

Sunrise Sunset Pre-Visit Activities

Grade Levels: 4-12

In a Nutshell

The students participate in a land use simulation game in which they assume the roles of special interest groups to determine the future of Sunset Lake. As representatives of these groups, the students attempt to influence land use in a specific area.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Discuss the benefits and consequences of different land uses.
- Understand how to develop and present proposals for land use.
- Know what a value is, and be conscious that values vary among individuals.
- Be aware of how values may affect land use planning and decision-making.

Additional behavioral objectives:

- Gain confidence in public speaking skills.
- Learn public action skills.
- Become better skilled at group work.

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The following materials are aids to help prepare your students for their visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The vocabulary list contains terms and concepts your students will encounter in their visit. Please modify the definitions as needed. The activities listed below are merely options—it is not necessary to do them all or to follow any particular order. Keep in mind that your students' learning experiences at CWES will be enhanced if they are familiar with these concepts and terms prior to the on-site activities.

Vocabulary

- Citizenship:** membership in a community
- Environmental Issue:** a particular interaction between humans and their surroundings about which there are differing beliefs and human values.
- Land Use Planning:** the process of determining how a plot of land will be used; it includes identification of possible alternatives, evaluation of these alternatives, resolving value conflicts associated with the choices, and implementing the selected alternatives.
- Value:** guiding force that determines the choices we make in living our lives.

Activity #1

Take the students to a natural area or, as an in-class option, choose an area which all the students are familiar with. Assign each student or group of students to represent the viewpoint of different resident animals (e.g. rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, fox, robin, owl, mouse, hawk, deer.) Have the students examine and evaluate the availability of food, shelter, air, water, space and any other aspects of the site from the viewpoint of their animal.

Now assign each student or group of students a human viewpoint (e.g. homeowner, farmer, builder, teacher, environmentalist, logger, hunter, artist) and ask them to evaluate the site from that perspective.

Discuss the results. Does the role they assume affect how they view the environment? Discuss differences between the “animal evaluations” and the “human evaluations.” Also discuss differences between the animal and human viewpoints. Do these viewpoints conflict? Complete the activity by staging a debate between a “human” and an “animal.” The debate could focus on how the area should be used (i.e. for the animals, for the humans, or for both humans and animals)

Activity #2

Begin with a discussion of the complexity of environmental issues. Point out that major roadblocks in the issue resolving process occur when the people involved don't know all sides of the issue and are unsure about their own values concerning the issue. (The issue means different things to different people.) Explain that this activity will help the students clarify their own thoughts and feelings about the value-laden issue of land use.

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Have each student write the words “land use” in the center of a large piece of paper. Ask them to brainstorm ideas related to this concept, placing any thoughts, feelings, characteristics or considerations on lines radiating out from the center. Responses might include such things as jobs, progress, wise planning, cost, bulldozer, damaging to the environment, and proud. Emphasize that there are no right answers or correct format.

After they have completed their sheet, have the students share their ideas with another student. Ask the pairs to discuss similarities and differences they find on their sheets. Also ask them to develop a list of general criteria that they think should be considered in land use planning. Criterion categories could include economics, environmental considerations, reason/need for a given project, etc. Have them employ this same synthesis process in developing a list of human values associated with land use issues.

Have each pair share their lists with the class. Note areas of agreement and disagreement. Make a class list of criterion for land use decision-making as well as a list of land use related human values. Discuss the diversity of values.

Activity #3

Challenge each student to create a logo that represents what it means to be a “good citizen.” Have them explain the meaning behind their logo design and relate citizenship to environmental issue resolution. You may want to expand this activity to include development of an entire advertising campaign to promote being a “good citizen.” Share the citizenship campaigns with others.

Sunrise Sunset Post-visit Activities

A visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station can be a school-year highlight for both students and their educators. We feel the knowledge and concepts gained during a Station visit apply outside the Station as well. The following activities will allow students to expand their knowledge and help them incorporate those lessons into their everyday lives. Feel free to pick from and modify the activities as best suits your group.

Activity #1

Begin by asking the students to collect newspaper and magazine articles on a variety of environmental issues. Ask each student to choose at least one environmental issue of interest to him/her. (Note: Encourage the students to select environmental issues that are “close to home.” These are issues to which the students can more easily relate.) Using the collected articles and/or other sources, the students should find the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the environmental issue?
2. What are the values associated with *all sides* of the issue?
3. What **environmental factors** are being discussed concerning the issue? (e.g. water, soil, wildlife)
4. What **human factors** are being discussed concerning the issue? (e.g. homes, food, space for recreation)
5. What are the **economic factors** involved in this issue? (e.g. jobs, public cost of project)
6. What government agencies are involved, if any?
7. How are the citizens involved in solving the issue? (e.g. public hearings, letter writing campaigns, protesting)
8. Are there any compromises proposed? If so, what are they?

Have the students present the results of their findings to the class.

Activity #2

Have the students list examples of environmental issues they have some interest in or strong feelings about. From their lists, have them select one issue, which they will investigate in detail.

Note: Investigation of an environmental issue involves a number of processes and skills. Choosing a specific issue, finding sources of information, choosing the correct investigations strategy, and evaluating information are all examples of components involved in investigating an issue. Harold Hungerford (see Resource) provides an excellent framework for guiding students through the issue investigation process. Instructors should be familiar with the components of an issue investigation procedure for this exercise.

Assist the students through the investigation process and have them compile their findings in a written report. When their reports are complete, have them brainstorm actions (solutions) which speak to the issue they have researched, are consistent with their values concerning the issue and which are realistic for them to try. Ask the students to carry out or become involved in at least one of these actions. (Note: It is very important that the instructor not impose personal judgments on courses of action legitimately reached by the students in this process.)

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Activity #3

This activity consists of a provocative statement followed by a series of questions. The questions, along with the quotation below, help the students examine their values by clarifying how the statement relates to their personal lives and values.

“Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the questions whether a still higher ‘standard of living’ is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.”

Aldo Leopold

A Sand County Almanac, 1948

Questions:

1. What are your reactions to this quotation?
2. Would you consider yourself a member of Leopold’s “minority”? Why or why not? Who represents the “majority”?
3. “... the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.” Are there any rights you enjoy that you would define as strongly as this? If so, what are they and why are they important to you?
4. Name three things you really appreciate but have come to take for granted.
5. A) Do you think that “progress” and a “higher standard of living” always take a toll on the natural community?
B) Can “progress” and “things natural and free” ever exist in harmony? If so, give an example. If not, why not?
6. A) What are some guidelines you have used to resolve conflicts in your own life that might help resolve this one?
B) If you were to send your recommendations for resolving this conflict to the President, what would you say?

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Sunrise Sunset Resources

Teacher Resources

Hungerford, Harold R., *et al.* 1978. *Investigation and Action Skills for Environmental Problem Solving*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Company. 166 pp.

Leopold, Aldo. 1966. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press. 269 pp.

National Audubon Society. *The Guide for Citizen Action*. Washington, DC: National Audubon Society.

National Wildlife Federation. 1982. *The Class Project*. Washington, DC: National Wildlife Federation.

Youth Resources

Fleisher, Paul. 1993. *Changing our World: A Handbook for Young Activists*. Tucson, AZ: Zephyr Press. (For grades 5-12).

Lewis, Barbara A. 1991. *The Kids Guide to Social Action*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. (For grades K-6).