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LETTERS

Keeping Track of Carbon

In his Policy Forum "Carbon sequestration in soils" (*Science's Compass*, 25 June, p. [2095](#)), William H. Schlesinger's observation that treaty negotiators for the Kyoto Protocol need to keep in mind the complexities of a full accounting of carbon emissions when calculating mitigation credits is spot-on. Negotiators need additionally to be mindful of the effects of CO₂ mitigation on other greenhouse gases, such as N₂O and CH₄. Carbon sequestration in soils can lead to concomitant changes in microbial habitats and populations that could offset or perhaps accentuate any credit provided by carbon sequestration per se. Research that simultaneously assesses the effects of mitigation strategies on all relevant trace gases is required.

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[Editor's note: The above letter was revised on 11/2/99 (addition of a title and text to the first sentence) to reflect its association with W. H. Schlesinger's Policy Forum.]

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