

## Module

# 2

## Lesson

# 1a

# History of Public Lands

## Lesson at a Glance

### Timeline Activity (30 min):

Participants will work together to lay out important events in the history of public lands in order along a timeline. The group will read through the timeline together, correcting dates and order as they go.

### Debrief of Timeline Activity (25 min):

The group will discuss the timeline and answer questions.

### Conclusion (5 min):

Review of concepts and feelings.

## Learner Outcomes

### Participants will:

- Learn about important events in the history of public lands.
- Understand that public lands did not develop in a vacuum.
- Recognize the importance of social history in defining access and stakeholders in the creation of public lands.

## Getting Ready

### Participants: any

### Time: 1 hour

**Materials:** Laminated timeline cards, rope

**Preparation:** Lay out the rope in a line

**Location:** A flat space to lay out 10 feet of rope and move around

**Objective:** To understand the history of public lands in the context of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

## Timeline Activity (30 min)

1. Lay out a piece of rope (about 10 feet long), and identify one end as Time Immemorial and the other end as today. Give the participants an envelope with 30-40 events in the history of public lands, with dates on the back.
2. Instruct the group to work together to correctly order the events chronologically, without looking at the dates on the back. Encourage listening and discussion. Give the group 10-15 minutes to order the dates.
3. After 15 minutes, read through the timeline together from beginning to end. Correct and reorder the events as necessary. Encourage discussion as you go, but keep in mind that you will be doing a big picture debrief next.

## Debrief of Timeline Activity (25 min)

After reading through the timeline together, debrief with the following questions:

*What is your immediate reaction to the timeline? Have you seen one like this before?*

- a. Participants' feelings run the gamut from "mind blown!" to "guilty" to "tell me something I didn't know" to "no reaction" to "confused." Remind participants that all reactions are valid and in some ways representative of our relationship(s) to history and public lands.

*How are social events like slavery related to public lands?*

- a. Mention that public lands creation, expansion, and management did not happen in a vacuum. The creation of public lands is reflective of U.S. attitudes past and present, for better or for worse. For example, although slavery may seem tangential to public lands management, the legacy of slavery impacts Black and African American perception, experiences, engagement, and participation in public lands management.

*Who and for whom were public lands created and protected?* In particular, think about who had the right to fully participate in public lands management decisions before 1965 and before 1920.

- a. Debrief: Before 1965, African Americans, while they had the right to vote based on the ratification of the 15th Amendment on February 3, 1870, oftentimes they did not have the ability to vote or participate in any public lands management decisions, because during most of this timeline they were fighting for basic rights due to slavery and the subsequent Jim Crow Laws.

Women, on the other hand, did not have the right to vote until the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, so they too could not participate in public land management decisions prior to 1920.

Let's think about what else was happening in the United States while public lands management was just beginning to emerge. Many groups like African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinxs/Chicanxs, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ people, and non-Christians had concerns outside of public lands related to their physical and cultural survival. At the same time, policy-makers actively prevented many such groups from being a part of the decision making processes. Some of these concerns facing groups who were not white Euro-American males include slavery, genocide, forced removal/internment, and legalized discrimination.

**Discuss these questions in pairs, then as a whole group:**

*What kinds of impacts do you think forced removal and assimilation might have had on Indigenous people?*

*What kinds of impacts do you think slavery had on African Americans and Mixed Race Peoples' relationship to the land and outdoor spaces?*

*How might the inability to vote have impacted everyone but Euro-American men? How might this have prevented these people from participating as decisions makers in the birth of the public lands movement?*

*How would the history of public lands be different if everyone had been allowed to vote from the beginning?*

*What are some of the impacts of these events and concerns on public lands management today?*

- a. **Indigenous Dispossession:** Dispossession of Indigenous land resulted in small parcels of often non-arable land sectioned off for Indigenous Peoples.
- b. **Erasure of Indigenous presence:** Most public lands are touted as "untrammelled, pristine, and untouched" with no discussion of Indigenous Peoples who lived or currently live on these lands. Indigenous Peoples are relegated to the status of a relic.
- c. **Erasure of African American presence:** Some public lands overlie areas that have become culturally important or sacred to African Americans, including former plantation lands and cemeteries, refuge maroon colonies, and newfound sacred sites for the religions (some still practiced today) carried over by enslaved Africans.
- d. **Distortion of Indigenous presence:** To the extent Indigenous people are mentioned, their narrative is distorted (e.g., Ahwahnechee people were allowed to remain in Yosemite Valley if they performed native art for tourists).
- e. **Cultural appropriation:** Camps and outdoor programs often appropriate Indigenous culture, symbols, or other icons such as totem poles, feathers, and teepees, while simultaneously distorting or erasing the history of the Indigenous people.

