

Module

1

Lesson

1

Personal Connections to Public Lands

© Wondercamp

Lesson at a Glance

Gallery Walk and Pair Share (15 min):

Participants will discuss how the outdoors has or has not shaped their lives by viewing and discussing visuals of outdoor places and public lands.

Brainstorm (15 min):

Participants will brainstorm ideas that come to mind with the words “public lands” and then discuss the definition of public lands.

Conclusion (5 min):

Material review and questions

Learner Outcomes

Participants will:

- Discuss the role of public lands in childhood and adult experiences.
- Have a basic understanding of the term “public lands” in a broad sense.

Getting Ready

Time: 35 minutes

Materials: Outdoor Spaces cards, butcher paper and pencil/markers

Preparation: Material collection, place public lands cards around instructional space

Location: Indoor or outdoor with room to sit in a circle and move around

Objective: To explore personal connections to public lands and develop a basic understanding of the definition of public lands.

Gallery Walk and Pair Share (15 min)

1. Distribute public lands visuals around the instructional space, with enough room for participants to gather in groups. Ensure that the images represent a wide variety of ways that people can connect with the outdoors, including urban and rural scenes and a variety of types of people doing different things. Ask the group to think quietly for a minute how the outdoors played a role in their childhood. Give the group 2 minutes to locate a visual that best describes their childhood experiences of being outside. Allow the small groups to discuss their choice with participants that chose the same visual or as a whole group, depending on group size.

2. Ask the group to move to a visual that best describes their connection to the outdoors in the present and allow time for discussion.

3. Pose the following questions to the group or pair up to discuss:

Was your choice of visual different from your childhood to now?

How did your initial exposure to the outdoors affect how you view or experience the outdoors now?

Was there a moment, event, or place that changed your perspective on being outdoors, for better or worse?

Is there an outdoor space that brings on negative feelings or memories? Ask participants to share as they feel comfortable. Note that we all have different relationships to the outdoors and to land, rooted in negative and positive feelings based on our experiences and the experiences collectively of the groups that we identify with.

Has an outdoor space ever felt like home?

Have you ever felt so connected to a place that it felt like ‘yours’?

What made it special? A beach, tree fort, bench in a city park, waterfall or overlook, etc.

4. Ask the group to consider that even if your connection to the outdoors was forged in your backyard, farm or city park, federal public lands are for all people.

So what are ‘public lands’?

Public Lands Brainstorm (15 min)

1. Create small groups of 3-5 people and pass out butcher paper and markers to each group.
2. Pose the question to the group, “What are public lands?” Explain that we will be doing a group brainstorm, and their task is to think of words, images, people, places, and ideas that come to mind for “public lands.” There is no correct answer, and ideas may be written as words, phrases, or even doodles. Encourage participants to open their minds up and be creative. Allow 5 minutes.

3. Ask each group to post their brainstorm in a central location and allow the group to silently review each paper. After 2 minutes, pose the following questions:

Are there similarities?

Differences?

Remind participants that we all have a different relationship to public lands.

4. Review the following definition of public lands and waters: areas of land and water that today are owned collectively by U.S. citizens and managed by government agencies; some are governed by cities and counties, some by states, some by the federal government. Offer the following concepts for discussion:
 - a. Lands considered “public lands” are often ancestral homelands, migration routes, ceremonial grounds, hunting and harvesting places for Indigenous Peoples who were forcibly removed historically and currently. Although public lands are now considered to be owned collectively by U.S. citizens, much of this land was stolen from Indigenous Peoples.
 - b. There are many types of land in the U.S. not owned or managed by the federal government that are open to the public, including state, regional, and local parks and greenways, and public use or conservation easements on private land that are managed by nonprofit land trusts, and private lands that are accessible via special hunting and fishing permits. Though it is important to know about all of these lands, this curriculum is focused on federally managed lands open to the public.
 - c. We say “United States citizens” because although undocumented people living in the U.S. and non-citizens have a connection to land and use public lands, because of their citizenship status, they are not included in the formal decision-making process through their right to vote. Certainly, undocumented advocates in the NGO or academic sectors can be influential in the public lands conversation.
 - d. Public lands are the result of specific and important history in the U.S. The ongoing protection of these lands by the federal government stemmed from a conscious decision to establish a network of land that is available to the public for a myriad of reasons; including recreation, natural resource extraction, hunting, preservation of cultural resources, and more.

