
New York Primate Lab Seeks Help from Congress

New York University's primate center, which has led a precarious existence during the past few years, has once again sought direct support from Congress. The Senate recently approved an amendment that grants regional primate center status to the Laboratory for Experimental Medicine and Surgery in Primates (Lemsip) of Sterling Forest. Although this legislative move will grant no new funds to the New York facility, it could force the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to deal with Lemsip in a way it has so far resisted.

The New York primate center and NIH have been squabbling for years. NIH withdrew major financial support from Lemsip 5 years ago to concentrate support in the established regional primate centers. The move put the New York center in serious financial straits and led it to appeal to Congress for funds (*Science*, 19 December 1980, p. 1333). The appeal was unsuccessful, however, and the lab was forced to close temporarily. It was later revived with an infusion of private funds.

Lemsip has tried several times to become an NIH-sponsored regional primate research center. Currently there are seven such centers, all of which were set up in the early 1960's after a competition among nearly a dozen primate laboratories. The regional centers are set apart from other primate labs by receiving "core" support from NIH for six to ten scientists, who are nonetheless encouraged also to apply for competitive grants.

Although a case can be made for NIH adding new regional centers, "resources are not there," says William Gay, chief of the animal resources branch. Despite this limitation, Lemsip is trying to gain a new title—and perhaps a better chance at receiving core support—by law. "We were told by NIH officials that we would have to have an act of Congress" for this change of status, says Lemsip director Jan Moor-Jankowski. He says the NIH recently turned down a Lemsip grant, despite its receiving favorable review, because this is a facility "providing service only."

"There has been disagreement

about the concept of the primate centers," he continues. "But if NIH will fund an intramural research program, we will do it. We would like to become part of the NIH team."

Lemsip's new status was enacted by the Senate as part of the Health Professions Training Assistance Amendments of 1984. (Lemsip is seeking similar support in the House.) It was sponsored by Senators Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.), Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.), and Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), who chairs the key Committee on Labor and Human Resources. In a statement on the Senate floor addressed to D'Amato, Hatch emphasized that the amendment would not expand existing programs, but simply allow a "highly respected primate center . . . the opportunity to compete."

—JEFFREY L. FOX

Environmental Retrofit Delays L-Reactor Restart

The Department of Energy (DOE), under fire from environmentalists and South Carolina state regulators, has been forced to delay the controversial restart of a defense reactor in order to build a \$35-million cooling pond at the reactor site. The decision is the latest, and perhaps the final, chapter in a long battle over restarting the so-called L-reactor at DOE's Savannah River plant to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons.

The reactor, which was built in the early 1950's, was shut down in the late 1960's. Four years ago, the Administration began a \$200-million overhaul aimed at bringing the reactor back into production by October 1983 to help meet an expected sharp rise in plutonium requirements for the weapons program.

But environmental groups, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), filed suit to block the restart, arguing that DOE should produce an assessment of the reactor's impact on the environment before going ahead. Last summer, Congress, at the behest of South Carolina Senators Strom Thurmond (R) and Ernest Hollings (D), directed DOE to produce a formal environmental impact statement.

A draft statement, published last

fall, indicated that the reactor would cause severe damage to local wetlands by discharging hot water into a local creek and run the risk of contaminating ground water. These findings caused the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior to insist on the installation of better control technologies and South Carolina threatened to withhold necessary permits to operate the plant.

In the face of this reaction, DOE has decided to construct a 1000-acre pond at the site to prevent cooling water being discharged directly into the local environment and it has pledged to take a variety of other pollution control measures. This is expected to delay the restart of the reactor until next spring, some 18 months after the original target date.

Opponents are pleased that DOE has finally recognized the need for more environmental controls, but they argue that cooling towers, rather than a pond, should be installed. "DOE was going to use 1950's technology, now it is planning to use 1960's technology," says NRDC staff attorney S. Jacob Scherr. "We think they should use 1980's technology."

—COLIN NORMAN

Whaling Tensions Rise as Moratorium Approaches

If all goes according to plan, the quotas for commercial whaling set by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) at its annual meeting in June will be the last before a total moratorium on whaling goes into effect at the end of 1985. Catch limits were cut by about a third from last year. But it was not clear at the Buenos Aires meeting whether the reduced quotas for 1984–1985 or, in fact, the moratorium itself will stick.

Japan, Norway, and the Soviet Union, the countries with the largest commercial whaling operations, have lodged reservations to the moratorium indicating that they may decide to continue whaling after the date for cessation. And there is strong speculation that one or more of these nations will register similar reservations to this year's lower quotas.

The IWC reduced the overall limit for commercial pelagic (high seas)