f. **Failure to acknowledge the trauma of racism in outdoor spaces:** Even well-meaning people may assume that the historic connections to land and artifacts of nature are universal; in fact, for many African Americans (especially older African Americans), spaces like formerly segregated parks, groves of trees where people may have been lynched, or mentions of things like hunting may raise painful and traumatic memories of racist violence.

g. **Assumptions about environmental connections and what it means to "recreate" in nature:** Some assume that there is only a single way to connect to nature, namely, the John Muir-style solitary escape into "pristine" wilderness. The reality is that different communities connect in different ways based on their culture and history.

h. **Myopic environmental and conservation curriculum:** The traditional narrative not only doesn't mention Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ people, and to some extent women, but presents a narrow point of view generally held by notable white men from the 1800s and early 1900s, people such as John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gifford Pinchot, and Aldo Leopold.

i. **Myopic understanding of protection and conservation:** Organizations often do not include communities' needs in the protection and conservation conversation. Protection is often in service of the health of flora and fauna, or for traditional forms of recreation. Specific needs like Indigenous subsistence hunting and fishing and spiritual practices are not considered. In addition, conservation movements rely on Western Science and do not value or consider traditional ecological knowledge or other ways of knowing.

## Conclusion (5 min)

1. In Round Robin sharing style, ask the participants to describe in one word how this activity made them feel.
2. Acknowledge feelings of guilt, sadness, anger. Ask a final question: How can we take pride in and advocate for our public lands without glossing over or ignoring the complicated history surrounding them? How can we put forward a different narrative?
3. Conclude on a hopeful note: there is a lot that we can do to create a more complex and positive narrative: listening and learning, create an inclusive experience on public lands, advocate for people with marginalized identities' voices to be heard and influential in your organization's decision-making processes.

## Adapt the Lesson

Include timeline events relevant to the group and/or location, add in other important place-based events.

## Module

# 2

## Lesson

# 1b

# History of Public Lands

## Lesson at a Glance

### Timeline Activity (30 min):

Participants will examine public lands and social history events and pair share.

### Debrief of Timeline Activity (25 min):

The group will discuss the timeline and answer questions.

### Conclusion (5 min):

Review of concepts and feelings.

## Learner Outcomes

### Participants will:

- Learn about important events in the history of public lands.
- Understand that public lands did not develop in a vacuum.
- Recognize the importance of social history in defining access and stakeholders in the creation of public lands.

## Getting Ready

**Participants:** any

**Time:** 30 min - 1 hour

**Materials:** Laminated timeline cards, rope, paper for additions to timeline

**Preparation:** Lay out the rope in a line

**Location:** A flat space to lay out 10 feet of rope and move around

**Objective:** To understand the history of public lands in the context of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

## Timeline Activity (30 min)

1. Lay out a piece of rope (about 10 feet long), and identify one end as Time Immemorial, and the other end as today. Lay out 25-30 relevant events, making sure to include both environmental and social history.
2. Highlight the notable and well-known environmental events. Ask participants for any other events they would like to add and write them on a piece of paper to add to the timeline.
3. Have participants gallery walk through the timeline. For large groups, consider spreading the event around the room.
4. As people have finished perusing the material, ask them to pair up and discuss their initial impressions and what surprised them until everyone has had an opportunity to review the timeline.

## Debrief of Timeline Activity (25 min)

After reading through the timeline together, debrief with the following questions:

*What is your immediate reaction to the timeline?*

*Have you seen one like this before?*

- a. Participants' feelings run the gamut from "mind blown!" to "guilty" to "tell me something I didn't know" to "no reaction" to "confused." Remind participants that all reactions are valid and in some ways representative of our relationship(s) to history and public lands.

*How are social conditions like slavery related to public lands?*

- a. Mention that public lands creation, expansion, and management did not happen in a vacuum. The creation of public lands is reflective of U.S. attitudes past and present, for better or for worse. For example, although slavery may seem tangential to public lands management, the legacy of slavery impacts Black and African American perception, experiences, engagement, and participation in public lands management.

*Who and for whom were public lands created and protected?*

In particular, think about who had the right to fully participate in public lands management decisions before 1965 and before 1920.



- a. **Debrief:** Before 1965, African Americans, while they had the right to vote based on the ratification of the 15th Amendment on February 3, 1870, often times they did not have the ability to vote or participate in any public lands management decisions, because during most of this timeline they were fighting for basic rights due to slavery and the subsequent Jim Crow Laws.

Women, on the other hand, did not have the right to vote until the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, so they too could not participate in public land management decisions prior to 1920.

Let's think about what else was happening in the United States while public lands management was just beginning to emerge. Many groups like African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinxs/Chicanxs, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ people, and non-Christians had concerns outside of public lands related to their physical and cultural survival. At the same time, policy-makers actively prevented many such groups from being a part of the decision making processes. Some of these concerns facing groups who were not white Euro-American males include slavery, genocide, forced removal/internment, and legalized discrimination.

