

Overview

Ready, Set...Action includes three activities:

Activity 1: *iConserve Pennsylvania*

Activity 2: *Conservation Heroes*

Activity 3: *ACTION: Stewardship and Service Learning*

Summary: The ultimate goal of education is to develop responsible citizens. This lesson focuses on the power and responsibility of each individual to become involved in improving his or her community through community action and leadership in conservation.

Involvement can happen at many levels...on a personal level, a community level, a state level, a national level and a global level. The community provides many opportunities for involvement and participation in local leadership. From planting trees to picking up litter to joining an Environmental Advisory Council, people can choose the type of contribution they can afford to make. The local government structure of communities involves elected officials, laws, and enforcement, enabling residents to practice citizenship on a local level involving themselves in the democratic process and the importance of democratic deliberation.

The activities will introduce participants to the DCNR iConservePA website (www.iConservePA.org) that promotes the actions of people who have participated in various conservation activities. Participants will meet heroes who have contributed energy, resources, leadership and commitment to protect land in their communities. Participants will explore a variety of ideas to inspire actions in their own communities. Discussions for teachers on service learning projects and contacts will encourage conservation projects through public schools.

Activity 1

Activity 1:

iConserve Pennsylvania

Summary: The iConserve Pennsylvania activity focuses on identifying the opportunities for participants to become involved in conservation and community projects. It provides the opportunity to describe the types of actions that help communities and to describe the process of becoming involved. The activity focuses on the website developed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: www.iConservePA.org.

Questions: What is the definition of the word “conservation” and what does it entail? What do people look like when they are practicing conservation, stewardship and citizenship? What type of partnerships, tools and skills are needed to conduct conservation projects?

Preparation

- Develop a T chart on a flip chart (p 217).
- Assemble the objects that symbolize various conservation actions.
 - a. Cloth shopping bag
 - b. Faucet aerator
 - c. Bus pass
 - d. Shovel
 - e. Bluebird box
 - f. Borough map or website
 - g. Compact fluorescent bulb
 - h. Recyclable can or bottle
 - i. Voter registration card, paper and pen
- Copy and distribute the Object to Action cards (pp 218-219).

- Provide access to the internet to demonstrate the iConservePA website.
- Copy and distribute the Community Network Worksheet (pp 220).

Procedure

1. *We can define the words “community action” in many ways.*

What are some of the words that we associate with the words “community action” (stewardship, volunteer, service-learning, partnership, citizenship, conservation, voting, writing a letter)? Define the meaning of the word “conservation.” Write the words on a flip chart.

When we say each of those words, we have an image that emerges in our minds based on our experiences. To help others develop a common understanding, it is important to define examples of the word. What does “conservation action” look like? It can be a personal commitment to conserve water by turning off a faucet when brushing teeth. It could be a group action such as joining a watershed organization to clean up litter along stream. It can be a monetary donation to a favorite conservancy or creating a land easement that leaves a profound legacy.

In order for people to understand what is truly meant by the word, a helpful exercise is to develop a tool called a “T” chart. We use it for helping small children learn what is expected, for example, when a teacher says “to listen.” What does it look like when a person is listening? These actions are discussed and modeled. (They look at the person speaking. They might nod their head. They aren’t talking. They pay attention.) This type of discussion helps young children to visualize what it looks like when a teacher says “to listen.”

This tool is useful for older participants and adults in defining and modeling the behaviors that are valued. Defining the word is only part of the communication.

Discussing the behavior provides a clearer understanding of the expectation.

Give each group one of the words listed above. Discuss the word and describe a behavior that represents that word. Add other words to the “T” chart and have the group discuss examples.

2. *Objects can symbolize community actions.* Cut and copy the Object Action Cards. Give a card with a brief explanation to a team of participants.

Have a collection of objects or photos that represent action projects. Assemble objects in the front of the group. Have participants select an object that relates to their card. Explain how that object relates to a conservation action. Discuss conservation actions that are individual actions, household actions, and community actions.

3. *iConserve.* What is “conservation?” A very exciting place to learn about conservation in action is to visit a DCNR website dedicated to conservation in Pennsylvania—www.iConservePA.org.

You will not just read about conservation, you will meet a host of individuals that practice it every day. They are people like you and me. They are people who have developed a life style of conservation from saving water to developing outdoor ethics in children. Each person is considered a “PA iCon.” You too can be a Conservation Icon. You can be listed on the website by registering your commitment to conservation and sending a photo. Conservation can look like many things to many people but the common thread is a commitment to making wise choices in our actions that are positive for the environment and our community. Develop a list of conservation actions from the icons on the website.

Partnerships and resources are very important in developing community initiatives. Using the Community

Network Worksheet, define sources of support and information for your community project.

Activity 2:

Conservation Heroes

Summary: Pennsylvania has a history of conservation heroes. From Gifford Pinchot to Dr. Joseph Rothrock to Rachel Carson, Pennsylvanians have dedicated their lives to protecting natural resources. This activity focuses on current heroes of land protection and conservation highlighted in the publications produced by the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association. By connecting to personal stories, the activity hopes to inspire and motivate others based on the dedication of these land conservation heroes. The activity also includes identifying actions among the participants.

Questions: What stories support the importance of land conservation? What were some of the reasons that people save land? Who is impacted by their actions? Who is practicing conservation in your community?

Preparation

- Copy, cut and distribute copies of Conservation Heroes (p 221) from the book *In Their Own Words* by the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (www.conserveland.org).
- Copy and distribute the Trading Cards worksheets (pp 222-223) to pairs of participants.

Procedure

1. One meaning of conservation is to protect special places. Our public parks and forests are special places where land management decisions are based on sound conser-

vation practices. What are your favorite natural places?

According to the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, “conservation is defined as a choice to protect special places for present and future generations. It is a choice to safeguard our water, care for wildlife, preserve productive farmland and forest, and maintain natural beauty. Everyday across Pennsylvania, individuals and families make the conservation choice...Those who conserve their land create a profound legacy. They make a gift that will resonate through time.”

A conservation easement is an agreement between a landowner and a private land trust or government. The agreement limits certain uses on all or a portion of a property for conservation purposes while keeping the property in the landowner’s ownership and control. The agreement is tailored to the particular property and to the goals of the owner and conservation organization. An easement applies to present and future owners of the land. Most easements are donated by people who wish to protect a beloved place.

2. *In Their Own Words* by The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association is a booklet filled with 15 remarkable stories of conservation and inspiration. Four of the stories are summarized on the worksheet. Assign participants to read the stories. Discuss these questions about the people in the stories.

1. *What is common in each of the stories?*
2. *How do the people in the stories view their land?*
3. *Why do people save land?*
4. *Who are the other people or organizations important for land conservation?*
5. *How do you think their decision impacted the surrounding community?*