

## Module

# 1

## Lesson

# 1

# Personal Connection to Public Lands

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## Lesson at a Glance

### Gallery Walk and Pair Share

**(15 min):** Participants will discuss personal connections to the outdoors by viewing and discussing visuals of outdoor places and public lands.

### Brainstorm and Discussion (20 min)

Participants will brainstorm ideas that come to mind with the words “public lands”, review the definition of public lands, and discuss complicated aspects of public lands management and connection to land.

### Conclusion (5 min):

Material review and questions

## Learner Outcomes

### Participants will:

- Discuss the role of public lands and the outdoors in childhood and adult experiences.
- Have a basic understanding of the term “public lands” and the complicated nature of public lands in the United States.

## Getting Ready

**Time:** 40 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 what role the outdoors played in their childhood. Give the group 2 minutes to locate a visual that best describes their childhood experiences of being outside. After individual reflections, ask 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?*

*What kinds of feelings come up when you think about your connection to the outdoors? 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? A beach, tree fort, bench in a city park, waterfall or overlook, etc.*

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

*What made it special?*

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

*So what are ‘public lands’?*

## Public Lands Brainstorm (20 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 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 so these brainstorm visuals may look very different from group to group.

4. Post and review the following definition of public lands and waters: **Public lands and waters are areas of land and water that are open for public use and are managed by government agencies with guidance and support from people residing in the United States.** Offer the following concepts for discussion:

- a. Lands considered “public lands” are the current and ancestral homelands, migration routes, ceremonial grounds, hunting and harvesting places for Indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed historically and currently. From some Indigenous people’s perspective, public lands are stolen lands that were taken from Indigenous people and later transformed into the public parks, forests and refuges we know today.

*Why is it important to consider that different people have different relationships to public lands? What does that mean as people offer “guidance and support” for public lands management?*

- b. Protection and management of public lands means that land is managed for use by different stakeholders- from ceremony and prayer, to recreation, to resource extraction and energy development.

*What does this mean for the nature of public lands management? What happens when two (or more) stakeholders have competing interests in public land use?*

## Conclusion (5 min)

1. Go around the group and ask each person to share a word or phrase that reflects what they learned in this lesson. Review that relationships to the outdoors and to public lands are complicated- each person connects to land in different ways and each way is valid and extremely personal. Just like people connect to land in a myriad of ways, public lands are managed in many ways. Public lands are an amazing, complicated resource that we all share.
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.

# Management and Uses of Public Lands

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## 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 (30 min):

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

**Conclusion (5 min):** Round robin or pair share. 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:** 40 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

**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 lands found in the United States. Note that examples could include federal (National Parks or Forests), state (Parks, Recreation Areas), and private lands (Preserves, Conservation Areas).
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 (30 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, 5 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 the lesson.

### 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 and was generally a lot more complicated, hence the relatively small amounts of federal public lands in the East.

Allow participants to review the cards that show the different agencies that manage public lands and their mission statements. 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?*

*Who lived there before you did and where are those people now?* (If time, use this prompt to introduce the <https://native-land.ca/> resource for identifying ancestral 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.

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. Non-Wilderness areas of National Forests and BLM land are the least protective.)**

## 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, and rafting** are generally allowed on all federal public lands and waters, including Wilderness. As noted above, these activities may be limited in specific locations and at specific times. Livestock grazing can occur on all federal public lands, including Wilderness, subject to location-specific limitations.
- b. All activities allowed in Wilderness, plus **mountain biking, off-road vehicles, RVs, motor boats, and scenic driving** are generally allowed on federal public lands outside designated Wilderness, subject to location-specific limitations determined by the managing agencies. Motorized and mechanized travel (including mountain biking) are prohibited in designated Wilderness.
- c. **Construction and road building, mining, logging, and energy development** also occur on public lands. However, they are generally prohibited in areas designated as Wilderness.

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: off-road vehicles and wildlife viewing.

## Conclusion (5 min)

1. Ask students to review their take away points for Each One Teach One lesson with a partner then 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.

The Each One Teach One lessons can also be taught in small groups of 3 participants each, with each participant responsible for one Each One Teach One lesson. Make sure to print out enough teaching materials for each group.