community contribution and the primary conduit for public information during the nomination process. Two Committee representatives indicated that Committee members talked at a few small group meetings of various groups in the region. In 1993, Foster reportedly began to give some small group talks to regional tourism groups. After the nomination was abandoned, representatives at Buffalo National River gave talks to such organizations as the Lions Club and Rotary Club.

According to some Committee members, more community-oriented meetings were desired and anticipated after the completion of the *Feasibility Study*. Unfortunately, intentions to inform or include the public were largely unrealized. Committee members

frequently cited a single conference held in Harrison, Arkansas as the primary attempt to inform and include the community after completion of the *Feasibility Study*.

The Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Regional Conference was held in November of 1993. Ozark Regional Land Trust and Winrock International officially sponsored the two-day conference; sponsorship by these non-governmental organizations was by design. The federal and state agencies involved in the nomination enlisted the help of these organizations in an effort to distance the OMAB nomination effort from appearances of being a government program. The Buffalo River representative stated,

[T]he agencies tried to stay away. We tried not to make the appearance that it was a Park Service meeting. And that's why we had the Land Trust because that was a pretty innocuous group of people. They weren't threatening to the public, so we could get as much public input as we [could]. (George Oviatt, personal interview)

From personal interviews conducted with Steering Committee members, we were not able to get a good sense of the amount or nature of publicity prior to the 1993 meeting. However, it appeared that the public was notified of the conference in one of two ways. First, press releases announcing the upcoming meeting were reportedly published in local newspapers. In a local newspaper article written about the OMAB controversy, Committee representative George Oviatt was quoted as saying that the meeting was “advertised in the Harrison Daily Times in a large ad (*Mountain Wave* 1997:1).” In fact, an article entitled “Ozarks Nominated for Biosphere Reserve” did appear in the November 4, 1993 edition of the *Harrison Daily Times* on page B3. The article did not provide registration information to readers, although it did announce plans to nominate the Ozarks, discussed the upcoming conference, and named the agencies and organizations that were participating in the nomination. In addition to published

announcements, specific invitations were sent to a handful of Ozark citizens and various local interest groups.

Unfortunately, if the Steering Committee's goal was to encourage the attendance of ordinary local citizens representing a variety of stakeholders, they were unsuccessful. The 1993 public meeting drew between 60 and 70 interested individuals, according to Steering Committee members. An article published about the conference in *The Rackensack Monthly* placed attendance at "about 40 persons from the agricultural, environmental, political, and social fields (Modeland 1993:16)." According to Steering Committee representatives, most individuals attending the conference represented government or environmental-oriented interests. Further, some Committee members indicated that attendees were often already familiar with MAB and the nomination effort.

Conference attendees paid a base registration fee of \$12 or \$30 with meals, to hear various speakers describe the MAB program and the proposed nomination. The conference featured presentations from individuals familiar with the MAB programs in other regions of the United States. Talks were also given by individuals familiar with sundry features of the Ozarks, including presentations on the social and economic aspects of the region. Finally, conference attendees were given the opportunity to discuss the benefits and implication of a MAB in the Ozarks during small group discussion sessions.

Most Committee members viewed the conference as a success. Moreover, public notification of the nomination proposal failed to generate public dissention in 1993. George Oviatt of Buffalo National River indicated that he browsed newspapers several months after the 1993 conference and found no negative responses from the public. Oviatt recalled,

That next day (after the Harrison conference) there was a full 1/3 page article in the front of the Harrison paper. And as I have told you, I followed up on those papers for about four months reading letters to the editor columns. There was not a single letter to the editor pro or con regarding that article. The article was very favorable and talked about the UN connection [and] about what MAB was. (personal interview)

While the Harrison conference was probably a reliable source of information for citizens that attended the meeting, overall the meeting was not effective in meeting the goal of informing the general public of the Biosphere Reserve plan. Many citizens did not 'discover' the proposal until years after the Harrison conference. Among other issues, opponents critiqued the Committee's community outreach efforts through public meetings.

Opponents cited both the insufficient notice of the 1993 meeting and the lack of other public meeting opportunities as evidence of the Committee's desire to keep the public in the dark. In relation to the Harrison meeting, anti-Biosphere Reserve activists contested both the nature and amount of public notice provided by the OMAB Steering Committee. They disputed Committee claims that notice of the Harrison conference was published in multiple papers. Most opponents, like Everett Middleton of Arkansas, stated that the Steering Committee was operating in secrecy because there was no effective public notification of the 1993 conference. He wrote,

Mr. Oviatt states they publicized their meetings. When pressed to produce such publications, the only one produced was an article in "The Rackensack Monthly" (no, I'm not kidding) a tiny newspaper which had a life span of about four months. To put it mildly, this was not a good faith effort. [parenthetical statement original] (Middleton 1996b:4A)

Opponents clearly perceived Committee efforts as token and consistent with a plan to keep the general public unaware of the nomination effort. By and large, opponents saw

the 1993 conference as little more than a Steering Committee ruse aimed at fulfilling some bureaucratic public notification requirement in the most non-public way possible.

Another problem with this effort to include citizens was pragmatic. Regardless of disputes over good faith efforts to notify Ozark citizens of the Harrison meeting, the 1993 conference came late in the nomination process and arguably too late for meaningful inclusion of local citizens and community interests. The conference came only as the nomination was nearing completion. In fact, a draft of the nomination proposal was completed in March of 1994, just five months after the Harrison conference. The limited number of meetings accessible to the general public, in addition to the rather short period of time between the Harrison meeting and a completed nomination proposal left little opportunity for the public to participate in the process or become meaningfully informed about the nomination.

Most likely, the community aspect of the Harrison conference was geared toward informing the public of an intended proposal, rather than providing citizens with a meaningful opportunity to participate in the nomination process. Opponents rightfully noted that for a program founded on the notion of including communities in cooperatives, the nomination process had not proven to be open to citizen input and participation. One letter writer criticized a Steering Committee Representative, John Linahan, Superintendent of Buffalo National River, writing:

If MAB is a voluntary, cooperative program, when were you, Mr. Linahan, going to let us know about it? Being asked after the fact is never voluntary. You had the feasibility study in your hands in 1991. You have had five years to seek our cooperation. We never heard from you. (Bright 1996:2)

## Perceptions of Public Inclusion Efforts

While opponents viewed the extent of community inclusion as unsatisfactory, some Steering Committee representatives viewed this meeting, in conjunction with the *Feasibility Study*, as sufficient and good-faith efforts to inform and involve community interests. Those who expressed satisfaction with the extent of community inclusion and information oftentimes expressed the belief that it was adequate given the positive findings of the 1991 *Feasibility Study*, coupled with the fact that there were no laws or regulations associated with the program.

Some Committee members expressed surprise at the nature and amount of public discontent expressed in the final stages of the OMAB nomination. After the *Feasibility Study*, lack of opposition at the 1993 public meeting and over the following months served as a litmus test for the degree of public opposition to the program. Because no opposition surfaced immediately after the 1993 conference, committee members felt they had at least secured public apathy toward their proposal and continued with the nomination process. The second committee chairman stated that,

I [have] been asked many times, “Do you think now, being able to look back on it, that you should have done more public outreach?” But you have to remember in 1993 [public reaction to the Harrison meeting] that told us that the public knew about it [and] was supportive or were apathetic. We saw no opposition. (George Oviatt, personal interview)

Most committee members perceived the nomination process as a coordination-type effort that would be non-regulatory in nature. As a consequence, little emphasis was placed on community outreach during the early stages of the process. Public participation was excluded early in the nomination process in part because agencies were deeply



entrenched in planning and did not have time or resources to spare for attention to public outreach.

As is often the case with other state and federal programs, participating agencies managed the nomination project's design until it was practically finalized. Only after they worked out the details was the nomination proposal presented to citizens in a public forum. This strategy was described by one non-agency, committee representative who observed,

It was only natural that they [the agencies] spent all this time trying to determine their own willingness to participate. Once they thought they pretty much had a chance of getting [the agencies] on board, ...they had a meeting [and] opened it up to the public. They had talks and so forth with various groups. They were trying to show people what could be done through co-operative [efforts, and] not through regulatory things. (Ben Johnson, personal interview)

While some steering committee members were comfortable with the nature and degree of public outreach, in hindsight some representatives were less satisfied with the amount and quality of community outreach efforts made. Foster, the first committee chairman, stated,

We had planned to have a number of public workshops. We ended up having one, and that was embarrassing. We had a pretty good attendance at that, but we really didn't get a number of people there from a wide spectrum that we hoped we would. (personal interview)

When asked why they had not sponsored more public meetings, Foster indicated several reasons including the time and effort it takes to plan such meetings, the desire to keep the program from appearing to be a governmental program, and the committee's lack of effort in finding groups or individuals to sponsor other meetings. He remarked:

My feeling and the feeling of most on the steering committee and other agencies [was] that it would be better if we didn't set up those meetings. ...We felt as though we wanted to sit back and let someone else do that. We were willing and

able to help them if they wanted our help, but we didn't want to push our way into and play the lead role. (David Foster, personal interview)

Another committee member from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission stated that there was little effort made to provide explanation of the program to local communities, and attributed this to limited resources. He said,

We all felt that there was a need to have a staff, someone who could, full-time, speak for the project. Someone who could conduct public hearings, meetings, and answer the phone and talk with people. We understood that we weren't reaching out at this point, we hadn't really begun to reach out and explain to anyone what we hoped to do. (Mark Birk, personal interview)

The lack of communication or inclusion of local communities early in the nomination process paved the way for OMAB opponents' onslaught of criticism, accusation, and innuendo directed toward the Steering Committee and OMAB. Regardless of Committee perceptions about if and why their community outreach efforts were satisfactory or unsatisfactory, opponents of the OMAB nomination effort perceived community outreach efforts as grossly lacking, and even deceitful. Further, not only did they perceive themselves as being excluded from the process, but they also pointed to the exclusion of local governments and elected officials (local, regional, and national) from the planning process as well.

Opponents irritated about the OMAB nomination process aggressively analyzed and scrutinized the Steering Committee's public outreach efforts and attributed subversive motivations to, speaking candidly, such lame and ineffective community outreach efforts. They believed state and federal agencies had ignored their rights and concerns. Moreover, they believed agency officials were dishonest and had betrayed them. A member of Take Back Arkansas raised the specter of suspicion in a letter to the editor in a local newspaper: "For the Ozark Highlands MAB program to be so benign and

beneficial it has certainly been well hidden [from] public and official scrutiny for over seven years in Arkansas (Denham 1997:2).”

Most anti-OMAB activists were disillusioned by the type and extent of public outreach and angered by the idea that a group of agencies and organizations were implementing a program that would have, from their perspective, brought changes to the Ozarks and increased environmental regulations for property owners and land users.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

During the OMAB nomination process, from inception in 1988 to withdrawal of support by most Committee members in 1996, Committee energy was focused primarily on trying to coordinate the nomination proposal among the participating agencies and organizations. Outreach tasks and obstacles, such as aggressively pursuing community participation and addressing anticipated concerns of local opposition, were not adequately addressed by the Committee. Efforts to engage local communities were not made until relatively late in the process, some taking place after the OMAB nomination was dropped when Ozark citizens became worried, began to ask questions, and started to publicly express their concerns. In short, the inclusion of Ozark communities in the OMAB effort was nominal in both quality and quantity.

In retrospect, Steering Committee members recognized a need to include the public in the OMAB nomination process. However, the OMAB nomination experience appears to have been fraught with ambiguities about if, how, and when this was to be accomplished. Where some Committee members saw efforts to include and inform the community as adequate, those in opposition to the OMAB perceived Committee efforts as grossly lacking and, in some cases, outright deceitful. These dramatic differences in

the perceptions of community role, awareness, and involvement uncover core problems with the OMAB effort.

The MAB program seeks to incorporate the needs of humans and the needs of the environment into natural resource management. However, much work remains in defining what a MAB really means for local communities and individual property owners. Moreover, critical questions are raised about how much community involvement is necessary to have a successful MAB and, to complicate matters further, what constitutes community involvement and benefits.

US MAB and nominating committees must decide how to best achieve goals oriented toward inclusion of communities and realization of community benefits. MAB hopefuls should be realistic when estimating the amount and type of community participation required and when determining what kind of tangible benefits local citizens are likely to realize. Moreover, they should be clear in reporting such requirements and benefits to the community early in the nomination process so citizens can judge for themselves if a Biosphere Reserve will be beneficial to the community and local residents.

An important question US MAB and nominating committees should ask is what constitutes community involvement and benefit in the spirit of the MAB program? The US and UN MAB literature seems to emphasize the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of a MAB, as well as the biological and ecological. If this is so, one might expect more consideration given to community interests and wishes, along with greater efforts to create avenues of input for local residents throughout the nomination process, rather than waiting to include citizens after the designation has been awarded.

Inclusion of local communities and residents from the onset of the nomination process and continuing throughout the implementation of a successfully designated Biosphere Reserve would likely engender citizen ownership and commitment for the Biosphere Reserve and its objectives. Such inclusion would increase the opportunity for greater, meaningful citizen participation, while fostering an understanding among local residents about the goals and objectives of a Biosphere Reserve. In addition, because a Biosphere Reserve seeks to create such links between communities, managers, and the environment, the goals of a MAB are essentially only realized if such alliances are effectively secured. Finally, if committee members find that citizens are not receptive to the prospect of a Biosphere Reserve, they may save time and money by discovering this fact before the final stages of a nomination.

One of the most important lessons learned from the OMAB case study is that communities and citizens must be informed and, ideally, included in the nomination process from a point soon after its inception. While it is important for those seeking a nomination to be aware of and address all potential stakeholders, it is critical to detect and establish a public dialogue with those who are most likely to oppose the effort. The goal of this dialogue is to help anticipate and resolve conflict before it becomes a paralyzing factor.

