tear sheets to those who ask for them until supplies run out.)

We hope we are taking the best course that is allowed by a number of different, changing, and sometimes conflicting pressures.—EDS.

New York Bight Project

The Marine EcoSystems Analysis (MESA) Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is establishing a panel to designate the 20 or so most serious chemical contaminants (or classes of contaminants) in the New York Bight and to rank these contaminants, on the basis of current information, according to their existing or projected threat. Emphasis will be placed on adapting existing ranking schemes or devising a new one for coastal marine ecosystems, in general, and for the New York Bight, in particular.

Information is being sought by the panel from all possible sources to guide its study. Reports on recent work dealing with ideas or approaches, as well as applicable data, would be of great assistance. Published reports will be readily utilized. However, the panel would also appreciate knowing about unpublished work. Reports describing such work can be sent to the undersigned for transmittal to the panel.

HAROLD M. STANFORD
JOEL S. O'CONNOR
MESA New York Bight Project,
State University of New York,
Stony Brook 11794

"Petroleum Plants"

The Research News article of 1 October (p. 46) by Thomas H. Maugh II on the possibility of growing some little-known species of plants to produce a substitute for petroleum is interesting and may prove to be significant. By all means, let us explore and test new and untried methods and approaches to supplying our energy needs.

But let us not neglect or downgrade proven, economically practical paths to the same end. The existing forests of the United States can be made to produce vastly more wood than they now do. After setting aside liberal acreages for conservation, recreation, watershed, wilderness, and other forest uses and for outputs other than wood, there still remain many millions of acres of highly productive forests, from which wood, especially softwoods, can be produced as cheaply and as permanently as anywhere in the world. In my judgment, the gap between what is and what might be is wider for timber than for any other natural resource in the United States today. In a recent report (*1*), the National Research Council estimated that the annual production of wood could be doubled in this country.

Direct conversion of this wood into energy is not necessary, and probably not economical. But the export market for United States wood products—notably paper and notably to the developed countries of the world—is growing rapidly and will almost surely continue to grow. Exported wood produces foreign exchange, with which we can buy oil; thus indirectly wood can supply needed energy. Everyone genuinely interested in energy supply at the least environmental cost should focus his or her attention on the potentials of our forests.

MARION CLAWSON
Resources for the Future,
1755 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20036

References

1. Committee on Renewable Resources for Industrial Materials, Board of Agriculture and Renewable Resources, Commission on National Resources, *Renewable Resources for Industrial Materials* (National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1976).

Maugh reports on the proposal of Melvin Calvin that plants in the genus *Euphorbia* be grown to produce a hydrocarbon substance similar to gasoline. Calvin need not look far for *Euphorbia tirucalli*. It has been grown in California for many years as an ornamental, "in any soil, irrigated or not, requiring no attention whatever" (*1*). Unfortunately it is common in south Florida, where it is not infrequently a cause of acute injury, especially severe keratoconjunctivitis when the sap has come into contact with an eye (*2*).

Both *Euphorbia tirucalli*, the pencil tree or spurge tree, and *Euphorbia lathyris*, the caper spurge, are noted for the acridity of their milky sap. Exploitation of these species as sources of energy might expose workers to serious hazards in harvesting, transporting, and crushing operations.

JULIA F. MORTON
Morton Collectanea,
University of Miami,
Coral Gables, Florida 33124

References

1. R. S. Hoyt, *Check Lists for Ornamental Plants of Subtropical Regions* (Livingston, San Diego, Calif., 1958), p. 295.
2. J. F. Morton, *Plants Poisonous to People in Florida and Other Warm Areas* (Trend House, Tampa, Fla., 1971), pp. 70–72; J. I. Crowder and R. R. Sexton, *Arch. Ophthalmol.* **72**, 476 (1964).