

## UN World Heritage Controls US Parks

The Constitution gives Congress the power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations governing lands belonging to the United States. Yet over the last 25 years, 68 percent of America's National Parks, Preserves and Monuments have been designated as a United Nations *World Heritage Site*, *Biosphere Reserve* or both by Executive Branch action with virtually no Congressional oversight or approval and out of the sight of the public scrutiny.

*World Heritage Sites* are natural sites or cultural monuments recognized by the "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization" (UNESCO) under "The Convention Concerning Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage."

*U.S. Biosphere Reserves* are part of the "Man and Biosphere Program," a worldwide program operated by UNESCO. *Biosphere Reserves* operate without legislative direction and are not authorized by Congress, nor is the program part of an international treaty.

What is a biosphere reserve? The model UN biosphere reserve is actually a federally zoned laboratory where social engineers have real life subjects to use in studies to testing their theories on biodiversity, conservation and sustainable development. The reserve consists of:

- a core area, such as a national park, which has strict legislative protection and is used for scientific monitoring of minimally disturbed ecosystems;
- a "managed use area," surrounding the core area, where allowable land uses and human activities are strictly regulated; and
- an "area of cooperation" having an undefined boundary and managed for "Sustainable" production and uses in harmony with the biosphere reserve.

The "*area of cooperation*" is a sort of utopian neighborhood where, according to the State Department, "*managing agencies, local governmental agencies, scientists, economic interests, nongovernmental organizations, cultural groups, local citizens and other biosphere reserve stakeholders educate one another in the process of linking conservation, economic development and cultural values.*" The "*area of cooperation*" includes non-federal property.

**Dr. Jeremy Rabkin**, professor of government at **Cornell University**, argues: "*Lands of private owners, lands owned by state or municipal governments and*

*U.S. government land seem to be thrown into this warm, bubbling stew of cooperating 'stakeholders' where actual owners seem to have no more status than advocacy organizations from outside, where 'local citizens' have no more status than 'cultural groups' from the other side of the country." Rabkin adds, "The whole point of that amorphous term 'stakeholder' is to blur distinctions between owner and spectator and between citizen and outsider."*

Federal agencies use international land reserves to control and orchestrate local and state land use policy and steamroll the property rights of private land owners. This problem is illustrated by the "**New World Mine**" project located three miles beyond **Yellowstone National Park**, a **World Heritage Site**. The boundary of the **World Heritage Site** coincides exactly with the national park boundary. The **Department of Interior (DOI)**, which wanted to stop the mine, brought in the **World Heritage Committee** to "*inspect*" the project, parading the Committee around Montana and Wyoming as if they had an important say in the development of the mine.

Ninety percent of the **New World Project** is located on private land and the remainder is in a National Forest. Under U.S. law, private land cannot be included in a **World Heritage Site** without the consent of the owner, and the owner of the mining project never consented to be included in the **World Heritage Site**. **DOI's** action also trampled on the decision made by Congress to manage Federal lands included in the project as part of the multiple-use National Forest System -- not as protected land in **Yellowstone National Park**.

**DOI** had no authority to invite a foreign entity to interfere with a domestic land use decision. **DOI** bureaucrats ignored U.S. law and infringed on personal private property rights by involving the **World Heritage Committee** in a project located on private land. They exhibited no concern or interest about protecting rights of U.S. citizens or respecting the decisions of Congress. These bureaucrats were incapable of seeing how these actions compromised U.S. sovereignty.

Why should we even think about involving an international body in making land policy decisions for lands within the United States? Congress must act to keep international commitments from interfering with Constitutional constraints. Otherwise, the rights of our citizens and the boundary between public land managed by government and private property can be too easily ignored.