

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, January 1981, carries two articles of interest to certain NPS personnel. One "The Wild Gene Resources of Wheat" supports the importance of gene pool preservation, a prime function of world biosphere reserves (20 of which are located within U.S. national parks). The other (a Science and the Citizen note) details the methodology by which China's Sichuan province is massively converting to biogas as a major source of energy.

In the wild wheat gene article (p. 102), Moshe Feldman and Ernest R. Sears, note that failure to conserve the primitive cultivated varieties of wheat already has resulted in loss of a substantial reserve of genetic variability, and conclude that "the restoration and enrichment of the gene pool of the cultivated wheats can be accomplished only by tapping the vast genetic resources that are to be found

in the wild relatives of the wheats." A major publication, "The Value of Conservation of Genetic Resources," by Margery Oldfield, under NPS contract, is slated for eventual publication by NPS/WASO. It will cover use and preservation of genetic resources as two inextricably interrelated human activities.

Also described in an *SA* newsnote is a "digester" that produces a clean-burning gas, one half to three fourths methane, that could make economic and ecologic sense in conjunction with the solar privies now a working part of the backcountry scene in several NPS areas (see Dec. 1980 *Courier*, p. 5). In China the gas is used for burners, lamps, pumps and motors, and experiments are in progress toward converting the gas into a fuel to power small tractors. It costs \$14 for supplies to build a 10 cubic meter cylinder. For a detailed description of how to build the digester, including adaptations for different soil conditions, see "Translation of a Bio-gas Manual," 1979, 160 pp., \$8.75, distributed for a British publishing company by I.T.G. (914) 271-6500.