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MICHAEL DICK/ANIMALS ANIMALS

Protecting an icon. Russia will create new haven for Kamchatka's brown bear.

Russia Aims to Protect Fragile Tundra

Bucking a trend toward increased exploitation of its natural resources, the Russian government is expected this summer to create a nature preserve in one of the world's most fragile ecosystems—the mixed taiga and tundra in Russia's Far East.

The main purpose of the reserve—to be located in the Koryaksky region of northern Kamchatka—would be to protect brown bear habitat, says Victor Nikiforov of the World Wildlife Fund. The Arctic brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is becoming scarce in Russia's hinterlands, says Nikiforov, who adds that in northern Kamchatka about 500 bears are killed illegally each year by reindeer herders and poachers. They take the bears for their skins and bile, which they sell as a prized ingredient in Asian medicines, Nikiforov says. The region is also home to more than 150 bird species, including swans, snipes, and cranes, as well as a unique subspecies of bighorn sheep.

A decree issued last December by the governor of Koryaksky "withdrew from economic use" 327,000 hectares of land for the reserve and set aside an additional 600,000 hectares as a buffer around the reserve on which limited activities will be permitted. Russia is expected to issue a decree next month that will officially establish the reserve.

What's In a Name?

The Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) has decided to add some gravitas to its image: Henceforth, LBL, one of the labs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, will be known as the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL). The change, says LBNL's Ron Kolb, will "insure that the decision-makers and budget-cutters targeting science programs don't make mistakes based upon confusion or lack of recognition." The name change won't eliminate one common confusion, however—the lab is often confused with the Lawrence Livermore National Lab.

NIMH Plans Self-Review

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which has been looking for a new chief since former Director Frederick Goodwin stepped down last year, has decided not to wait any longer before reviewing its intramural science. According to acting NIMH chief Rex Cowdry, the agency is now drawing up plans to conduct a wide-ranging "self-assessment" of its laboratories and researchers.

The review, Cowdry says, will differ from a recent critique of the National Cancer Institute (*Science*, 26 May, p. 1121) in that it will be conducted by an internal panel. And rather than examine extramural programs, says Cowdry, the NIMH review will focus on improving in-house science and using clinical resources more efficiently.

However, some NIMH scientists are uneasy about the plan, which half a dozen NIMH lab chiefs met recently to discuss. One concern, says a staffer who attended the meeting, is that the planned review is focused too narrowly. It would ignore extramural projects that may deserve closer scrutiny, he says, such as centers and cooperative agreements. These researchers hope NIMH will avoid making a scapegoat of intramural science. Cowdry has not yet decided who will lead the review, says NIMH spokesperson Jules Asher, or when it will begin.

DOE Seeks Truce With Radiation Researchers

Seeking to mend a growing rift with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) earlier this week announced that it would delay its decision to remove the academy as the U.S. manager of a joint U.S.–Japanese radiation research lab. The move comes 2 weeks after DOE sent the academy a letter that appeared to imply that the lab and NAS were involved in covert radiation research.

For the past 6 months, the academy and DOE have sparred over the future of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF), a body funded by the United States and Japan to monitor the health of 120,000 people who survived atomic bomb blasts in 1945. Last January, officials at DOE, which now contributes about $18 million a year to RERF, told foundation scientists it planned to terminate NAS's 49-year-long involvement with the foundation and bring in Columbia University as a new manager (*Science*, 3 February, p. 611). DOE officials later said Columbia had never been awarded the contract and that the agency would issue a request for proposals from universities to compete for the contract (*Science*, 17 February, p. 951). The reason for switching to a university, DOE officials said, was to reduce RERF's operating costs and to train radiation scientists.

DOE's decision, however, upset RERF and outside scientists, who argued that the academy was well suited to administer the politically sensitive program. NAS formally objected to the move last April, when 191 academy members signed a resolution criticizing DOE's decision.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's response to the petition provoked an even bigger furor. In a 14 June letter to academy President Bruce Alberts, O'Leary stated, "With the end of the Cold War, it is now time to bring [RERF] into the mainstream of scientific and public health research. ... The need for secret research on the biological effects of radiation has ended." O'Leary reiterated DOE's intent to have universities compete for the RERF contract.

On 23 June, the academy responded in an unsigned statement, stating that "at no time has the academy ... conducted secret radiation research." Steve Galson, a DOE official involved with RERF, told *Science* that the statement in O'Leary's letter was meant to apply to DOE Cold War studies that had nothing to do with the academy or RERF. "I don't disagree with the academy statement," he says. But some people aren't buying this explanation: "It was a baseless, irresponsible attempt to discredit the RERF studies," an RERF researcher told *Science*.

Shortly after the brouhaha, however, DOE decided to delay removing the academy from the RERF contract—a move it planned to make this fall. Instead, in a statement issued on 27 June, DOE said it would adopt a recommendation by RERF's bilateral Science Council, issued last month, to defer action for 2 years while a blue-ribbon panel assesses RERF's activities. DOE also said it plans to request proposals in August for a new $2-million-per-year program to train radiation researchers.

While DOE may be delaying a final decision, Galson reaffirmed DOE's underlying view that it was time to change the guard at RERF. "We remain convinced that a relationship with a university will bring RERF into the mainstream of public health research," he says.

In the meantime, academy officials are happy to remain at the helm of RERF and have expressed approval of the plan to separate the RERF management contract from the training program. "We certainly think it's a very reasonable approach," says Bill Colglazier, executive officer of the academy's National Research Council.