As recommended in the previous chapter, all stakeholders should be identified, addressed and, hopefully, represented in all stages of the process.<sup>4</sup> Given the Ozarks

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<sup>4</sup> Here a distinction must be noted between 'included,' 'addressed,' and 'represented.' Given the nature of the OMAB opposition, it is our opinion that efforts to include—that is seat opponents as representatives on the Steering Committee or otherwise engage them in efforts to forward the nomination—would have done little to either heighten opponents' desire to compromise or further the nomination. Addressing opponents, that is opening a channel of communication where committee members talk with groups about the proposed nomination and discuss opponent concerns, on the other hand, would have brought issues to the fore earlier in the process allowing committee members time to discuss concerns as they arose or, if necessary, to

experience, however, it becomes extremely important to note that there may be varying opinions on who is and who is not a stakeholder. For example, as we will see in the next chapter, OMAB opponents believed that private landowners in the Ozarks were stakeholders. This assessment was based on their understanding of MABs and the proposed nomination.

The Steering Committee, on the other hand, may not have regarded such small landholders as an important stakeholder group because the OMAB was focused, in terms of core areas and buffer zones, only on government land holdings along with private lands voluntarily included in the program.<sup>5</sup> The Committee may not have recognized a need to include certain private landowners or interests groups that were, from their perspective, likely to be unaffected by the proposed Biosphere Reserve. As a result, such groups were bypassed in community outreach efforts. Differences in perceptions of who was and was not a stakeholder in the Ozarks resulted in hard feelings, distrust, and other insurmountable obstacles in the homestretch of the nomination process.

To guard against exclusion of groups that should be addressed in the process it is critical that nominating committees quickly identify local groups and individuals who are likely to oppose the effort and then establish a public dialogue with them. Such communication could be established by direct contacts with interest group leaders and by giving presentations to potentially hostile groups. In the OMAB case, groups known to oppose natural resource programs, like Citizens for Private Property Rights and Take

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determine early on that a MAB was not feasible in their area. Finally, it is important to make a distinction between representation and inclusion. While it is probably impossible to actively include all stakeholders in a MAB nomination effort, it is certainly possible for all interests to be acknowledged and represented throughout the nomination process.

<sup>5</sup> Privately owned lands that may have been part of the OMAB included Pioneer Forest, Nature Conservancy holdings, and ORLT holdings.

Back Arkansas in the Ozarks, should have been discovered and addressed. Efforts to engage opposition groups would, of course, have enabled OMAB proponents to address contentious issues directly with opponents in a forum where other citizens could listen and benefit from the discussion. At the very least, knowledge of and contact with citizens and groups that might support and oppose a nomination may help committee members decide if a MAB would be welcome and under what circumstances.

More general public outreach might have vastly improved the chance of a successful nomination. Although officials could not have easily alleviated the concerns or answered the accusations of hard core anti-OMAB activists, they could have tried to develop community support among the majority of citizens by reaching out to local communities early in the process. Given that most residents had no knowledge of MABs, addressing opponent concerns in a public venue would have informed citizens that may have otherwise been persuaded by opponent interpretations of what a MAB was and what it meant for the Ozarks. If a support base had developed along with the opposition, there may have been just as many calls to politicians in support of the Biosphere Reserve as in opposition to it. Citizens were not given a chance to support the program, but they were given many reasons and opportunities to reject it.

While it is impossible to say if more public outreach and inclusion would have ultimately paved the way for a successful nomination, we do believe such efforts would have paid off in terms of broadening community support by involving citizens likely to agree with such management efforts. Moreover, involving local communities and citizens would have been consistent with in the overall goals of a MAB. Regarding the core anti-OMAB activists, however, it is unlikely that inclusion would have made a



significant difference in terms of efforts at compromise and cooperation.

Those Ozarkers who came out in opposition to the OMAB expressed ideas and beliefs rooted in the property rights movement. Over the past ten months, we have spent a good deal of time becoming familiar with the premises, rhetoric, claims, and positions of this movement. More than likely, nothing really could have been done to alleviate concerns of property rights activists ideologically immersed in opposition to public environmental programs. The conspiracy orientation of the movement leaves little room for efforts to explain or provide information to rectify misunderstandings or to alleviate concerns. Further, inviting them to the table as potential steering committee members would doubtless have proven fruitless as well, and this may have been more disruptive than helpful. Those in the movement are, mildly speaking, suspicious and distrustful of any government officials or organization representatives who are involved with or support environmental programs. The most radical appear to be against environmental protection efforts facilitated by any environmental organization or government agency.

One premise of the private property movement, from which some OMAB opposition was rooted, springs from a belief that most environmental problems are fictitious. Claims of environmental woes are merely Trojan horses constructed by those who wish to usurp private property and individual freedom. For environmental problems that do exist, environmental protection efforts should be left up to the discretion of individual property owners, and not the government. The anti-OMAB movement really had no agenda to negotiate with OMAB Steering Committee members; they had no desire to participate in the nomination effort. Instead, their mission was to block the OMAB nomination.

Although we believe that little headway could have been made in alleviating the concerns of core OMAB opponents' in the Ozarks, we do believe extensive, immediate, and formal efforts should have been made to publicly address and respond to their claims and questions. Agency silence and the frantic distancing by some of the participating agencies and organizations served only to promote the opponents' cause. Quite frankly, much of the response of the participating agencies could easily have been interpreted as evidence of guilt and wrongdoing. At least two agencies went so far as to deny participation in the OMAB effort, after they had clearly been involved to some extent.

Most of the agencies fielded phone calls from opponents and concerned citizens. Two agencies, Missouri Department of Conservation and Buffalo National River, published official statements in local newspapers. Only one agency, Buffalo National River, took initiative to publicly address opponent claims after the onset of the controversy. Unfortunately, such outreach was too little, too late.

It is clear from conversations with Steering Committee members and reading the *Feasibility Study* that the nominators believed early on that strong opposition would likely creep up in response to the OMAB effort. It also appears that the Committee was unsure how to best deal with this possibility, but chose to keep a low profile. The nature of the *Feasibility Study* methodology leads us to believe that they wanted to keep the MAB effort under wraps until the last possible moment, when it was ready to go to the US MAB nominating committee. Although this strategy helped avoid early public opposition to the program, the more critical mistake was that it also served to negate chances of developing allies in the general public as well. During the period of controversy, several citizen letters published in local newspapers tried to address and

contradict opponent claims while advocating the OMAB effort. It is very likely that there were other citizens in the Ozarks that would have agreed with and, perhaps, actively supported the OMAB if they had known about it sooner or had been invited to have some role in the effort.

Those citizens who were scared and concerned about the program were likely so in part because they had no knowledge of the program or effort. All they had to base their ideas and conclusions on were the allegations, claims, and views of the very organized and vocal opponents. Some citizens may have been swayed by these arguments because the OMAB opponents were the only people who made information available and held frequent public meetings. In short, the opponents did what the OMAB Steering Committee should have been doing from the beginning, at least after the *Feasibility Study*.

OMAB opponents were doing extensive outreach, actively trying to educate and inform Ozark citizens with their version of the OMAB effort. Because the opponents were more aggressive and, yes, effective at community outreach, the OMAB committee was forced into a damage control, defensive stance. Failure to reach out to the general public early on left them defending a dead program before a silent, but watching, Ozark audience in the end.

There are several things that could be done in the future to ensure that communities are given the sufficient information and opportunity to make their own decision about the desirability of a MAB. One of the best ways to reach communities is by hosting free public meetings where committee members present the program along with their ideas for establishing a local MAB. At such events, local residents or groups

could be given the opportunity to comment directly about the proposal or be encouraged to send written comments to the committee members or coordinator. Such public forums would enable citizens to meet proponents and hear first hand about a proposed nomination. Further, such public gatherings would enable committee members to directly address citizen concerns and questions, rather than sending interested citizens an untimely packet of complicated information.

In doing community outreach, a steering committee might consider a nomination Webpage that provides easily accessed and detailed information about the program, the nomination, and its implications for the region and communities. The use of the Internet proved effective in the Ozarks for opponents and could have been an effective tool for OMAB supporters. Such a resource could provide information to a large number of citizens quickly. More importantly, a Webpage would enable citizens to directly contact nomination supporters to get information and ask questions throughout the process.

Finally, a great way to inform and include local communities is through local media. Nominating committees can utilize local media to notify residents of meetings, keep them updated on the progress of the nomination, and to answer common questions posed through correspondence. Steering committees might consider establishment of guest columns in local papers and even publication of their own newsletter or status report to be distributed to interested citizens and groups or made available at local libraries and civic offices. Although local interest and participation in natural resource programs can be quite apathetic, the delicate nature of the MAB programs and its reputation in recent years suggest that all efforts to include, represent, and inform the public would be beneficial.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Opposition: Who, How, and Why?**

Public opposition to the OMAB nomination did not begin to surface until 1995, was in full swing in by 1996, and remained vigorous well into 1997. Quite probably, discussion and expressions of concern continue to echo around the Ozarks. In response to the nomination, opponents inundated the Steering Committee and local communities with questions, claims, and accusations regarding the MAB Program and the OMAB nomination effort. One of the primary goals of this research was to determine the nature of the controversy, and to discuss the grievances, claims, and strategies of those people who came out publicly in opposition to the nomination. This chapter is devoted to addressing these issues. Despite the vast array of claims, some quite extraordinary, opposition grievances can be attributed to opponent perceptions of: 1) the nomination process; 2) the betrayal of Ozark citizens by nomination participants, particularly agencies; and 3) the substance and implications of the MAB program for local residents.

#### **The Extent of Opposition**

Determining the specific breadth of anti-OMAB or pro-OMAB sentiment among Ozark citizens was not within the scope of this research. However, the data indicate that a number of opponents and interested citizens contacted Steering Committee representatives, local papers, and political representatives to get the information and to express their feelings about the OMAB nomination. While it is impossible to say conclusively if opponent sentiments were widely held or concentrated among a few individuals, most OMAB proponents and non-opponent bystanders interviewed indicated

that nearly all public opposition came from a small group of very vocal individuals aided, perhaps, by a couple of property rights organizations. The dominant impression expressed by pro-OMAB and bystander interviewees was that the public at large was either apathetic to the issue in general or, after investigating the issue for themselves, did not believe there was cause for concern. Because no empirical assessment of the public was undertaken, again, we cannot say if this perspective was accurate or if it represents pro-OMAB rhetoric to de-legitimate opposition claims.

OMAB supporters attributed the bulk of the opposition to local people distrustful of government in general. Kevin Larson, the editor of a southern Missouri newspaper, described local OMAB opposition in this manner:

[T]he Man and Biosphere project itself I think was a handy-peg onto which a lot of people who just generally don't trust or dislike the government, to hang their anger and distrust on. Whether they were anti-abortion, ...pro-gun ownership, [or] anti-tax people, they all tend to kind of float around and join and follow various groups and movements which are just generally anti-government. The hard core people were just interested in the Man and the Biosphere movement, but a lot of familiar faces from other causes showed up at the meetings too. So, I think there were a lot of disgruntled people there who, [to them], this was just one more thing that the government was doing to them, that they didn't like ...as opposed to them knowing very much about it. (Kevin Larson, personal interview)

Our impression is that a core group of individuals were responsible for much of the public discourse and activism on the issue, such as obtaining and publicizing information. This is not to say, however, that the community in general was passive or non-supportive of OMAB opponents and their cause. There were many letters to the editor written by citizens and high attendance at local anti-OMAB meetings. Moreover, it seems counter intuitive to believe that the nomination would have been dropped if just a few vocal individuals had expressed isolated concerns. Although we cannot speculate as to the full extent of public opposition regarding the OMAB nomination, it elicited

enough intense social and political pressure for the Steering Committee participants to be driven away from the nomination.

### **The Rise of Opposition**

Although there was no consensus among proponents as to whether the controversy began in Missouri or Arkansas, our analysis of media publications indicates that it first surfaced publicly in Missouri. The epiphany is thought to have come from watchdog property rights activists in 1995 who noted an obscure reference to the Ozark Highlands Man and the Biosphere Reserve in a Missouri Department of Conservation publication regarding their since discontinued Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) program initiative (*The Current Local*, 1997:1).

The earliest newspaper notice of the OMAB issue appears to have been in the March 29, 1995 edition of a small town Missouri paper called *The Mansfield Shopper II*. The publication contained an advertisement warning the public about the impending United Nations program to confiscate Ozark land and offered for purchase a packet of information proving the “conspiracy (*The Mansfield Shopper II* 1995:16).” Fourteen months after this warning was published, informal interagency correspondence from the Missouri Department of Conservation to Buffalo National River reported insurmountable public opposition to both Coordinated Resource Management and the OMAB nomination in Missouri (McGrath, Missouri Department of Conservation. Correspondence 5/21/96). The controversy was in full swing in Missouri.

Conflict blossomed publicly in Arkansas in early fall of 1996. One Arkansas newspaper in Fayetteville attributed the discovery of the proposed nomination to an

anonymous Arkansas woman, a preacher's wife. The mystery woman was quoted as saying, " ' I am not a political activist,... I simply called and asked a question...Apparently I'm the only person in Arkansas who thought to ask this question and found out what's happening (Garret 1996:A1+).'" A majority of opponent letters to the editor in Ozark newspapers began showing up in late Summer to early Fall 1996 in both states. However, we collected letters published on the OMAB nomination well into 1997.