Conclusion (5 min)

1. Review the definition of public lands and waters- areas of land and water that today are owned collectively by American citizens and managed by government agencies. These federal lands (and many of the other types of public lands) are yours and are available to the public for their use.
2. Time for questions.

Adapt the Lesson

Create public lands visuals that reflect the green spaces in and around the instructional location.

Consider adding in a group contract discussion to promote respect and emotional safety within the group, especially around the discussion of negative experiences in the outdoors.

Module

1

Lesson

2

Management and Uses of Public Lands

© John McCarthy

Lesson at a Glance

Rapid Fire Brainstorm (5 min):

Participants will collectively create a list of the different types of public lands.

Each One Teach One Activity (25 min):

Participants will teach about the map of public lands, federal land designations, and activities on different types of public lands.

Current Event Case Studies (25 min):

Participants will explore case studies and discuss issues associated with multiple use on public lands.

Conclusion (5 min): Round robin or pair share and report out. Questions.

Learner Outcomes

Participants will:

- Explore maps of federal public lands.
- Learn about the different agencies within the federal government that manage public lands.
- Learn about the different designations for public lands and recognize Wilderness as the most protective type of land designation.
- Understand the different uses for public lands and their potential conflicts.

Getting Ready

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Each One Teach One fact sheets, print out of federal lands map, agency logos and missions, print out of organizational chart and designations cards, print out of land use icons, printouts of case studies

Preparation: Examples of land designations relevant to the audience and location

Location: Indoor or outdoor with room to sit in a circle and move around

Objective:

To understand public lands distribution, how federal public lands are managed, different designations, and how uses differ depending on that designation.

Rapid Fire Brainstorm (5 min)

1. Divide participants into groups of 3-5 people. Assign a scribe and piece of butcher paper to each group. Give the groups 3 minutes to brainstorm different types of public lands found in the US. Note that examples could include federal, state, and private lands.
2. After 3 minutes, have each group put a star by each of the examples of federally managed public lands. Mention that the focus of the lesson will be on federally managed public lands.

Each One Teach One Activity (25 min)

Divide participants into 3 groups and provide a fact sheet for each topic and associated teaching materials. Give the groups 15 minutes to plan their lesson to the group, 4 minutes to present. Have groups present in the order listed below. As each group is presenting, the participants should write down 3-5 main takeaway points to share at the close of each presentation.

1. Public Lands Distribution

What percentage of the country is public lands?

How many acres are federal public lands in the US?

Poll the group for their thoughts before giving the correct answer. Who was closest? Are the numbers surprising?

(Answer: 640 million acres, 26% - in all 50 states!)

Present the map of federal public lands to the group. Ask the group to make observations about the distribution of public lands in the country.

Is it surprising? Why do you think it is that way?

As the country expanded westward, the government claimed ownership of land across the country. Through dispossession, genocide, and relocation, many Indigenous people were removed from these lands (although some still live on their aboriginal lands). Most of these lands were then transferred to individuals through grants and homestead acts. Other lands became state land when states entered the Union. However, the federal government retained ownership of some parts. In the East, the government had to purchase and acquire land later on, specifically for the purpose of conservation, not for expansion. This was done through Acts of Congress (i.e. Forest Reserve Act of 1891, Weeks Act of 1911).

Look at the key and mention the different agencies that manage public lands. Ask participants why they think multiple agencies are involved. Ask the participants to locate some public lands near to where they live and point them out on the map- answers could include city parks, privately owned conservation land, state parks, or federally-managed lands. Present the following questions:

How do you or your community use the land?

