

Government News

EPA proposes to cancel BHC, a chemical used in pesticides manufacture, and asks for public comment on risks and benefits of pesticides containing benzene hexachloride. Despite the fact that BHC for use in other pesticides is no longer being made, some 58 U.S. firms are still employing old BHC stocks to produce some 86 different pest control products.

Scientists at the University of Wisconsin will study feasibility of transferring chloroplasts from one plant species to another, under a cooperative agreement with the USDA. USDA Agricultural Research Service will provide \$59,918 for the two-year study.

The USDA made three changes in the citrus blackfly quarantine: 1) replaced emergency regulations on the recent Florida outbreak with more formal citrus blackfly quarantine; 2) extended the regulated area in Florida to two additional counties; and 3) added two articles to the list of restricted items.

Three national parks and three national forest areas are the first to be officially recognized as Biosphere Reserves in the U.S. The Biosphere Reserve Project is an effort of the international Man and the Biosphere Program to protect representative segments of the world's natural regions as major centers for animal and plant preservation, environmental research, and education.

The six designated areas are: Coweeta Experimental Forest, N.C.; Great Smokey Mountains National Park, Tenn. and N.C.; Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest, N.H.; Everglades National Park, Fla.; Virgin Islands National Park, V.I.; and Luquillo Experimental Forest, P.R.

Use of Mirex for fire ant control is to be discontinued by June 28, 1978. EPA Administrator Russell Train accepted the cancellation plan proposed by the state of Mississippi to end all use of the pesticide in the South. Train agreed to gradually phase out federal permission for Mirex production and use. Airplane applications against fire ants will end December 31, 1977. Ground treatment ends six months later. During the phase-out, more environmentally acceptable Mirex 10:5 will be substituted for current 4X bait.

Further increases in minimum wage become effective January 1, 1977. Seasonal exemptions will be eliminated. The minimum wage for agricultural employees becomes \$2.20/hour on January 1, and \$2.30/hour for other employees covered by law.