Much of the public controversy, consequently, took place well after participating agencies and organizations had withdrawn from the nomination effort. In summary, the public controversy over the OMAB nomination began sometime in early 1995, most probably in Missouri. Arkansas activists joined the fight in the Fall of 1996 and Winter 1997, when the controversy seemed to peak in both states.

### **The Opponents**

Once opposition began it was swift, intense, and extremely effective. There was no one anti-OMAB group or organization; activism against the OMAB was comprised of loosely networked individuals and organizations. New groups sprang up, and some groups already in existence, like Take Back Arkansas, opened new chapters or gained new members as a result of the controversy. There were a variety of organizations that supported events and efforts to oppose the OMAB. Organization names linked to the opposition were Keep the Ozarks American, Society for the Preservation of Ozark Culture, Take Back Arkansas, Citizens for Private Property Rights, People for the West, and the Missouri Farm Bureau.



Media and Steering Committee representatives we visited speculated that organizations from outside the Ozarks financed or otherwise supported anti-OMAB activism. An editor of a local Ozark newspaper cited such organizational support as one reason for the success of the opponents, he said:

They (the Steering Committee) didn't realize there was some big money behind it. These aren't just local people. They are well funded. Some of the speakers that passed through the area initially were related to the People for the West movement. People for the West is funded by big timber industries and the big cattle industries up in the Pacific Northwest. ...Some of the advertising that was put in this newspaper advertising... 'learn about the danger to your property and the Man and the Biosphere movement,' ... were paid for by checks drawn on an agency in Pueblo, Colorado which is one of a corporate entities of the People for the West. ... There's a movement called Take Back Arkansas... who I'm told is subsidized by the mining and timber industries. So, I don't think our local people (agency representatives) took it nearly seriously enough, soon enough. (Kevin Larson, personal interview)

While there may have been influence from people and organizations outside the Ozarks, it is undeniable that bona fide Ozark citizens acting together and acting alone played an extremely important role in the protest. Several individuals stood apart from the pack in terms of their activism, serving as speakers at anti-Biosphere Reserve meetings, relentlessly writing letters to the editor, continually contacting Steering Committee members and politicians, and networking intensively. Those opponents who appeared to be most active were Connie Burks from Jasper, AR; William Jud from Fredericktown, MO; Everett Middleton from Flippin, AR; Ed Manor from Jasper, AR; Mary Rivera of Jeep, AR; Mary and Elam Denham (of TBA) from Fayetteville, AR; and Ray Cunio (of Citizens for Private Property Rights) from Japan, MO. These individuals frequently took center stage, aggressively informing Ozark citizens about the OMAB nomination.

## **Opponent Strategies**

Opponents, individuals and organizations alike, formed alliances with each other to coordinate their efforts. This allowed them to work together quickly and efficiently to gather and exchange information. OMAB opponents were very successful in mobilizing against the nomination. Their goals were to disseminate information about the OMAB 'plot' and to rally support, both in the public and political arenas, against the nomination. To accomplish these goals they employed five central strategies: a) contacting Steering Committee and US MAB representatives; b) holding public/town meetings; c) writing letters to the editor; d) setting up information websites on the Internet; and e) contacting local, state, and federal politicians.

Opponents sought information on the OMAB from a variety of sources, including Steering Committee representatives and US MAB officials. Activists wrote letters and made phone calls asking for explanations and information. Most Steering Committee representatives we talked with indicated that numerous phone calls were received about the OMAB nomination. One Steering Committee representative described his attempt to assist an information seeking opponent, saying, "...she called me a couple of times and acted very objective, [saying] 'I just wanted to get information,' but she was obviously biased. She was looking for the dirt (Ben Johnson, personal interview)." Also, George Oviatt of Buffalo National River reported a couple instances where he sat down with opponents to answer questions and discuss their allegations. Once opponents collected information, they worked relentlessly to get the word out.

Opponents wanted to warn the public and politicians about perceived threats associated with the nomination. The Fayetteville reporter who interviewed the mystery woman wrote:

The woman said since she has learned of the MAB program and its potential threats, she has felt compelled to alert the citizens of Arkansas to the issue. She has found allies in her cause in state property rights groups, including the Fayetteville-based Take Back Arkansas (Garret 1996:A1+).

Virtually every letter to the editor cited important sources of information accompanied by pleas for readers to get educated and get involved. Opponents believed that if people were informed about the threats associated with a MAB, there would be enough public outcry to stop the nomination. Which was, of course, the case. To inform the public, opponents held public/town meetings, published letters to the editor, and utilized the Internet both as a source and conduit for information.

A series of public/town meetings held in various towns in the Ozark region proved to be an extremely effective strategy employed by OMAB opponents interested in reaching out to the Ozark public. At these meetings local activists and national environmental-conspiracy experts provided Ozark citizens with documents, sources, and their interpretation of the MAB program, among other things. It is difficult to get a sense of how many gatherings were actually held or how many citizens were in attendance. Numerous public meetings were held in local cafes and in the homes of Ozark citizens. Newspaper articles reporting on the happenings at such meetings, especially in Arkansas, began to show up in local papers in the Fall of 1996.

Several large-scale public meetings were held in southern Missouri between February and April of 1997, long after the actual demise of the OMAB nomination. Meetings covered in local newspapers took place in Winona (February 28), West Plains

(March 22), and Thayer (April 17). Attendance estimates reported for these meetings ranged from 100 to more than 300 citizens. Other large-scale town meetings were reportedly held in Houston, MO; Salem, MO; and Deer, AR (Midkiff 1997; Robert Martin, personal interview). According to some, these large meetings were organized and/or sponsored by organizations in opposition to the OMAB, including Missouri Farm Bureau and, later, People for the West (Midkiff 1997; Kevin Larson, personal interview). These public forums often received coverage from local print media, and even drew attention from larger media markets such as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, as well as piqued the interest of news reporters from *Time Magazine*.<sup>1</sup>

By reading newspaper coverage of these large-scale meetings, as well as surmising from researcher experiences in attending property rights conferences, we can generally describe what an attendee might have experienced at one of the Ozark gatherings. Speakers at such meetings were a combination of local Biosphere Reserve ‘researchers,’ seasoned private property rights activists, as well as some national UN/environmental conspiracy experts. The goal of speakers was to share information and interpretations about Biosphere Reserves, the OMAB nomination, and a variety of other pertinent issues. Audience members were probably provided with some information in the form of handouts or source citations, as well as information on how to obtain necessary information on the issues. Most importantly, attendees would have been encouraged to contact OMAB Steering Committee participants and politicians to express their views on the nomination proposal. These public meetings were very effective avenues of publicity and networking for opponents.

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<sup>1</sup> Two separate individuals, a newspaper editor and a Southern Missouri private property rights activist, shared accounts of *Time Magazine* journalists who came to the Ozarks in search of a story on the issue.

Individual efforts were largely accomplished through print media, the Internet, and by contacting agencies, officials, and politicians. In addition to public meetings, letter to the editor columns in local Ozark papers served as a major conduit for information exchange and dissemination. Trying to mobilize Ozark citizens, opponents wrote letters to the editor expressing their interpretation of the Biosphere Reserve program, their concerns about the potential threats it brought, and outrage at those who supported or sympathized with the nomination effort. Such letters were submitted and published in numerous local and regional newspapers, as well as publications with statewide circulation like *Rural Missouri*, published by the state association of electrical cooperatives, and *Missouri Ruralist*, a state farming magazine.

Opponent letters often cited documents and provided the names of agencies and individuals associated with the OMAB nomination and the US MAB Program and encouraged citizens to contact them. Also, many letters included the names of local experts on the OMAB conspiracy along with national UN conspiracy researchers for concerned citizens to get more information.

In addition to these more traditional mobilization strategies, a fairly new tool utilized in the OMAB protest was the Internet. The Internet became an extremely important way for citizens to find information, as well as a way for OMAB opponents to disseminate information they had collected. At meetings and in published letters, opponents provided citizens with specific weblinks to pertinent sites, including those managed by US MAB and the UN. The Internet made it possible for opponents to quickly access and download information posted on the Internet, as well as to order information they felt was important, such as federal and UN publications.

In addition to finding information, the Internet made it possible for opponents to quickly share information. For example, concerned Ozark citizens could easily access the Take Back Arkansas webpage and view documents associated with the OMAB nomination, as well as read the organization's interpretations and opinions about such documents. Ozark citizens against the OMAB nomination also used the Internet to easily network with national organizations mobilizing against MABs and other environmental programs and efforts throughout the United States. Ozark activists new to environmental controversy thus benefited from the experience of older, more established organizations and veteran activists.

After opponents found information and gathered evidence supporting their conclusions about the OMAB, they focused their efforts on lawmakers. Influencing politicians who were willing to exert their authority against the MAB program proved to be a momentous achievement for opponents. Activists aggressively campaigned for citizens to contact local, state, and federal politicians. Through meetings and published letters, opponents implored Ozark citizens to write or call politicians to stop the OMAB nomination and, later, to support legislative efforts to eliminate MAB and other federal environmental programs.

As discussed in the previous chapter, citizens contacted state and federal Congressional representatives, county judges and city officials, and, at least in Arkansas, the State's governor. Politicians got involved by writing letters to the National Park Service and US MAB demanding that they stop the Ozark nomination. In addition, shortly after the Ozark experience came to political light, the American Land Sovereignty Act was resubmitted in Congress. Jo Ann Emerson and Tim Hutchinson, who were very

vocal political opponents of the nomination proposal, were in support of the bill. Connie Burks, a high profile activist from Newton County in Arkansas, spoke at a meeting and reportedly warned citizens “not to let up on calls and letters opposing the [MAB] program and supporting the American Land Sovereignty Act (*Newton County Times* 1996A:1).”

On the state level, the governor of Arkansas reportedly responded to requests by OMAB opponents by consulting with UN/environmental conspiracy expert Henry Lamb about the implications of a Man and the Biosphere Reserve (Robert Martin, personal interview). Later the governor demanded that state agencies immediately withdraw from participation in the nomination. An article in the *Harrison Daily Times* about a speaking appearance by Connie Burks before the Society for the Preservation of Ozark Culture, reported that Burks “..said both the congressman [Hutchinson] and the governor [Huckabee] had told her to keep encouraging people to call and write (*Newton County Times* 1996a:1).” OMAB opponents enjoyed extensive support in state and federal political arenas.

Local governments and politicians also took action against the OMAB. In Newtown County, Arkansas, after testimony from OMAB opponents, the county quorum court (the law-making body of the county) “went officially on record ...as opposing the designation of Crooked Creek as an Extraordinary Resource Waterway and opposing the Ozarks Man and the Biosphere Programme (*Newton County Times* 1996b:1).” Federal, state, and local politicians were powerful and influential allies for OMAB opponents. While the nomination was, for all practical purposes, dropped by the time political

officials really got involved, the enthusiastic participation of politicians brought more media and public attention to the issue.

### **Opponents' Public Outreach**

Probably the most effective effort of opponents was outreach efforts to engage the public and politicians. As individuals and as a collective, they did a phenomenal job of reaching out to Ozark citizens. Opponents believed they were doing a more effective job of publishing and publicizing the nomination than the Steering Committee. One activist publicly commended the efforts of another activist, comparing her efforts to that of the Park Service:

Connie Burks of Jasper did what the agencies were unwilling to do. With her research, quick analytical mind and actions, she made it public. Mrs. Burks and others have been instrumental in getting this information to the public, including Governor Huckabee, and Senator Elect Tim Hutchinson. (Denham 1997:2)

In my opinion, opponents deserve just such praise. They organized quickly and disseminated information clearly and efficiently. While Ozark citizens were largely unaware of the nomination prior to 1995, by 1996 the OMAB had become a topic of conversation throughout the region, and beyond.

Opponents involved the community; they encouraged citizens to seek out information for themselves and to become educated about the plan to establish a MAB in the Ozarks. One opponent implored citizens to get involved, she wrote, "Please find out for yourself—this issue should not be ignored, and you do not have to rely on hearsay. Information is available for those willing to do a little research (Vandergriff 1997:11)." The call to action was an important dimension of opponents' effort to mount public



opposition against the nomination and MABs in general. Such motivating statements were often accompanied by claims that the evidence was available in black and white, albeit in a multitude of documents and web of associations, and this evidence was what had sparked concern in many Ozarkers.

In addition to being efficient, OMAB opponents were very convincing in their presentation of the facts. One public meeting attendee wrote,

My name is Fred Roe and I write "Our Neck of the Woods" as a freelance columnist for the South Missourian News in Thayer. My articles are a favorite among the locals in Oregon County, I believe, because I come across as being honest and homegrown. I attended one of the biosphere meetings in Winona and I have since then educated myself to some of the realities of politics in this country that should have been apparent to me for several years. It was not until I listened to a representative from the Farm Bureau and Mrs. Mary Rivera and weighed the factual substance of the materials they provided that I realized how far things have gotten out of our control. (Roe 1997:13)

Ozark citizens may have been receptive to opposition claims because opponents were local folks appealing to their neighbors for help in protecting the Ozarks. They encouraged people to stop and consider the possibility of potential problems associated with the OMAB. Opponents were successful in that their message elicited concern, or at least curiosity, among fellow Ozark citizens and resulted in action from politicians and OMAB participants.

This successful outreach campaign posed a significant problem for the Steering Committee in terms of the nomination effort. The most damaging aspect of the Ozark experience was that opponents to the OMAB and MAB in general were able to gain the upper hand, both in time and credibility, by doing the outreach that should have been done by the Steering Committee. Opponents were able to present their interpretation of the MAB program and their version of the implications of such a program to an

uninformed public, with virtually no response or challenge by those associated with the program. Any information local citizens got on the issue more than likely came filtered through MAB opponents and not directly from the Steering Committee or US MAB.

