

Overview

No Park is An Island includes five activities:

Activity 1: *Public Lands: Our Civic Responsibility*

Activity 2: *Enjoying Pennsylvania's Public Lands*

Activity 3: *Activities versus Resources*

Activity 4: *Who is Your Audience?*

Activity 5: *Developing a Public Park Project*

Summary: “No Park is An Island” expresses the connections of public lands to the surrounding communities, the natural resources, the state and the people. Public lands are the responsibility of each citizen. This lesson provides discussion about government responsibility and the encouragement of public input. Through the activities, participants will determine the role of government agencies and define the characteristics between public and private land. Participants will work in groups to make recommendations about the development of public lands for park, recreation and resource management.

Groups will research information, applying skills learned in previous lessons, and develop park and recreation plans for public land. The group will present their plans in a public forum.

Questions: What is the difference between public and private lands? Who has responsibility to manage public and private lands? What is the role of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in managing public lands? What recreation activities are available in our state parks and forests? How do activities impact the natural resources? What activities are recommended in developing a public park and recreation initiative?

Activity 1

Activity 1:

Public Lands: Our Civic Responsibility

Summary: Participants will work in groups to discuss the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) as the leader in management of public lands. They will review the mission and goals of the agency and other state and national agencies that own and manage public lands. Groups will locate state and national public lands in Pennsylvania and determine the types of visitor experiences provided at different sites.

Questions: Where are public lands located in Pennsylvania? Who owns public lands? What activities can be conducted in state public parks and forests, state game lands and on national lands located in Pennsylvania?

Preparation

- Reproduce a copy of the DCNR Mission Statement (p 189) and Action Plan (available online at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/info/shapefuture/actionplan.aspx) to display to the entire group.
- Copy and cut the Government Agency Worksheet (p 190) for pairs of students.

Procedure

Question: What public agencies are involved with protecting natural resources through land ownership?

1. Discuss the meaning of the words “public” and “private” land ownership. In Pennsylvania, DCNR is the primary organization responsible for the protection and stewardship of natural resources. Although DCNR owns only a small percentage of Pennsylvania’s lands, 2.4 million acres of Pennsylvania’s 29 million acres, it establishes a

model for the long-term sustainability of our natural resources. DCNR also provides funding incentives to private owners and communities to protect land such as greenways for natural resources and open space and to improve outdoor recreation activities.

2. Review DCNR's mission and explore and discuss DCNR's 2004 Action Plan. What are the highlights of the action plan that reflect a focus on land use issues?

3. There are other state and federal agencies involved in protecting public lands and protecting aspects of the environment. We will examine and compare the responsibilities of different state and federal agencies in relationship to land use.

Distribute the Government Agency Worksheet. Assign one box to pairs of participants to read. Pairs are to discuss the role of the assigned agency and provide examples. If time permits, pairs of participants could visit the web site and research information about the agencies. Discuss in a large group. How do the responsibilities of each agency compare with the other agencies?

4. Since DCNR owns only a small percentage of land in Pennsylvania, the long term sustainability of our natural resources rests with local communities, nonprofit conservation organizations and private landowners. What land in your community is owned by the municipality or conservation organization? What are some of the non-government land conservation organizations in your area? Distribute list of agencies that includes the Nature Conservancy, Natural Lands Trust and local conservancies. How are these organizations involved in land use decisions? How can DCNR help support municipalities and nonprofits on land use issues? (Through education and funding.)

5. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was created to advocate for Pennsylvania's state parks and forests and to promote public recreation and resource protection. DCNR is responsible for managing our ecological

heritage, geologic resources, waterways, greenways and for providing support and funding for community open space, conservation and recreation projects. DCNR promotes responsible decision making and stewardship for all natural resources in Pennsylvania and is involved with land choices on a daily basis. It maintains, protects, preserves, constructs facilities and administers policies for 2.4 million acres of public land.

The lesson will address the importance of public lands and the role of each person in protecting our "common wealth." Public land is land owned for the common good or "commonwealth" of the citizens from the public domain. Pennsylvania's public woodlands, wetlands, streams and other natural resources in the public domain can be thought of as our "commons" of today. Public lands are part of our state and national heritage. Such lands are administered and managed through local, state or federal government agencies.

There are opportunities for citizens to help make decisions on management and development of public lands.

It is our responsibility to be involved with decisions about public lands. There are opportunities to attend public meetings or to submit comments about management plans. Contact the nearest state park to find out when they are reviewing their management plan.

It is also important for people living in adjacent communities to make land use decisions on private lands that are compatible with protecting and enhancing public lands. It is important to encourage compatible gateway communities and protect natural resources beyond state park borders through education and participation in the planning process.

Individuals who own land own the rights to the land and they decide what to build on it, who can visit it and when to sell it. Places like a McDonalds or

Walmart are private places even though they are open to the public at certain times. Private land ownership places many rights in the hands of the owner. These rights can be exercised to the limit governed by municipal codes, if codes and regulations exist. These rights can be separated and sold individually such as in a conservation easement or mineral rights.

Government and environmental organizations can educate private landowners about options for their ecologically valuable land. Government can provide incentives such as tax incentives to protect forest land and funding for land acquisitions and easements that make wise land use decisions more desirable for the private landowners.

Activity 2:

Enjoying Pennsylvania's Public Lands

Summary: Participants will examine maps and information on Pennsylvania's state parks and forests and identify activities they can enjoy at the various places.

Questions: Where are state parks and forests? What can you do there? Why is it important to manage public lands for public enjoyment? Which parks have you visited? Which would you be interested in visiting?

Preparation

- Divide participants into groups and discuss procedures for group work.
- Provide each group with a Pennsylvania Tourism and Transportation Map (available through www.visitpa.com).
- Provide each group with a Pennsylvania Public Lands Worksheet (p 191).

Activity 2

Procedure

Question: Where are the public lands located in Pennsylvania and where do I find information about public lands?

1. Divide participants into groups. Establish groups of five or six. We are going to “take a journey to our public lands” using the PA Tourism and Transportation Map. Provide a map for each group. Distribute the Public Lands Worksheet for each team. Open the maps and locate the key. Discuss the key. Overview the location of various information on the map.

2. Each group is to complete the worksheet by using the front and back of the map. Additional paper may be needed to write answers. Allow about 10–15 minutes for groups to complete the map activity. Review the answers when completed. (Facilitator Note: The Appalachian National Scenic Trail runs from Maine to Georgia and is 2,167 miles of which 232 miles are in Pennsylvania.) Discuss participant experiences. Place a map in front of the room. Using yellow stickers, participants identify their favorite place on public land by placing their name on the map. Share their experiences. After hearing their experiences, place a red sticker on the place you want to visit.

Discuss the following question: How can participants be involved with public lands? List and discuss the following:

- Conservation Volunteer Program
- Forest Stewardship Program
- Park Management Plans
- Clean-up programs
- Advisory or Friends Groups
- PA Cavity Nesting Trails Program
- Watershed Education and stream watch programs
- Visit and Enjoy: Hiking, Hunting, Fishing, Camping, Kayaking, Horseback Riding, Birding