

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

*A Pall Over
the Parks*

"The Plight of the Parklands" by Gundars Rudzitis and Jeffrey Schwartz, in *Environment* (Oct. 1982), 4000 Albemarle St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

The sizable energy and mineral resources of federal parklands make tempting targets for developers. But Rudzitis and Schwartz, geographer and graduate student, respectively, at the University of Texas, warn that if development proceeds, as urged by the Reagan administration, the resulting air pollution alone would hasten the already serious deterioration of the parks' beauty.

Public lands account for 34 percent of U.S. surface area. Under the surface may be up to 37 percent of the nation's potential oil resources, 43 percent of its potential natural gas, and 80 percent of its recoverable oil shale reserves. Although one-third of all federally owned land is available for development, only 12.5 percent had been leased out by 1980, accounting for about seven percent of U.S. oil and gas output.

The parks are already suffering. The number of park visitors, most of them arriving by auto, rose 75 percent during the 1970s, to 295 million a year. New factories and power plants have been built closer to park borders. A 1979 National Park Service survey of the 63 largest parks showed that more than 45 percent were experiencing deteriorating air quality and 60 percent faced threats to their scenic beauty. In the "Golden Circle" of National Parks—including the Grand Canyon—in Nevada, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, average visibility has dropped from 60 miles to 40 since 1974.

Congress extended special protection to large national parks under the 1977 Clean Air Act Amendments, barring any nearby industrial project that might seriously erode air quality within their borders. But because of political opposition and the technical difficulties of setting standards, the law has not been fully implemented.

The only other way to protect the parklands, the authors contend, is by buying up costly "buffer zones" of 60 to 125 miles around them. Yet Interior Secretary James Watt cut an annual \$200 million land acquisition appropriation from his budget in 1981. He called instead for upgrading existing holdings. That, the authors say, will be hard to do while Washington is also opening more federal lands to developers.

*A Water Crisis
in the Future?*

"Water Resources in Food and Energy Production" by David Pimentel, Sarah Fast, Wei Liang Chao, Ellen Stuart, Joanne Dintzis, Gail Einbinder, William Schlappi, David Andow, and Kathryn Broderick, in *BioScience* (Dec. 1982), 1401 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22209.

While the energy crisis occupied center stage during most of the 1970s, other U.S. natural resources received scant attention. According to