Opponents put participating agencies, organizations, and the US MAB program on the defensive. Rather than presenting the MAB concept to Ozark citizens, proponents were forced to respond to opponent accusations. Moreover, the general public witnessed the public bantering of opponent allegations and official explanations, although few explanations were actually attempted. The silence of OMAB participants and supporters was surprising, as opponents took the lead in communication.

Opponents informed the general public of the grievances all Ozark citizens had a right to claim as a result of the OMAB. Broadly, opponents expressed three grievances: the exclusion of citizens from the nomination process; the betrayal of Ozark citizens by nomination participants, particularly agencies; and the substance and implications of the MAB program for the Ozarks.

## **Opponent Claims**

As discussed in previous chapters, opponents were angry about being disregarded and overlooked throughout the nomination process. They expressed great displeasure and resentment toward Steering Committee participants for having betrayed citizen interests by pursuing the nomination behind closed doors. Anger elicited from resentment attitudes toward the process were compounded by opponent beliefs about what a MAB was and what it meant for Ozark citizens. To opponents, it was alarming and infuriating that citizens had been excluded from the formulation of an environmental

program that would have, in their opinion, far-reaching and dramatic impacts on the lives and livelihoods of Ozark citizens. In this section, we will focus on the claims opponents made regarding the substance and implications of a MAB and what this would have meant in the Ozarks.

The claims opponents made regarding the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program were often extremely complex, convoluted, and, occasionally, somewhat fantastic. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this report to detail the origin and extent of opponent allegations about the United Nations, the environmental movement, and their connections to the US Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program. However, the environmentalist-United Nations conspiracy was well summed by one opponent, who wrote,

Individuals, especially in the environmental and world government movements, demand that governments violate constitutionally guaranteed rights and property of other people to further their own narrow interests. Demands are rationalized by public statements that greed, exploitation and immorality of others stand in the way of fulfilling the environmentalists' utopian dream. Theft by political means, the transfer of property and wealth from "haves" to "have nots," is their "higher morality" which environmentalist fanatics and rogue politicians pursue to "remedy social injustice" and "save the planet." [quotations original] (Jud 1997a:12)

For opponents, the OMAB issue was another symptom of a wider problem facing citizens of the United States, the problem of loss of individual rights and personal freedoms. This loss was sometimes attributed to regulation from the United States government, international forces such as the United Nations, or both.

Opponents often claimed that demise of democracy is desired by government globalists associated with the United Nations and/or environmentalists. In order to protect the environment on a global scale, globalists or environmentalists desire the

implementation of a world government, which was often referred to by opponents as ‘the New World Order.’ While it is impossible to determine who exactly would be at the helm of the impending ‘green,’ world government, it was clear that OMAB opponents believed the environmental movement would be the vehicle whereby individual rights would be quashed to make way for a universalized government force.

The fall of democracy, from opponents’ perspective, would be an outgrowth of global efforts to protect or restore the environment. They regularly cited the Biodiversity Treaty, the *Global Biodiversity Assessment*, and numerous international environmental efforts, proposals, and conferences as proof of an environmental agenda. According to OMAB opponents, the Biodiversity Treaty is the United Nation’s master plan for the implementation of global environmentalism, or socialism, and the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program was a major component of this wider environmental scheme. As one opponent wrote, “If you don’t believe the federal government and the U.N. have conspired to create a biosphere reserve for our area, please refer to the Global Biodiversity Assessment, the U.N.’s ecological plans for the planet Earth (Roe 1997:13)”

According to some OMAB opponents, the move toward a ‘green’ socialist government is loosely disguised as ‘sustainable development.’ In a 1995 *eco-logic* column, conspiracy expert Henry Lamb described the problem,

Sustainable development is the buzz word of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the 70’s, “environmental protection” was used to cover a multitude of intrusions into private property rights. In the 80’s, “biodiversity” was born and was used to further erode individual liberty. Now “sustainable development” encompasses both and, like pac-man, is gobbling up what remains of free enterprise and individual rights in America. (Lamb 1995:28)

Opponents frequently drew connections between the environmental movement and alleged globalist efforts to take over the United States. They pointed to UN documents as

proof about the 'true' nature of Biosphere Reserves and their place in broader design of globalists and environmentalists. The goal essentially being the eventual 're-wilding' of the United States to further the implementation of a 'green' socialist government. The US MAB program was objectionable to opponents because it furthered the global agenda.

According to opponents, the primary symptom of a coming 'green' socialist government is the erosion of private property rights. The loss of ownership and control of private property was equated with the loss of Constitutionally guaranteed individual rights and privileges. Access to property ownership and land use rights are, according to opponents, tantamount to the preservation of democracy and national sovereignty. The trend toward environmental regulation, which threatens property ownership and control, is conceived of as a trend toward socialism or communism. Jane Darcy, a Take Back Arkansas representative, indicated that the Biosphere Reserve issue highlighted growing problems of suppression and control of individual rights and freedoms by government. She commented on the core issue saying:

[T]here isn't one government agency given the opportunity to spread their authority and take rights that won't put this nation in real... I don't know what you would call it... throes of actual communism. I mean, there are two systems of government essentially. The system of government that respects individual rights and the system of government that takes those rights, there's no in between. (Jane Darcy, personal interview)

A variety of extraordinary claims about the OMAB circulated throughout the Ozarks and beyond. Some of the more popular allegations were the following: forced reduction and relocation of the Ozark population and placement of citizens in concentration camps; destruction of homes, businesses, and infrastructure in order to reclaim areas as wilderness; accession of Ozark land and natural resources to the United Nations; and the presence or likely arrival of United Nations military troops in the

Ozarks, which explained the alleged black helicopter and white tank sightings in the Ozarks region. One letter to the editor suspiciously reported,

They imply the U.N. is concerned about certain life forms, but is this true? Or just another insult to our intelligence? To be honest, the entire matter reeks of subversion. Rumor has it that the U.N. is to train foreign troops on our soil in the art of warfare, but under the guise of “ecological research,” and if the federal government goes through with this U.N. land grab the citizens of the Ozarks region will be left out literally in the cold. (Dean 1996:2)

The Ozark Regional Land Trust representative shared some allegations he heard from one opponent, who claimed that “...people were going to be moved off their land [and] moved out of the Ozarks. If they picked a flower, like one on [the] endangered species list... they would be taken, not to the United States Court, but to a world tribunal (Ben Johnson, personal interview).” George Oviatt, the Buffalo River representative, reported,

I had people come in my office and tell me that they had seen the Russian tanks in the wilderness areas. Of course my response was to bring me a picture and I’ll believe it. I had people tell me that there were going to be vast areas of Arkansas [where] people were going to be driven out of the communities and that they (the areas) were going to be left as total wilderness for just the animals. (personal interview)

Many opponents believed that these events either were already taking place or that they would have followed a successful OMAB nomination.

While some opponent claims rivaled the popular television conspiracy thriller “The X-Files” in their complexity and believability, other opponent claims required far less imagination to understand. An Arkansas journalist summed the ‘on the record’ concerns of one anti-OMAB activist he interviewed saying,

I went over this with \_\_\_\_ because I wanted to make sure I quoted her exactly right... But it was to the extent that a lot of this property was going to be given over. Control of it was going to be given to the UN, or it was at least going to have this designation. And it was all going to happen without anybody knowing

about it. And that's what she was willing to stand behind in print. But you get to talking to these people and they go off way beyond that premise, but that's why I called her back because I wanted to make sure I [was] understanding [her] exactly. (Robert Martin, personal interview)

The central concern about the substance of the OMAB plan was the threat of land seizures and potential land use regulations. Opponents feared having their land taken to make nature reserves or losing control of their property due to government or international regulation. Also, they believed that a MAB would result in the exclusion of humans from certain areas of the Biosphere Reserve.

A popular belief was that the OMAB would have resulted in the eviction of Ozark citizens from properties located within the Biosphere Reserve. One opponent expressed this belief in a letter to the editor writing, "The Biosphere Reserve program, despite your protestations to the contrary, would have forced massive land controls on Ozarkers and evicted tens of thousands of people from the land which they own (Jud 1997a:12)."

Evictions, opponents alleged, would have occurred either because land would immediately be taken to establish nature parks or because property owners would be so restricted in use of their land that they must surely abandon it to make a living elsewhere.

OMAB opponents were very concerned about the potential for increased regulation and control of Ozark land should the Biosphere Reserve have been designated. The Missouri Farm Bureau, who came out in opposition to the OMAB nomination, stated in a press release that, "the physical taking of property is not the issue. What is of concern to our members are the cumulative effects of local, state, and federal regulation. Regulation can affect land use and, over time, actually make it impossible to for a family farm to survive (Kruse 1997:1)."

It was obvious that opponents viewed the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program as a precursor to further attempts to implement environmental regulations and restrictions in the Ozarks. One letter writer complained,

Through a jungle of bureaucracies Thomas Jefferson never imagined possible, we are daily told how we must conduct our industries, our businesses and our farms, and we are confronted with some branch of government telling us what we must do or cannot do with out property. (Roe 1997:13)

Notions that humans would be restricted, banned, controlled, and/or regulated within the Biosphere Reserve were commonplace. An editor's note prefacing an anti-OMAB letter to the editor in the *Mountain Echo* (Yellville, AR) explained to readers, that the Man and Biosphere Reserve Program "would involve the establishment of large nature reserves in this country on which public admittance would be limited or banned (*Mountain Echo* 1996:2)."

A handout included in a Take Back Arkansas seminar packet, a publication from the Property Rights Foundation, contrasted the myth vs. reality of various international and national environmental programs, including Biosphere Reserves. The article described what local residents could expect from the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve in their area. First, the article indicated that the goal of a MAB was to restore natural areas, meaning that the area would be managed "so that human influence on nature is eliminated (LaGrasse 1997:1)." As a consequence of this goal, the article continued, Biosphere Reserves necessarily bring with them at the request of environmentalists government sanctioned "land acquisition and more 'environmental' restrictions on land-use (LaGrasse 1997:1)." The article summed the treatment by reporting that, "for Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites to be successful, areas



must be off-limits to hunting, and many roads used by hunters and tourists closed (LaGrasse 1997:1).” Beliefs similar to these were common among OMAB opponents.

Some Steering Committee representatives and U.S. MAB officials answered opponent concerns regarding impacts to private property rights by emphasizing there would be no regulations associated with the OMAB and that the MAB program carried no force of law. These explanations, however, were often met with disbelief. There was suspicion and skepticism for a program that did not appear to actually do anything. As one individual wrote, “...George Oviatt asserts that this program is an innocent, benevolent proposal, strictly voluntary with no regulatory authority. This is absurd. What possible use is a program with no regulatory authority? (Middleton, 1996b:4A).” Similarly, another opponent wrote, “The notion that the U.N. MAB is a toothless document is patently absurd. Has anyone ever seen a government program that carried no weight of law or regulation (Schlernitzauer 1997:B6)?” Opponents’ research and intuition led them to believe that the OMAB would have brought threats to property rights in the Ozarks, contrary to official protests stating otherwise.

The more fantastic allegations about the OMAB were readily picked up by the popular media in articles and superficially defined the general opposition position. Punctuation of the more creative and extravagant conspiracy claims may have contributed to a blanket dismissal of opponent concerns and grievances by Steering Committee members and others. For example, the *West Plains Daily Quill* (1997b:1) reprinted a St. Louis Post-Dispatch editorial that stated:

It’s one thing when the black helicopter crowd gets together in paranoid little klatches to talk about an imminent invasion by the United Nations. It’s another when the Missouri Department of Conservation and the National Park Service cancel worthwhile programs to placate the conspiracy buffs.

Such a cursory glance at the issue, however, minimizes the fact citizens had real concerns and complaints regarding the proposed Biosphere Reserve, regardless of how fanciful some assertions seemed to those not inclined toward conspiracy theories. The beliefs expressed by opponents were their perception of the threats and consequences of an Ozark Biosphere Reserve. However unlikely such claims were to agency personnel, journalists, or the general public, they reflected the perceptions and belief systems of at least some citizens of Ozark communities. Moreover, given some aspects of the local culture and history of the Ozarks, citizen concerns about property rights do not seem quite so far fetched.

### **The Influence of Place**

Opponents perceived the OMAB nomination as yet another threat to cultural and personal identities linked to place. Even the *Feasibility Study* discussed the intense cultural pride Ozark citizens felt and identified within the area (Faulkner and White 1991). Many of the people we talked to described Ozark citizens as independent, strong, and stubborn. One interviewee stated that both the best and worst trait of an "...Ozark hillbilly, which I consider myself, ...[is] the hard-headed, spirit of independence of the native Ozarker (Kevin Larson, personal interview)." The representative of Take Back Arkansas described herself and other "Ozarkians" as highly independent because they and their ancestors had come to the Ozarks and survived by working hard, being independent, and living by their wits (Jane Darcy, personal interview).

Ozark citizens take pride in being independent and capable of managing their own property. Therefore, the TBA representative added, they resent it when people in

Washington D.C., and perhaps other countries, make rules and decisions that private property owners must abide by (Jane Darcy, personal interview—field notes). The desire to control individual destiny and to maintain ownership and control of private property are part of Ozark cultural identity. Moreover, Ozarkers believe they can manage natural resources and steward the land much better on an individual basis, without the interference of government or anyone else. This excerpt from a letter to the editor highlights the personal and cultural identity associated with land ownership and control:

We own property in Nevada and most of that state is BLM land. Go out and talk to residents and you learn more about government mismanagement. Having worked for the Federal Government, I know far too well just how inefficient it is. Most employees care about nothing but being paid. Once they have tenure they do as little as possible until they retire. And you want us to believe that these people will care for our land better than we will? That is like telling me the baby sitter cared more for my boys than I did. We own 235 acres in Arkansas and we cherish and protect it. WE guard it like a child and every single day we oversee it. (Blanchard 1996:2).