How did you find out about it?

Do you have a good story to share that happened at that place or any of the lands identified on the map of federal lands?

Who lived there before you did and where are those people now?

generally allowed on all public lands and waters, including Wilderness. As noted earlier, these activities may be limited in specific locations and at specific times. Livestock grazing can occur on all public lands, including Wilderness, subject to location-specific limitations.

b. The above activities plus mountain biking, off-road vehicles, RVs, motor boats, and scenic driving are generally allowed on public lands outside designated Wilderness, subject to location-specific limitations. Motorized and mechanized travel are prohibited in designated Wilderness.

c. Construction and road building, mining, logging, and energy development also occur on public lands. However, they are generally limited to undesignated areas of the National Forests and BLM lands.

2. Federal Land Designations

Present the Land Management Agency organizational chart. Note that under each agency are different ways that lands are designated within that agency (in green).

Pass out the designation cards and have each person read out their card. Note that some of the designations may be managed by multiple agencies. Pose the following questions to the group:

Can you think of an example of your type of designation?
Be prepared with relevant examples to your group and location.

What challenges are there if one type of designation is managed by multiple agencies?

For example, National Monuments are managed by NPS, USFWS, BLM, and USFS. The potentially competing missions of these agencies might cause inconsistencies in management.

What is the most protective type of designation?

What is (are) the least?

(Answer: Wilderness is the most protective. Undesignated areas of National Forests and BLM land are the least protective.)

Ask each person to choose two activities that may potentially come into conflict and take 1 minute to think about why and ways to mitigate the conflict. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts. Example: Tribes work through conflict with federal management to protect their sacred sites, sacred landscapes and areas of traditional ecological knowledge.

3. Federal Land Uses

The designation of a particular area of federal lands or water generally determines what activities can and cannot take place in those areas. The general rules are described below. However, activities may be subject to limitations imposed by land managers in specific locations, during specific times of year, and during ceremonial use by Indigenous Peoples.

Review the allowed activities using the land use icon cards.

a. Hiking, fishing, ceremony and prayer, hunting, rock climbing, wildlife viewing, photography, horseback riding, kayaking, canoeing, rafting are

Case Studies (25 min)

Divide students into small groups and assign case studies. Ask each group to read each case study, together or separately, and individually take note of 2-3 takeaways from the article before discussing as a group.

Discussion Questions:

- *What designation applies to the land in this case?*
- *Who are the stakeholders in the case you read? (define “stakeholders” for the group if needed)*
- *What did each stakeholder want the outcome of the case to be?*
 - *Why?*
 - *How would that outcome affect the other groups involved?*
- *Would anything about this case have been different if the land designation were different? (think about designations that are more protective or less protective).*
- *Think about the opposing interests of the stakeholders in the case you read. Can you think of a situation where similar groups might be on the same side?*
- *What solution would you propose for this conflict? Why?*

Ask each group to share their takeaways from the article and their solution to the conflict.

Help students understand that while different land designations allow or prevent different types of land use, this does not mean that all stakeholders will agree on what the land should be used for. Point out that some designations allow for multiple uses that sometimes conflict with one another (such as BLM land, which allows for recreation as well as cattle grazing, for example). When one stakeholder claims that another’s use of an area of public land interferes with their right to use that land, the case often has to be decided in a court of law.

Conclusion (5 min)

1. Ask students to take 2 minutes to write a reflection on what they have learned- pose the following questions: Why are public lands so complicated to manage? Do the challenges associated with managing public lands relate to anything in your life? Ask for volunteers to share their responses.

Adapt the lesson:

Instructors are encouraged to provide local maps and locally relevant case studies in addition to or in place of the ones provided.

Facilitators can rework the case studies into role play scenarios, having students each represent stakeholders in each conflict. With this lesson adaptation, please ensure respectful dialogue, being careful that students do not use stereotypes to represent different identities.

Reference the following article for tips on how to powerfully teach using role plays: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/how-to-teach-role-plays/>.