#### **Discuss these questions in pairs, then as a whole group:**

*What kinds of impacts do you think forced removal and assimilation might have had on Indigenous peoples?*

*What kinds of impacts do you think slavery had on African Americans and Mixed Race Peoples' relationship to the land and outdoor spaces?*

*How might the inability to vote have impacted everyone but Euro-American men? How might this have prevented these people from participating as decisions makers in the birth of the public lands movement?*

*How would the history of public lands be different if everyone had been allowed to vote from the beginning?*

*What are some of the impacts of these timelines on public lands management today?*

- Indigenous Dispossession:** Dispossession of Indigenous land resulted in small parcels of often non-arable land sectioned off for Indigenous Peoples.
- Erasure of Indigenous presence:** Most public lands are touted as "untrammelled, pristine, and untouched" with no discussion of Indigenous Peoples who lived or currently live on these lands. Indigenous Peoples are relegated to the status of a relic.
- Erasure of African American presence:** Some public lands overlaid areas that have become culturally important or sacred to African Americans, including former plantation lands and cemeteries, refuge maroon colonies, and newfound sacred sites for the religions (some still practiced today) carried over by enslaved Africans.
- Distortion of Indigenous presence:** To the extent Indigenous Peoples are mentioned, their narrative is distorted (e.g., Ahwahnechee people were allowed to remain in Yosemite Valley if they performed native art for tourists).

- Cultural appropriation:** Camps and outdoor programs often appropriate Indigenous culture, symbols, or other icons such as totem poles, feathers, and teepees, while simultaneously distorting or erasing the history of the Indigenous Peoples.
- Failure to acknowledge the trauma of racism in outdoor spaces:** Even well-meaning people may assume that the historic connections to land and artifacts of nature are universal; in fact, for many African Americans (especially older African Americans), spaces like formerly segregated parks, groves of trees where people may have been lynched, or mentions of things like hunting may recall painful and traumatic memories of racist violence.
- Assumptions about environmental connections and what it means to "recreate" in nature:** Some assume that there is only a single way to connect to nature, namely, the John Muir-style solitary escape into "pristine" wilderness. The reality is that different communities connect in different ways based on their culture and history.
- Myopic environmental and conservation curriculum:** The traditional narrative not only doesn't mention Indigenous people, people of color, LGBTQ people, and to some extent women, but presents a narrow point of view generally held by notable white men from the 1800s and early 1900s, people such as John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gifford Pinchot, and Aldo Leopold.
- Myopic understanding of protection and conservation:** Organizations often do not include communities' needs in the protection and conservation conversation. Protection is often in service of the health of flora and fauna, or for traditional forms of recreation. Specific needs like Indigenous subsistence hunting and fishing and spiritual practices are not considered. In addition, conservation movements rely on Western Science and do not value or consider traditional ecological knowledge or other ways of knowing.

## **Conclusion (5 min)**

- In Round Robin sharing style, ask the participants to describe in one word how this activity made them feel.
- Acknowledge feelings of guilt, sadness, anger. Ask a final question:

*How can we take pride in and advocate for our public lands without glossing over or ignoring the complicated history surrounding them?*

*How can we put forward a different narrative?*

- Conclude on a hopeful note: there is a lot that we can do to create a more complex and positive narrative: listening and learning, create an inclusive experience on public lands, advocate for all voices to be heard and influential in your organization's decision-making processes.

## **Adapt the Lesson**

Add in locally relevant events to the timeline.

## Module

# 2

## Lesson

# 2

# Early Attitudes and Shifting Perceptions of Wilderness

## Lesson at a Glance

**Journal Activity (10 min):** Participants will reflect on their own values of “wilderness” and discuss.

### Early Attitudes Towards Wilderness:

**Teaching Groups (10 min):** Teaching groups will explore manifest destiny, settler colonialism, or early wilderness values and share their knowledge in small groups.

### Early Attitudes Towards Wilderness:

**Debrief (5 min):** The group will discuss the three attitudes towards wilderness with a series of debrief questions.

**Shifting Perceptions: Speeches from Famous Environmentalists (20 min):** Break participants into four groups to become an expert on one famous environmentalist and deliver a speech to the group.

### Shifting Perceptions: Debrief (10 min):

The group will discuss how different ideals from the early environmental movement influenced what it is today.

### Conclusion (5 min):

Discuss personal connection to historical perspectives, time for questions.

## Learner Outcomes

### Participants will:

- Understand that there are many different ways to value wilderness, and that perceptions have shifted over time.
- Learn about how the ideals of four major figures helped shape the environmental movement.
- Explain the difference between conservation and preservation.