Ozark citizens are not strangers to controversy and contention over the control and use of natural resources in the region. Quite the contrary, the Ozarks has a rich history of conflict over a variety of environmental and natural resource issues that have at times pitted various stakeholders against each other. OMAB opponents and proponents alike were often candid about the deep distrust and resentment some Ozark citizens feel toward various governmental agencies, especially the National Park Service. A member of Take Back Arkansas stated that the OMAB experience was just another example of how the National Park Service "...has overstepped its bounds, egregiously... case after case, after case, they've overstepped (Jane Darcy, personal interview)."

Many of the Steering Committee members we talked with were keenly aware of this legacy of distrust and resentment. In fact, all committee members were aware of these lingering sentiments by 1991 when Faulkner and White reported that,

Overall the attitude toward the National River and National Scenic Riverways agencies is the least favorable, in part because the National Park Service condemned land and forced people from their homes more recently than other agencies. Considerable ill will persists around this issue. (1991:71)

The cultural memory of the eminent domain takings in the Ozarks served as an ominous foundation for the OMAB nomination effort. One newspaper editor from southern Missouri described his participation in this cultural memory:

...[during the creation of the national parks] if I couldn't make a deal with the government they eventually paid me what a commission...or somebody said [my property] was worth, and I was told to get off and they took it by eminent domain. So, that is a reality and some people remember that from the 60's. I think in a lot of those cases people were allowed to live out their lives on the property. It wasn't the kind of thing where they came by with a bus and herded everybody aboard and shuttled them away or anything. But it's not a great step in some people's minds from using eminent domain to buy a miles worth of property along... either side [of] three rivers... to using eminent domain to move us out of an area that is a part of the Biosphere Study Area that they want to keep pristine and stop further development. It's a big step for me, but it wasn't a big step for a lot of people. I guess what I'm saying is that there is a seed there. (Kevin Larson, personal interview)

The specter of eminent domain takings of private property by the National Park service was raised time and again by opponents of the OMAB. Many opponents cited historical eminent domain takings in the Ozarks as proof that property seizures would accompany the proposed Biosphere Reserve. One concerned Ozark woman wrote,

Do they forget what happened on the Buffalo River in the 1970's? Selective memory, or, as my husband would say, ocular rectal vision. I am amazed. My husband said to me, "If they put a gun to your head and told you 'We will only pay you \$10 an acre for your land or shoot you,' what would you do?" My response was "Shoot me. I will die for what I believe in. (Kerstetter 1996:5J)

To opponents, the idea of the government seizing land from home and property owners was not far fetched. Instead, it was practically a given that land seizures or land use restrictions would certainly occur if the Biosphere Reserve became a reality.

In addition to eminent domain takings, opponents cited a variety of historical and contemporary situations, circumstances, and occurrences that they believed further supported their contentions about the MAB program and the scheming of government officials. Everything from the alleged government cover-up of agent-orange to the imposition of zoning ordinances was cited as proof of government desire to deceive, manipulate, and control Ozark citizens. Narratives of people's experiences in other regions and states served as evidence of the potential negative impacts of further government ownership or control of land, such as property rights conflicts that have arisen from the implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Closer to home, the OMAB effort was likened to proposed efforts to govern natural resources, like the Natural Streams Act initiative in Missouri in 1989 and 1990, which critics alleged would have led to the imposition of massive land use controls on private landowners. In Arkansas, opponents' often referred to the then-raging Crooked Creek controversy where the state sought the right to regulate gravel-mining activities damaging riparian ecosystems along state waterways.

### **The Sources**

Although some Ozark citizens may have been predisposed to object to natural resource programs based on perceptions of past violations of citizen rights by government, it was not merely past remembrances of objectionable government activities

that opponents relied on as the foundation of their beliefs. To the contrary, opponent arguments rested heavily on more contemporary evidence to support their claims about MABs and to substantiate their beliefs about the hazards of a UN sponsored program in the US.

Much of the general information about the United Nations led environmental movement conspiracy is well documented by individuals who seem to have devoted their lives and careers to informing others about such plots. Many opponents pointed to the writings and speeches of self proclaimed experts on conspiracies of the United Nations and the environmental movement. Three of the most influential of these experts are Henry Lamb, Michael Coffman, and Texe Marrs.

Henry Lamb publishes a journal entitled *éco·logic* and attends conferences as a featured speaker who reveals the United Nations plan to implement a global, socialist regime through environmentalism. Michael Coffman of Environmental Perspectives, Inc also publishes books and, in addition, sells videotaped lectures of himself describing the United Nations conspiracy. In addition to elaborating on the efforts of the United Nations to implement a global government, Coffman spends a good deal of time debunking scientific evidence supporting the existence of environmental problems. Coffman is widely known for the creation of colorful maps hypothetically depicting the limitations in human land use in the United States should the environmental conspiracy be realized. The maps visually record the potential combined impact of the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program, Wildlands Project, the Global Biodiversity Assessment, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Finally, Texe Marrs of the Living Truth Ministries focuses his research and publishing on the immoral and Satanic undertones of the United Nations and the environmental movement, particularly the conspiracy to replace Christianity with Earth Goddess or pagan religions. An Arkansas journalist who interviewed key Arkansas opponents reported that the individual who initiated OMAB opposition in Northwest Arkansas relied heavily on the 'investigative reports' of Texe Marrs (Robert Martin, personal interview). In the Ozarks, where fundamentalist religions are widespread, such claims found significant resonance among citizen belief systems.

While OMAB opponents often referred to these experts and their ideas, it is unclear how much influence such experts had on opponents or when their ideas became integrated into opposition rhetoric. To fully elaborate the belief systems upon which opponents' claims were based would be a report within itself. The remainder of this section, however, provides a synopsis of the major sources used by opponents to verify the need for public concern specifically relating to the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program.

Opponent claims were grounded in a variety of non-MAB documents and sources of information believed to support and confirm their suspicions and fears about the consequences of a Biosphere Reserve. They referenced non-governmental books and articles such as *Earth in the Balance* by Al Gore and the infamous Wildlands Project proposal published in the June 1993 issue of *Science* magazine. Opponents found the Wildlands Project to contain the most objectionable objectives. It proved their worst fears about the plans of extreme environmentalists to depopulate the land of humans and restore it to wilderness. Gore's book, on the other hand, was most often cited to prove

opposition claims relating to the contamination of the United States government, especially the Executive Branch, by extremist environmental ideals. This contamination includes the commitment of the US federal government to assist in the global plan to replace Christianity with nature or Gaia worship.

Opponents did not rely solely on secondary sources of information as proof of government efforts to seize and control property in the Ozarks as part of wider environmental agenda. Much of their proof came from original documents published by US MAB, UN MAB, the United Nations, and, remarkably, the OMAB Steering Committee.

Opponents aggressively acquired information on MAB's, the OMAB nomination, and any related topics or issues. They cited numerous documents published by the United Nations, especially the Biodiversity Treaty, the *Global Biodiversity Assessment*, *Our Global Neighborhood*, and various UN MAB publications. In addition to United Nations publications, opponents referred to various federal programs and publications such as reports on the President's Council on Sustainable Development, Agenda 21, and reports published by federal natural resource agencies. Finally, lending a good deal of credence to their assertions, they quoted from documents directly related to the OMAB nomination effort such as the 1991 *Feasibility Study*, official correspondence between agencies and organizations, and even internal agency memorandums and notes.

When engaged in public discourse on the issue, opponents often promoted the empirical nature of their evidence and the reliability of their sources. Many opponents evaded direct, detailed, and clear explanations of their claims by summarily referring to



the mass of evidence available and irrefutable credibility of source documents. One letter to the editor assured readers,

Is the Man and the Biosphere program (MAB) a threat or not to our way of life? Well, if we carefully examine the facts and source documents it is quite clear the ultimate goals and objectives are in fact quite anathema to America's constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and rights of self determination. (Schlernitzauer 1997: B6)

Often, the mere existence of a large amount of evidence or a particular publication was offered to the public as proof of the conspiracy, without specifically detailing the objectionable information or facts. For example, a reporter covering the anti-OMAB public meeting in Thayer, MO described the presentation of a local activist. She stated that the speaker, Ray Cunio, while talking about the notorious connection between the Biodiversity Treaty and the "1,040-page" *Global Diversity Assessment*, held up the *Assessment* saying, "'You don't want to know what's in here and what they are going to do!' (Henderson Vaughn 1997:7)." However, Cunio did not continue to "explain what he objects to in the book (Henderson Vaughn 1997:7)." Similarly, Don Hartley, an OMAB opponent from Yellville, AR, stated:

The sheer volume of publications, data, reprints and handouts should lead any reasonable person of sound mind to the conclusion that the dedicated and conscientious researchers of this material are not indulging in misconceptions and rumors. (Hartley 1996:3).

Like many opponents Hartley did not present the evidence, but alluded to its existence. He continued to report that he and other activists "have the facts" and that documents "will be on display in Marion County for any and all members of the public and residents of Marion and surrounding counties to see for themselves (Hartley 1996:3)."

While OMAB opponents often did not specifically cite and explain evidence of a conspiracy, they frequently encouraged citizens to obtain the original documents for

themselves and, in most cases, gave tips on why, where, and how to look for information on the conspiracy. One activist encouraged citizens to get the facts, he wrote:

Facts will stand when name-calling and character attacks will not. We must get busy or our demise will rest solely on our own heads. Let's not be willfully snookered when the facts are so clear. By the way, the Internet is an incredibly good source of information. If you are not online visit your local library and do a search on the topic Man and the Biosphere, sustainable development, etc.”  
(Schlernitzauer 1997: B6)

Opponents spoon-fed concerned Ozark citizens a complex soup of documents, narratives, and claims relating the potential horrors of MABs, then buttressed their position by stressing the urgent need to act. If interested citizens took time to venture forth in search of original documents and evidence themselves, they were already primed on how to interpret the bits of evidence taken from here and there.

At public and town meetings concerned citizens could actually see the primary sources of evidence for themselves. Offending documents were displayed as speakers generally articulated their meaning and described impending implications for the United States, especially the Ozarks. Any citizen attending the Take Back Arkansas meeting in November of 1997 had an opportunity to view copies of most of the incriminating documents first hand, including the *Global Biodiversity Assessment* and text books on conservation biology (Field notes, TBA Conference 11/15/97). In addition to exhibiting big books, opponents made packets of literature, including copies of evidence from primary and secondary sources, and offered hordes of handouts for citizens to take and examine for themselves.

Many of the sources opponents referred to and quoted from were deemed quite reliable. In fact, OMAB proponents routinely recommended opponent sources when interested citizens inquired about the nomination. The *Feasibility Study* and MAB

documents, for example, served as evidence for OMAB proponents and opponents alike. The reliance on original documents from noteworthy sources provided opponents with credibility and at the same time made it difficult for Steering Committee members to refute all opponent allegations. The fact that they were using and interpreting primary sources to prove that an OMAB would have negative consequences for the Ozarks was an important point of legitimization for opponent claims.

After the controversy was well under way, proponents of the OMAB and officials associated with the MAB program asserted that opponent claims were rumors and lies. In addition, a few newspaper articles and editorials discounting OMAB claims appeared in some Missouri and Arkansas newspapers. In response attacks on credibility, one representative of Take Back Arkansas confidently retorted:

Everything that has come from TBA [Take Back Arkansas, Inc.] was first documented by papers obtained from the Buffalo National River “Preserve”, the U.S. State Department, UNESCO and other sources considered reliable. The irrefutable information, documentation and more is now public and available from Take Back Arkansas, Inc. (Denham 1997:2).

### **Teasing Out the Conspiracy**

The complexity of the MAB program in terms of both its conceptualization and the difficulty of describing the program’s management strategies in practice likely amplified the concerns of Ozark residents. A Missouri newspaper reporter shared wonderment about program goals saying:

I had heard a Man and the Biosphere presentation given by a man with the Park Service at an environmental conference. At the time I listened to his presentation and my reaction was what’s this all about really? I don’t get it. (Devin Shaw, personal interview)

Opponents had similar reactions when they were given the official explanations about the MAB program. It was difficult for them to understand why the program was necessary and exactly how it would work.

To answer these questions for themselves and other Ozark citizens, activists examined words, phrases, and passages from various documents. This research allegedly pointed to the negative consequences of a Biosphere Reserve and a government cover-up of the nomination effort. Evidence, however, was consistently interpreted out of context and in tandem with a multitude of other documents not connected with Biosphere Reserves. As previously noted, the Man and the Biosphere Reserve Program was at times linked to the Wildlands Project, Global Biodiversity Assessment, Heritage River Corridors, and many other programs, legislation, scientific research, international treaties, and events. It was also linked to general management philosophies like 'ecosystem management,' 'conservation biology,' and 'sustainable development.' And in some cases, the Biosphere Reserve Program was conceptually linked to non-environmental programs and publications, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Opponents read between the lines of documents and reports for hidden or covert meanings and made broad, sweeping connections between MAB and a variety of other documents, programs, and events. Robert Martin, an Arkansas news reporter, read excerpts from an interview he conducted with an anti-OMAB activist. He explained how she alluded to the hidden meanings in a meeting agenda from the National Forest Service:

...[She said,] 'I take papers and belong to organizations all over the United States. When you get to learn the language you'll know what's going on... It's [a] language you have to learn.'... And she's pointing to a government Forest Service meeting agenda. They're going to have a little session on something and it's called "Teaching Cats to Swim." She points at that sentence and says, 'teaching cats to swim, why would you have to teach a cat to swim and overcome resistance

to change unless you're going to take over the land and make it ecotourism [and] watchable wildlife, a lucrative new market.' She's really not nuts, she hasn't lost it but she... this is how she sees it. This lights a light bulb in her mind and she thinks she's seeing through, that [these are] code words for something else. (Robert Martin, personal interview)

Opponents saw links between MAB and other programs, project, and publications because many shared the same jargon and broad conceptual ideas. Words, events, and activities associated with MAB and the OMAB nomination process were a major source of confusion and misunderstanding about the project and its implications.

The MAB program is complex, as are the scientific and managerial concepts on which it is founded. Much of the program, in official documents for example, is explained using natural resource and scientific jargon common to natural resource professionals, scientists, and even some environmentalists. The meanings associated with such terms as core area or buffer zone, vary depending upon who uses them and how they are being employed.<sup>2</sup> In the Ozarks, the meanings of words and phrases used and defined in other programs or projects were continually ascribed to the MAB program by opponents.

Of particular concern to opponents, and where most of the confusion manifested itself, was with the design of the MAB. The concentric circle reserve design, consisting of the reserve core, a buffer zone, and a transition area, is a general concept now widely discussed and utilized by natural resource managers and scientists (Meffe and Carroll 1997). Inclusion of the reserve design and use of technical jargon were problematic in

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<sup>2</sup> Opponents cited and interpreted a variety of scientific and environmental jargon. Environmental or management jargon set red flags for opponents. According to opponents, these words indicated environmental activities that would threaten property rights and/or such language was indicative of the UN/environmental conspiracy. Other words and phrases identified by opponents as suspect and loaded were: ecoregion, bioregion, ecosystem management, conservation biology, biodiversity, quality of life, preservation, tree ordinance, endangered species, habitat, watchful wildlife, scenic highways/riverways,

the Ozarks, however, because as a consequence opponents equated the Wildlands Project with the MAB program. When asked if opponent grievances sprung from terminology and definitions associated with the MAB program, Robert Martin responded, “Yeah, and in particular about the way that the Biosphere concentric circles looks like the Wildlands project. ...Some of the terminology I guess is the same. It was a constant source of confusion (personal interview).”

As indicated earlier, opponents feared the Wildlands Project because it advocated radical steps in management activity in order to protect biodiversity. An article about the Wildlands Project, referred to me by an OMAB opponent stated,

The sweep of the idea (to protect biodiversity) elicited gasps from the audience. On the Oregon coast, for instance—a shoreline dotted by small towns and inundated by millions of summer tourists—the Wildlands approach calls for 23.4% of the land to be returned to wilderness, and another 26.2% to be severely restricted in terms of human use. Most roads would be closed; some would be ripped out of the landscape. The plan does not specify what would happen to nearby inhabitants. (Mann and Plummer 1993:1868)

Later, the authors reported that the design of the Wildlands Project “consists of three elements: core reserves, buffer or multiple use zones, and connecting corridors. Core reserves, consisting of a quarter or more of an area in any given bio-region, would be off limits to much human activity (Mann and Plummer 1993:1869).” OMAB opponents consistently ascribed the management goals articulated in this article about the Wildlands Project to the OMAB in their anti-MAB rhetoric.

Opponents believed there were connections between programs and documents because they shared jargon and concepts. William Jud, a very vocal OMAB opponent, connected the Wildlands Project to the Biodiversity Treaty saying, “The United Nations

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heritage sites, scenic culture, consensus building, overcoming resistance to change, sustainable development, sustainable communities, and critical habitat.

adopted Wildlands as its preferred plan for protection of “biodiversity” and made Wildlands part of their Biodiversity Treaty (Jud 1997b:B6).” In turn, the Biodiversity Treaty, a United Nations sponsored document, was connected to UN MAB program and, ultimately, to US MAB.

Opponents extrapolated the meanings of terms in a variety of other programs and research, with the meaning of jargon in the MAB program. They frequently attributed the goals of various environmental programs, as well as the enforcement strategies of environmental laws, to that of the MAB program. Opposition claims were constructed based on this collage of information. They consolidated all the information they found no matter what document, agency, or entity published it. As a result, their interpretation of MAB was based on a conglomeration of a wide array of environmental, and even non-environmental, programs and policies. No distinctions were made between programs, agencies, or entities.

In most cases, they envisioned the worst case scenario, claiming that core areas would be totally off limits to humans and that access to the other reserve zones would be severely limited in a MAB. Ray Cunio, an OMAB opponent who spoke at a public meeting in Thayer, MO, reportedly told the audience that “A biosphere reserve starts on public lands and expands from there. No human activity would be permitted in the core area, and in the transition area, humans could live, but could do nothing without government control (Henderson Vaughn 1997:1).” Opponents, such as Cunio, articulated the potential impacts of a MAB in the Ozarks based on a synthesized and hypothetical knowledge base.

Although interpretations and implications often varied from activist to activist, they were all derived from the same type of accumulative synthesis of information. Opponents meticulously referenced, cross-referenced, and quoted offending documents, often including page numbers and cross-references. For example, Ed Manor, a regular letter writer in Arkansas, provided readers with offending quotes from the *Feasibility Study* that proved Steering Committee members wanted to keep the nomination secret:

On page 114 of the Ozark biosphere feasibility study you will find a total of sixteen American agencies, not ten, listed. I quote page 43, paper 7: “the steering committee decided that public meetings would not take place as such meeting[s] tend to polarize the public view and have negative press.” Page 100, paragraph 2: “There should be no press conferences or large public meetings as they encourage polarized views.” (Polarized as in “negative”). [parenthetical statement original] (Manor 1997:4A)

Another example, found in the *Newton County Times*, is an editorial. Ruth Ann Wilson provided readers with the pertinent quotes from various sources proving the U.N.-environmental conspiracy by quoting passages from a variety of sources. She quoted a passage from the article “The Wildlands Project” published in *Wild Earth* magazine. She also provided quotes attributed to: Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of the 1992 Earth Summit and Co-founder of UNEP; John Davis, a member of Earth First! quoted in *Wild Earth* magazine; Reed F. Noss, author of the Wildlands Project; and Daniel Sitarz, “editor of the United Nations-approved abridged version of Agenda 21, main agreement of the Earth Summit (Wilson R. 1996:2).” She summed her patchwork presentation of evidence by saying “You be the judge (Wilson R.1996:2).”

The nature of the opponent information gathering and interpretation made it difficult for agency representatives to refute or even address activist claims. To argue against another person’s interpretation of words, meanings, and phrases, one must be



familiar with the sources as well as the logic being applied to interpret and connect them. Answering such allegations and complaints was not an easy task for Steering Committee representatives. The convoluted and inferential nature of opponent claims made contradiction somewhat difficult.

As discussed earlier, opponents and proponents often referred to the same documents as proof of their own claims. When citizens would call asking questions, Steering Committee representatives would refer them to the *Feasibility Study* or US MAB publications for more information. Opponents, however, often cited these same documents as proof of their allegations. Frequently, it was not the source of information in dispute; rather, the interpretation of documents was contested between opponents and Steering Committee representatives. Brent Conner of AG&F shared his experience trying to decipher and refute opponent allegations:

I spent lots of time on the phone with them trying to convince them that I cannot find what they're saying in these reports and things. They'd tell me page by page where and I'd go look it up and I'd say 'that's not what it says.' I said '...you're reading things in here that's not here.' They'd always say 'well there could have [been].' Well, yes, anything could happen. (personal interview)

Proponents and journalists agreed that there was really no way to argue with opponent logic since they made countless references and numerous leaps of faith in their interpretations. A newspaper reporter described opponent preparation and evidence. In this portion of the interview, he recounted his experience interviewing an OMAB opponent from Northwest Arkansas, saying:

RM: Oh, they're amazing. You can't counter them. If you challenge them on one point, and my whole purpose was never to challenge them, but they'll point to something else. And \_\_\_\_, he had the whole... he had a 10 pound book that had to do with biology...

TG: The Biodiversity Assessment?

RM: Yeah, and he had it all dog-eared [with] little yellow tab notes on each page and there's no way anybody could refute that, including the agency people. You know, because there were references, oblique references to Wildlands or something. And it was a matter of taking this book and matching this reference with something over here on page 32 of this other thing that had to do with page 86 over here and weaving it all together. And it was supposed to show the conspiracy. (Robert Martin, personal interview)

Many Steering Committee representatives who talked with opponents were frustrated and unsure of how to respond to their concerns and complaints. Conner, of AG&F, reflected on various conversations with opponents saying,

I would ask them, 'where are [you] reading this and where does it say that?' and they [would] tell me 'well, it's not written in there.' 'You can't see it; it's hid[den]. So, there was no way you could ever respond to it. It was always something out there looming [but] nobody [could] get their hands on [it]...It was really odd, I've never handled anything quite like this before. (personal interview)

Possibly because of the nature of opponent allegations, agency efforts to address anti-OMAB claims in a public manner were minimal. Buffalo National River and the Missouri Department of Conservation were the only agencies that attempted to publicly contradict opponent assertions. However, both agency press releases came after the Ozarks was already deeply embroiled in controversy, November of 1996 and March of 1997 respectively. Kevin Larson, a Southern Missouri newspaper editor indicated that the nature of citizen complaints likely caused agency officials to ignore the issue. When asked his opinion on the Steering Committee's effort to answer citizen concerns, he stated:

In my opinion, they [the Steering Committee] did it entirely the wrong way. They waited until almost the last minute. I think their idea was 'we won't even [respond]... this is so ridiculous... we won't dignify it with a response.' Which was just the wrong thing to do. They should've jumped on it from day one and had everybody from the top down in every agency out doing public relations dispelling the rumors and that's not what they did. They didn't take it seriously enough. (personal interview)

The eruption of public opposition, the often times convoluted nature of opposition claims, and mounting political pressure to abandon the nomination effort no doubt led Steering Committee representatives to be somewhat non-responsive to citizen inquiries. The two attempts to publicly address opposition claims appeared to exacerbate rather than resolve the conflict. Jerry Conley of the Missouri Department of Conservation drew criticism from OMAB opponents when, in a press release, he responded to the OMAB fervor saying,

The jump from general proposals and odd maps to a conspiracy for evicting residents is ridiculous. People can believe what they want, but when they start spouting off and scaring vulnerable folks like some who've called our offices, they go too far. Show the scarecrows to the door. (*West Plains Daily Quill* 1997a:12)

Many opponents disliked what they thought was the trivializing of their message and being summarily referred to as scarecrows. The Buffalo National River attempt to address opponent claims fared no better. George Oviatt stated that "...we issued our own letter to the editor, which really seemed to fuel the controversy even more because the people who were against it then used that as a point to say, 'we struck a nerve.'"

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the Ozarks, a relatively small number of opponents did an effective job of gathering and disseminating information on alleged evils of the OMAB nomination and MABs in general. Once they discovered the nomination effort, they worked quickly and furiously, confronting Steering Committee representatives, legislators and other politicians, as well as US MAB officials with their objections and accusations. They

sought information from a wide range of sources trying to find out what a MAB was and what it meant for the Ozarks.

Their interpretation of the MAB program was quite different from that of the OMAB Steering Committee. However, while some opponent claims appeared to be no more than well-crafted science fiction tales, their message was relatively clear. In the most basic sense, anti-OMAB activists were fearful of the imposition of regulations and losses of personal freedoms. They feared losing control over their property and, perhaps, their lives if the OMAB became a reality.

Opponents voiced their fears to the people of the Ozarks and, more importantly, to politicians sympathetic to opposition claims. By working quickly and efficiently, networks of opponents spread their versions of the facts about the MAB program. Although the OMAB nomination was dead by the time opponent activism actually reached full force, their efforts paid off in terms of casting a haze of suspicion around the US MAB Program. Unfortunately, the haze still lingers in the Ozarks and is spreading throughout the country, clouding a program meant to benefit people as well as the environment.

An analysis of opposition that surfaced in the Ozarks lends much insight into the motivations, strategies, and grievances of anti-MAB activists in the Ozarks and throughout the United States. After attending several property rights seminars, it is clear that the beliefs and opinions of anti-OMAB activists were by no means unique to the Ozarks. This being the case, there are several lessons one can draw from the Ozark experience.

First, US MAB and future nominating committees should note the insurmountable confusion and angst scientific jargon and other terminology could lead to during a nomination effort. The nature and direction of opposition claims suggests the need to evaluate the implications of the language of the MAB program. MAB proponents must recognize that some of the terms used in this program carry considerable cultural baggage and, more than likely, conjure up in many people's minds a series of meanings that do not match the intents of the program. In addition, use of ambiguous, popular scientific jargon makes it very difficult for people to understand what the program does and what differentiates it from other programs and policies.

Key terms such as 'biosphere' and 'reserve' are notable cases. The word 'biosphere', for example, is not part of everyday vernacular. Many individuals are only familiar with the term in reference to sterile environments employed in medical treatments of severe immune deficiency or the thus far ill-fated attempts to develop new human communities in created and self-contained 'biosphere' environments. Individuals who turn to the dictionary for a definition of 'biosphere' find, for example, "the totality of regions of the earth that support self-sustaining and self-regulating ecological systems (American Heritage Dictionary 1981:133)."

Such conceptualizations denote very controlled environments with well-regulated human behaviors within Biosphere Reserve areas. The very term 'biosphere' denotes the primacy of biological systems. While scientists understand biospheres to incorporate all living organisms (including humans), the word continues to be defined in exclusionary terms and with implications of strict control. Similarly, the term 'reserve' is not neutral. It has a tradition of use that associates it with areas set-aside from normal human activity

and in some instances, as in the case of wilderness reserves, denoting severely restricted human activity. For others, ‘reserve’ also seems to imply an area kept apart or saved for some other use. In each of these usage’s, there is an implicit assumption that there will be major changes in current uses of these spaces.