## Getting Ready

**Time:** 1 hour

**Materials:** Printed environmentalist cards and speeches, printed wilderness values info cards, journals, and pencils

**Location:** A space to sit in a circle and move around

**Objective:** To understand how perceptions toward wilderness have shifted over time.

## Journal Activity (10 min)

1. Ask participants to think about the word “wilderness.” What thoughts, ideas, emotions, and images come to mind? Take three minutes to journal silently. This can be in the form of a paragraph, words and phrases, and/or drawings.
2. Bring the group back together and take a few minutes to share and discuss responses.
3. Notice any trends. Typical responses may include pristine, untouched, peace etc.
4. **Ask:** “What do you think this place means or meant to the Indigenous people in this area?” and discuss.
5. **Conclude:** Most cultures throughout the world have some understanding or connection to the concept of wilderness, but they do not all define it in the same way or value it the same way. To Indigenous cultures in the U.S., the word “wilderness” may not conjure up images of serene landscapes, but instead images of dispossession. To many people, the word “wilderness” itself is heavily loaded because much of the American Wilderness-designated lands were established through the forcible removal of people who once inhabited those lands. “Wilderness” as a pristine and untouched space doesn’t really exist in any of our public lands, most of which are now or used to be inhabited by other people. All public lands have a rich human history we cannot ignore.
  - a. Note: this does not invalidate anyone’s feelings towards wilderness, it just means that we should not assume that these lands mean the same thing to us as they mean to the people who live(d) there.

## Early Attitudes Towards Wilderness: Teaching Groups (10 min)

1. Break participants into three groups. Give each group one of the three cards explaining Manifest Destiny, Settler Colonialism, and Early Wilderness Values. Ask each group to become an expert on one of the concepts by reading and discussing the concept amongst themselves.
2. After five minutes, ask each person to find two people who discussed the other two concepts. You should then have multiple three person groups.
3. In the small group, each person will teach the other two what they learned. They will flag any questions or important ideas.

## Early Attitudes Towards Wilderness: Debrief (5 min)

Debrief with the following discussion questions:

1. *What's the difference between colonialism and settler colonialism?*

*What's the impact of settler colonialism that may be different from other forms of colonialism?*

2. *What's the impact of the intersection of Manifest Destiny and settler colonialism?*

a. **Debrief:** domesticating and “conquering” the frontier was a source of “pioneer” pride. It was also the fulfillment of their Manifest Destiny. The use of terms such as “frontier” and “pioneer” served to erase the presence of original inhabitants and reinforced the mirage of the West being empty land available for the taking. Since wild lands were seen as a source of danger and (often very real) hardship, their submission and conversion to farmland and settlements was a representation of progress.

3. *What's the impact on Wilderness Values of Euro-Americans' perception of Indigenous Peoples?*

a. **Debrief:** Indigenous people were considered part of the “wild” nature of wilderness. They were dehumanized and referred to as “savage,” justifying the genocidal actions against them. This, along with centuries of dispossession of Indigenous lands; relocation of Indigenous Peoples to allotted reservations on unproductive land; assimilation programs; and appropriation of their land, water, and mineral resources, played a significant role in environmental policy today.

## Shifting Perceptions: Speeches from Famous Environmentalists (20 min)

1. Begin by asking the group to name any famous environmental figures of the past that they have learned about.

*Who were they?*

*What values did they espouse?*

2. Divide participants into four groups and assign each group one of four famous men in the American environmental movement: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Theodore Roosevelt. Give them a card with a description of their person and the school of thought they represent, as well as a speech or writing by that individual. Have groups take five minutes to review their assigned person and prepare to give the speech provided. Note that each person should participate in the speech and each group should have a person responsible for introducing their character while other participant(s) deliver the speech.

3. Begin the speeches. Choose an area to be the stage, and everyone else to act as the audience.
4. After each speech, ask the audience to summarize the main points.

## Shifting Perceptions: Debrief (10 min)

1. *What is the difference between conservation and preservation?*

a. **Conservation:** Lands managed by the government should be used responsibly for multiple uses, including outdoor recreation by the public, logging, mining, etc., in a way that conserves resources for future generations.

b. **Preservation:** The idea that outdoor spaces should remain as pristine and untouched from humans as possible, protected from commercial efforts (logging, mining, etc.) and recreation and overuse by people.

2. *Based on what we've learned so far about public lands and land management, do the different designations represent a difference in ideals?*

a. National Parks and Wilderness areas are representative of the pristine, untouched preservationist attitude. National Forests and BLM land, being multi-use, are more representative of conservationist ideals.

3. *Are there other ways of valuing outdoors spaces that are not represented here?*

## Conclusion (5 min)

1. Pose the following question to the group:

*Do your connections to public lands or wild spaces reflect any of those historical figures and their ideas or the perceptions of wilderness that we discussed? Allow the group to answer “popcorn style.”*

2. Allow time for questions.