We are not suggesting that MAB or other programs need to jettison these terms in order to succeed. There are many instances of successful use of ‘biosphere’ in environmental protection efforts. Over time, residents in these areas have developed more valid knowledge of these terms’ implications. Proponents of new efforts need to recognize the existing cultural meanings associated with the program’s nomenclature, however, and should mount appropriate efforts to differentiate the specific meanings of MAB usage from those in the vernacular.

The inclusion of new or additional terms that better communicate the multidisciplinary goals of the program ought to be considered. For example, the notion of “Man and the Biosphere Reserve” is intended to deliver the message of human-nature interactions, but prefacing the notion of ‘biosphere’ or ‘reserve’ with ‘community’ might better connote the notion of community ownership, sponsorship, and involvement. This job will not be easy because opposition groups now attach negative connotations to so many of the current words used in environmental protection, including ‘sustainability,’ ‘bioregion,’ and ‘ecosystem.’ However, attempts should be made to find terminology or phraseology that effectively expresses the human dimension of the program, in addition to the environmental.

Once terms are chosen and defined, nominating committees must take care to do the proper community outreach and education about the program. This outreach should

include efforts to define the meanings of any terms or concepts, including those that seem self-explanatory to natural resource managers. When necessary, extra efforts should be made to explain how the proposed program is similar or different from other programs utilizing similar jargon or concepts.

The Ozark experience indicates a need for nominating committee representatives to actively and, when necessary, personally take time to answer citizen questions and inquiries about the program. Sending brochures or pamphlets in the mail, for example, is often not sufficient and a rather impersonal means of addressing personal inquiries. As we see from the OMAB case, citizens are no longer content with being uninformed or half-informed about natural resource programs. If neglected, they will seek out and interpret information on their own. Letting the public fend for themselves is not wise, as the OMAB Committee discovered, because citizen interpretations may be very different from those of a nominating committee and may bias the public against the program before proponents have shared their interpretation. In short, providing citizens with information does no good if citizens cannot understand what they are given and are left to interpret the meaning on their own. Efforts must be made to make the U.S. MAB program conceptually more citizen friendly. If citizens are to make an informed decision as to the acceptability of a MAB in their region, they must be fairly and adequately informed about the program and the nomination.

The US MAB program also suffers some public opposition due to its structural and linguistic links to UN programs. Many American citizens have, at best, ambivalent feelings about the United Nations. Public opposition to UN programs appears to have greatly increased as a result of events during the Reagan presidency. Although the US

MAB program is independent of the UN, the fact that it uses the same language, similar rationales and rhetoric, and relies on UN approval of its nominations raises both confusion and concern among some people.<sup>3</sup> Individuals often overlook agency structural differentiation and can only see the commonalities.

Again, we are not suggesting that the US program must necessarily change its language or process because of these connections. However, the program must realize the implications of the UN associations and develop strategies that emphasize the local and national dimensions of the program and consider means by which the US program might develop its own distinctive identity.

The Ozark MAB experience highlights the need for proponents who wish to create a new Biosphere Reserve to take the time to identify and understand any local or regional historical events that might impact on contemporary efforts. Such knowledge is necessary for three primary reasons. First, and as we have discussed, individual and collective memory of the negative consequences of previous environmental protection programs may condition local communities to reject proposed new efforts, even when new initiatives are markedly different from its predecessors. Historical events have a way of entering into local narrative and customary traditions and to serve as a template for interpreting newly proposed programs. Biosphere Reserve proponents may often have to make special efforts to distance themselves from this legacy.

Second, the history of previous negative events should be suggestive of how new efforts should be constructed, from the selection and implementation of community

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<sup>3</sup> In fact it was somewhat difficult for people to believe that MABs were not controlled by the UN when entrance signs to designated US parks announced that they have been designated a United Nations Man and the Biosphere Reserve. This circumstance struck many opponents as somewhat counter intuitive.



partnerships to the identification of key agencies and individuals whose participation in the nomination process should either be avoided or condoned. Knowledge of actors and agencies involved in previous disputes, both in terms of opposition and advocacy, ought to suggest which individuals and organizations need to be involved in any nomination process. Moreover, such knowledge may indicate where opposition will come from and in what form.

In terms of the inclusion or exclusion of individuals, organizations, or agencies participating in the nomination process, it is important to remember that power structures within communities typically include both formal and informal organizations and public and private groups. While elected officials and individuals in visible public offices are normally important, very often community sentiment and decision-making are swayed by individuals and groups working behind the scenes. Such powerbrokers must be identified.

Further, historical knowledge ought to suggest which individuals or groups may pose a liability to a nomination effort as active proponents. It is not that these persons or organizations should be excluded from a nomination, rather their public roles and presence might be de-emphasized. Frankly, considering the OMAB nomination, it would not have been difficult to predict that an effort led by the National Park Service would meet some stiff opposition. Previous public conflicts over the creation of NPS sites and controversies over public access, hunting and trapping, wild horses, and other issues are historical events that have primed the Ozark public to stand in opposition to NPS endeavors.

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Opponents continually noted such displays located at Yellowstone National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains as US parks that had already been acquiesced to the UN.

We realize this is a difficult subject, particularly as the NPS was committed to the MAB concepts and provided strong leadership to the Steering Committee. However, we know, for example, that among Federal agencies there is probably better receptivity to the Forest Service than to NPS, and that local attachment to state agencies (e.g., Missouri Department of Conservation) is stronger and more positive than to most federal agencies. It would likely have helped matters if MDC had taken on a more major role and the federal partners, in turn, had worked more behind the scenes.

Finally, proponents should use the substance of previous controversies to identify issues of local concern and, more importantly, those individuals and groups most likely to hold and express those concerns. This knowledge, however, should not be used to skirt likely confrontational issues. Instead, such knowledge should be used to implement proactive activities to mollify or even circumvent conflict.

In the Ozarks, proponents appeared to have recognized dimensions of likely local opposition and chose processional routes they hoped would avoid those dimensions. Avoiding potential controversy by excluding publics deemed inconsequential or unnecessary, however, is no longer an effective strategy for natural resource managers. In this era of telecommunications and increasing citizen scrutiny of government, it is implausible to believe major programs can be initiated without the knowledge and support of affected constituencies.

In fairness to local MAB proponents, a number of historical and cultural issues--some of them beyond the control of the Steering Committee--combined to doom the nomination. Proactive steps to develop local support and to address individual concerns

before they became collectivized, however, could have initiated a collaborative process in which the community took greater ownership of the project.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The OMAB Legacy**

Under pressure from citizens and politicians, the idea to establish an Ozarks Man and the Biosphere Reserve sank meekly into the Ozarks hills. Remembrances of the Biosphere Reserve controversy now add to the already rich history of social disagreements over environmental concerns in the region. As the conspiracy dust continues to settle, agencies and organizations that participated in the OMAB have returned their daily routines, though perhaps a little wiser. Proponents agree that nothing short of a grass-roots, community effort to resurrect the MAB idea would entice former participants to ever try again. Unfortunately, given the events and circumstances surrounding the failed nomination attempt, it would be unwise for any person to hold their breath while waiting for community action to rise out of the OMAB ashes.

On the upshot, one of the wonderful benefits of remembering the past is that it may improve our understanding of the present and, in turn, help guide us in our choices and actions as we move on to future endeavors. While this report comes too late to assist the OMAB Steering Committee, it may be timely enough to aid future committees interested in pursuing a MAB designation in the United States. In fact, any individual or group may find the wisdom born out of the Ozarks fire beneficial as they necessarily move, conceptually and practically, toward more socially and culturally accessible environmental management strategies. The goal of this chapter is to summarize the wider implications and consequences of the OMAB experience and, more importantly, to note the advantages such hindsight affords the future.

Throughout this report, we have described the events, circumstances, and situations that, in combination, made the OMAB experience what it was—a sometimes outrageous dispute over who makes what decisions about which resources. Arguments of this nature are familiar thorns to every seasoned natural resource manager. However, the Ozarks experience highlights a new dimension to an otherwise vintage predicament. Citizens are demanding inclusion in the decision making process. They demand the right to define social problems, as well as solutions. They are no longer content to bend to the will of scientists, academics, and politicians who purportedly act in the interest of all, even if such action is legitimate. In essence, the question is becoming one of who decides who decides.

In opposition to traditional voices of authority, Ozark activists have proven that disgruntled citizens are now willing to take to the arenas of influence to fight for the right to define social problems and, more importantly, dictate acceptable solutions. The Ozark activists successfully cast the MAB program as a threat to property rights and local control, thereby winning the support of fellow citizens and politicians. The social problem was no longer water quality or exotic species, but property rights and political process.

Another important outgrowth of the OMAB experience stems from the oppositions' victory in the Ozarks and how they viewed the withdrawal of the nomination. This conquest left Ozark activists, and quite possibly anti-MAB activists beyond the region, empowered and champing at the bit, eager to take on any agency, law, individual, or organization that smacked of bureaucratic environmental protection. The OMAB experience has proven to those who disagree with post-1970s environmental

values, assessments, and policy that they can re-define issues forged from decades of institutional environmentalism. They can again change the rules of the environmental game and in so doing successfully dictate both state and federal environmental policy.

Although the OMAB ultimately failed, this phenomenon of citizen activism against environmental programs need not become an insurmountable impediment to natural resource managers and environmental programs. It is not an obstacle, but an opportunity to progress toward more socially defined and culturally compatible natural resource and wildlife management efforts. The legacy of the OMAB nomination attempt is that people matter now more than ever and, if programs are to be successful, they must be included in practice as well as in theory.

Natural resource managers implementing a Biosphere Reserve are not just taking managerial steps toward protecting a river or an endangered species because science has dictated they do so. It is not so simple. Resource managers are looking for solutions to problems born out of and encapsulated within human society and culture. They are trying to address problems that are politically, socially, and culturally defined—even if problem definitions are hidden behind the many masks of the so-called hard sciences. Solutions to environmental problems, therefore, must reflect those human dimensions. More importantly, incorporation of those human dimensions must be practical and not just theoretical. In other words, communities and citizens must be given a voice to define their own place in the ecosystem. Resource management should not be the province of scientists, managers, and politicians alone.

Efforts must be made to discover, understand, respect, and incorporate social factors pertinent to natural resource management endeavors. On this count OMAB

remembrances offer sound guidance. Admittedly, the MAB program in theory attempts to address the human dimensions of natural resource management and environmental protection. Given the latitude nominating committees have in proposing, designing, and implementing a MAB, however, it appears that some aspects of the human dimension still get lost in the quest to address the scientific and bureaucratic considerations. If no other lesson is learned from the OMAB nomination effort, this lesson must be heeded. If citizens and communities are to benefit from a MAB and if a MAB is to benefit natural resources, citizens and communities must be a part of the program from beginning to end.

To get off to a good start, a nominating committee must know what important human issues are relevant to the area under consideration. A wildlife manager would never set a harvest limit on a population of organisms without first understanding all there is to know about the species' biology, life history, and environment. Doing so might jeopardize the population or, conversely, the habitat. Either way the result is undesirable and is avoidable if the manager takes the time to familiarize her or himself with the species and its biological and ecological characteristics. The concept is similar when implementing a MAB, or any environmental program for that matter. Research on the social and cultural characteristics of community and its citizens will go a long way. However, gathering information is not enough. Knowledge of communities and citizens must be understood and incorporated into any decision to pursue a MAB nomination.

Understanding the political, social, and cultural history and characteristics of a region would greatly improve the chances of successfully establishing a MAB. If US MAB or the OMAB nominating committee had known of and appreciated the intense anti-government, anti-UN, and anti-environmental program sentiments in the Ozarks

region, perhaps the nomination would have succeeded in spite of controversy. Or perhaps the nomination would have been abandoned long before 1996. Without pondering hypothetical outcomes, the fact remains that the Ozarks was chosen as a potential MAB site because of its unique ecological and geographical features, not for its cultural, economic, and social features. It is quite possible that if all the social and cultural features were identified and understood, the Ozarks would not have been so attractive to US MAB and agency officials looking for possible MAB locations.

The failure to appreciate the social and cultural features of the region led to the almost complete exclusion of anyone who was not scientifically or environmentally oriented throughout the nomination process. While lip service was paid to social and cultural issues in the *Feasibility Study*, these dimensions were mistakenly marginalized in the process and planning of the OMAB. And, though the OMAB nomination was paved with good intentions toward citizens and communities such a track record did not bode well for the real prospect of their eventual inclusion after the implementation of the MAB.

Once the historical social, cultural, and ecological legwork is done, questions of how to pursue a nomination become pertinent. Of course the nomination process for each MAB will vary due to, among other things, differences in locale, participants, and goals. However, the OMAB experience indicates that a MAB nomination may not be an easy sell with some Americans. Therefore, it becomes critical for MAB hopefuls to take extra care in courting and nurturing public and political support.

An analysis of the cultural and social features of a region should illuminate the various interests, opinions, and motivations of local communities. Knowledge of such



important regional features will guide MAB hopefuls in assessing where, when, and with whom public outreach and inclusion should begin. Committees should strive to be as inclusive as possible in terms of informing and building support within the community. While it may be impractical to invite all stakeholders to sit on a steering committee, it is certainly possible to offer information and open avenues for public comment. Efforts to be inclusive throughout the process will pay off in terms of building local understanding and, hopefully, support for the nomination.

It is important that citizens have an opportunity to develop a sense of ownership over the program. At the very least, it is necessary that a nominating committee avoid a process that may be perceived by citizens as exclusive or, worse, secretive. It is not surprising that citizens in the Ozarks were suspicious of an effort that they had never heard about. The greater proportion of the population had never heard of the program and, more than likely, were somewhat surprised to learn that a nomination had been in the works for several years. They never had the opportunity to learn about and participate in the formulation of the program.

Citizens should understand what the MAB program is all about and what it will and will not do for them. It is a reasonable expectation that committees let communities and residents know what a MAB is and is not *before* the nomination is awarded. Moreover, it is critical for committees to spell out what the establishment of a MAB could mean for the region. Communicating with communities and citizens will give them the opportunity to decide for themselves if a MAB is desirable, benign, or odious. For example, if there is a possibility that a MAB designation may induce agencies or politicians to seek more environmental protection regulations for the area in the future,

indicate this to citizens. Likewise, if there is no possibility that a MAB designation will result in the invasion of the United States by foreign military troops let the people know. Communication is critical.

Undeniably, future MAB hopefuls will find themselves up against some very creative and extraordinarily resourceful opponents. In our experience with the hard core conspiracy theorists, compromise is often not possible because rudimentary communication barriers exist. Those campaigning against the UN/environmental conspiracy often work outside the bounds of mundane logic and reasoning. Academics, scientists, and managers, on the other hand, find mundane logic and reasoning complicated enough without muddying the waters with conspiracy. Politicians, apparently, are opportunists and can easily go both ways. At any rate, the Ozarks teaches us that ignoring the outrageous and extraordinary opposition is not advisable. A concerted effort must be made to understand and address all claims and concerns, not just the thinkable ones.

The most effective way to alleviate such outrageous claims as a MAB leading to the complete exclusion of humans and the ultimate 're-wilding' of the United States, is to answer such accusations promptly and clearly. Avoiding vague, confusing, or deceptive explanations is absolutely necessary. For example, if a citizen asks how the UN is involved, it should be explained to them carefully and thoroughly. Although the individual may be bored with the realities of MAB organizational structure, they will most likely appreciate the time taken to share the information. However, committee members should not wait until citizens come to them for information and clarification on

the program or nomination. If they wait, opponents may well fill their shoes and answer citizen questions in ways not flattering to the program or nomination.

Instead, MAB hopefuls should stay in touch with the public, politicians, and stakeholders throughout the process. Being proactive in monitoring criticism and support for the program will pay off if adversity should arise. Proponents should solicit opinions, particularly if there is reason to suspect the public will not support the nomination or the program. By doing this, a nominating committee can more readily address citizen concerns and evaluate the nomination process. When word of community confusion and concern reaches committee members, proponents should be proactive and immediately engage the public in addressing accusations and concerns.

Finally, if MAB hopefuls find that some citizens in their region are against the MAB as a consequence of understandings gained through conspiracy sources, they should take pains to become familiar with the arguments and objections. Understanding the UN/environmental conspiracy belief system would enable MAB proponents to more effectively address specific concerns born from it. Attending a local property rights seminar or conference may be helpful, in addition to reading literature produced by renowned conspiracy experts. If this belief system is part of the community wherein the Biosphere Reserve is proposed, then it must be acknowledged, understood, and confronted.

It is very possible that the MAB Program will never escape the cloak and dagger reputation attributed to it by those who continue to fear the ghost of communism or the threat of an ecological, one-world order. The anti-UN/environmental rhetoric has worked far too well for anti-MAB activists to suspect they will change their strategy and attack

the program on more mundane plan planks. Therefore, US MAB and future nominating committees, as well as those associated with existing MABs, must learn to deal with such opposition. To accomplish this, the process of seeking a MAB nomination and implementing a Biosphere Reserve may be adapted to better integrate the human dimension of Biosphere Reserves. If controversy should arise, how a steering committee chooses to address and accommodate such opposition is material.

There is a difference between short term and long term solutions to community conflict over natural resource programs. While it may be possible to sneak in a MAB without communities or residents' full awareness and understanding of the designation, the fact remains that such a MAB may never achieve the admirable goals that embody the program. If the spirit of the program is to be satisfactorily incorporated into US Biosphere Reserves, the human dimension must be weighted as a component at least as important as environmental components. If it is not, MAB designations in the United States will be no more than dusty plaques mounted on the crowded walls of some government offices.

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### **Personal Interviews:**

Birk, Mark. Birk is an employee of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke, August 14, 1997.



Conner, Brent. Conner is an employee of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke, August 13, 1997.

Darcy, Jane. Darcy is a member of Take Back Arkansas. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke on November 14, 1997.

Foster, David. Retired from the National Park Service at Ozark National Scenic Riverways in Missouri. He was the first OMAB Steering Committee Chairman, from approx. 1988 to 1995. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke on July 16, 1997.

Hunt, John. An employee of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke, August 13, 1997.

Johnson, Ben. Johnson is a member of the Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT). Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke August 11, 1997.

Larson, Kevin. Larson is the editor of a local newspaper in a Southern Missouri town. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke on July 17, 1997.

Martin, Robert. Martin is a Northern Arkansas newspaper reporter. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke on August 12, 1997.

Oviatt, George. A Resources Management Specialist for the National Park Service at Buffalo National River in Arkansas. He was the second OMAB Steering Committee Chairman, seated in 1995. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke, July 8, 1997.

Shaw, Devin. Shaw is a Southern Missouri journalist who covered the OMAB issue for a local Ozark paper. Interviewed by Theresa Goedeke, July 17, 1997.

Smith, Ken. Smith is an employee of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Interviewed by Sandy Rikoon and Theresa Goedeke, February 24, 1997.

## Appendix A

### Publications Represented in Sample

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*The Durango Monthly Magazine*

*Coloradoan*

*American Survival Guide*

*High Country News*

*4WD & Sport Utility*

*Rural Missouri*

*Rural Missourian*

*Missouri Game and Fish Magazine*

*Arkansas Times Monthly*

*The Rackensack Monthly*

*Anchorage Daily News*

*Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

*The Baxter Bulletin*

*Columbia Daily Tribune*

*Columbia Missourian*

*The Current Local*

*Daily American Republic*

*Harrison Daily News*

*Hill 'n Holler Shopper & Review*

*The Joplin Globe*

*Lexington Herald-Leader*

*The Morning News of North West Arkansas*

*Mountain Echo*

*Mountain Wave*

*Newton County Times*

*Northwest Arkansas Times*

*Omaha World-Herald*

*Prospect-News*

*Reynolds County Courier*

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

*Standard News*

*West Plains Daily Quill*

Anchorage, Alaska

Little Rock, AR

Mountain Home, AR

Columbia, MO

Columbia, MO

Van Buren, MO

Poplar Bluff, MO

Harrison, AR

Mammoth Spring, AR

Joplin, MO

Lexington, Kentucky

Springdale, AR

Yellville, AR

Marshall, AR

Jasper, AR

Fayetteville, AR

Omaha, Nebraska

Doniphan, MO

Ellington, MO

St. Louis, MO

Mountain View, MO

West Plains, MO

## Internet Websites Periodically Accessed

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URL	Description
<a href="http://www.state.gov/www/global/oes/fs_mab.html">www.state.gov/www/global/oes/fs_mab.html</a>	Department of State—Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs—United States Man and the Biosphere Program
<a href="http://www.mabnet.org">www.mabnet.org</a>	UNESCO-MABNet Home Page
<a href="http://www.cciw.ca/mab/">www.cciw.ca/mab/</a>	Canada/MAB Home Page
<a href="http://www.aqd.nps.gov">www.aqd.nps.gov</a>	United States National Park Service
<a href="http://www.aqd.nps.gov/partner">www.aqd.nps.gov/partner</a>	The National Park Service--Partnerships in Natural Resources Home Page
<a href="http://www.cnie.org/nle/">www.cnie.org/nle/</a>	Committee for the National Institute for the Environment
<a href="http://www.cei.net/~jerf/">www.cei.net/~jerf/</a>	Fayetteville, Arkansas Community Bulletin Board
<a href="http://www.hevanet.com/nitehawk/">www.hevanet.com/nitehawk/</a>	For the People From the People (Addresses the “New World Order”)
<a href="http://www.nps.org">www.nps.org</a>	National Park Service Park Watch
<a href="http://www.pfw.org/index.html">www.pfw.org/index.html</a>	People for the West/U.S.A.
<a href="http://www.users.nwark.com/~tbark/home/">www.users.nwark.com/~tbark/home/</a>	Take Back Arkansas, Inc.
<a href="http://www.jb.com/~btennison/">www.jb.com/~btennison/</a>	Tennison Family Home Page
<a href="http://www.cafes.net/mo/">www.cafes.net/mo/</a>	Brian K. Mosely Home Page
<a href="http://www.imperium.net/~colombo">www.imperium.net/~colombo</a>	Colombo’s Safety & Security Home Page
<a href="http://csf.colorado.edu/mail/essa/feb97/0109.html">csf.colorado.edu/mail/essa/feb97/0109.html</a>	Earthships and Self Sufficient Architecture (Discussion List Archive)

## Appendix B

The following is a partial listing of opponent information resources. List A provides resources included in an informational packet distributed to attendees of the First Annual Conference of Take Back Arkansas Chapters, November 15, 1997. *Resources on List A are listed as they were organized and reported in the TBA handout.* List B provides resources on the UN/environmental conspiracy that were not included on the TBA handout.

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### List A

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#### Actual Documents

(United Nations, U.S. Federal-State)

- *Feasibility Study for an Ozark Man and the Biosphere Reserve Cooperative*  
Report to the: Ozark Man and the Biosphere Steering Committee  
Prepared by: Judy Faulkner and John White  
Possibly available from:  
Missouri Department of Conservation, Jefferson City, Missouri (573) 751-4155  
National Park Service Buffalo River National Preserve, Harrison, Arkansas (501) 741-5443
- *Global Biodiversity Assessment*  
By: United National Environmental Programme  
Available From: Cambridge University Press  
40 West 20<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10011-4211  
(913) 937-9600  
Reference No.: I.S.B.N. 564816 \$55.00
- *Our Global Neighborhood*  
By: The Commission on Global Government  
Available From: Oxford University Press, New York  
(919) 677-0977  
Reference No.: I.S.B.N. 019827997-3 \$15.00
- *Sustainable America: A New Consensus*  
By: The President's Council on Sustainable Development  
Available From: U.S. Government Printing Office  
Service Station SSOS  
Washington D.C. 20402-9329  
Reference No.: S/N 061-000-00857-8 \$15.00

## Additional Sources

(non-UN, federal, or state sources of information)

- *Earth in the Balance* by Senator/Vice President Al Gore
- *The Endangered American Dream* by Timothy Robert Walters

## Essential Source Materials for MAB Information

- Eco-Logic                      \$25/year              Henry Lamb, Editor  
P.O. Box 191, Hollow Rock, TN 38342  
(901) 986-0099    Fax: (901) 986-2299
- Land Rights Letter              \$20/year              David Howard, Editor  
P.O. Box 1111, Gloversville, NY 12078  
(518) 725-1090    Fax: (518) 725-8239    Email: [landrights@aol.com](mailto:landrights@aol.com)
- Liberty Matters                      Donation  
P.O. Box 15919, Austin, TX 78761  
1-800-847-7404                      Email: [Libertymat@aol.com](mailto:Libertymat@aol.com)
- NWI Resource                      \$25.00/year  
P.O. Box 25766, Georgetown Station, Washington D.C. 20007  
(703) 836-7404
- PRFA-Positions on Property              \$25.00/year              Carol W. LaGrasse, President  
P.O. Box 75, Stoney Creek, NY 12878  
(518) 696-5748    Fax: (518) 696-2332
- Video: "Biodiversity: The Key to Destroying Property Right and the U.S.  
Constitution"                      \$16.00  
Environmental Perspectives, Inc., 1229 Broadway, Suite 313, Bangor, ME 04401  
1-800-799-9879
- *Private Property Rights and the U.S. Constitution* by John W. Allen  
Real Estate Center, Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843-21  
1-800-244-2144                      \$4.00
- *Saviors of the Earth?* by Michael S. Coffman  
Environmental Perspectives, Inc.  
1229 Broadway, Suite 313  
Bangor, ME 04401  
1-800-799-9878                      \$17.50
- *Set Up and Sold Out* by Holly Swanson

CIN, P.O. Box 1682  
White City, OR 97503

\$17.95

- *Trashing the Economy* by Ron Arnold and Alan Gottlieb  
Merril Press  
P.O. Box 1682  
Bellevue, WA 98009  
(206) 454-7009  
\$19.95
- *Takings: Private Property and the Right of Eminent Domain* by Richard A. Epstein  
\$18.95

## List B

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### Newsletters:

- Flashpoint: A Newsletter Ministry of Texe Marrs  
Living Truth Ministries  
1708 Patterson Rd  
Austin, TX 78733

### Video Tapes:

- "Freedom on the Alter: The UN's Crusade Against God & Family"  
1995. Lecture by William Norman Grigg, 24 min.  
The John Birch Society, Distributed by American Opinion Books and Services.
- "Environmentalism: Door to the New World Order"  
1996. Lecture by Dr. Michael Coffman  
The Prophecy Club, Distributed by Environmental Perspectives, Inc.
- "The Treaty From Hell"  
1995. Lecture by Texe Marrs.  
Produced and Distributed by Living Truth Ministries.

### Audio Tapes:

- "The Re-Wilding of America: Hitlers Murderous Lebensraum Doctrine Lives Again!" 1996. Lecture by Texe Marrs. Living Truth Ministries, Intelligence Examiner Special Edition.

