

FOREST PERSPECTIVES

Overview

Forests provide homes for wildlife, purify water and air, provide a place for recreation, and the supply raw materials to make thousands of household products. How an individual views a forest and his/her opinions about its use depend on values, traditions and experiences. In this class students will discover the complexities involved in making decisions about forest use and the importance of participation in a democracy.



Background

Public and private forests provide many benefits to the environment, economy and community. They provide food and habitat for wildlife and play an important role in producing clean air and water. They also provide the raw materials needed to produce thousands of products that we all use every day and support more than 144,100 jobs in North Carolina alone. In addition, they provide areas for recreation and aesthetic value.

With proper management of our forest resources we can have all of these benefits and still have plenty of trees for the future. Most every individual or group, however, has a different opinion about the present and future uses of forests. These opinions are influenced by beliefs, values, traditions, past experiences and whether we see a forest as a source of jobs, as a wildlife refuge or as a place for recreation. These opinions are also influenced by our knowledge of forests and their role in our environment.

In developing forest management plans, we must consider costs, benefits, environmental impacts, water and soil quality, wildlife and recreational uses. In a democratic society, citizens have a voice in shaping resource and environmental management policies and decisions. In fact, the success of a democracy depends on citizen involvement.

It also is important to remember that we all have a role in decision making and are responsible for conserving resources and behaving in an environmentally responsible manner.

Vocabulary

- *Compromise*: To come to an agreement based on concessions from each party.
- *Debate*: A formal, organized discussion of an issue by people of opposing

points of view.

- *Perspective*: Point of view.
- *Multiple Use*: The management of land or forest for more than one purpose, such as wood production, water quality, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, flood control and clean air.

Doing the Activity

1. Ask the group questions such as: Have you ever visited a forest? What did you do there? Can you think of other uses of a forest?

Have them list as many uses as they can, and then ask whether we can have all of the uses at one time from the same forest.

2. Introduce the concept of multiple use. Explain that there are many uses for the forest and that with multiple-use management, large forests can be used for many different purposes at the same time.

3. Discuss some of the often conflicting forest uses: aesthetics, development, wildlife, timber harvesting.

4. Ask the class to define “perspectives” and discuss the influence of an individual’s perspective on his/her opinions.

5. Explain the importance of participation in your community, school or organizational decisions. Help students realize that their perspective and participation are important in a democracy.

6. Read the following scenario: Your town has been given 10,000 acres of prime forest land. The land has valuable, mature timber, clear flowing streams and an abundance of wildlife including deer, bear, squirrels, salamanders and song-birds. The land is adjacent to town. Some of the streams flow into the town reservoir that provides drinking water. It is your job to develop a long range plan for this land.

Subjects

Language arts, social studies, science, math

Concepts

Altering the environment affects all life forms, including humans, and the interrelationships that link them.

Cultural and societal perspectives influence the attitudes, beliefs and biases of people toward the use of resources and environmental protection.

Most cultures have beliefs, values and traditions that shape human interactions with the environment and its resources.

In democratic societies, citizens have a voice in shaping resource and environmental management policies. And they share the responsibility of conserving resources and behaving in an environmentally responsible manner.

In democratic societies, individuals and groups, working through governmental channels, can influence the way public and private lands and resources are managed.

Humans throughout the world create differing social, cultural and economic systems and organizations to help meet their physical and spiritual needs.

Objectives

Students will learn that: (1) there are many valid uses of a forest, (2) everyone is affected by forest management decisions (3) there is a need to compromise between the different demands on a forest.

Materials Needed

1 flipchart per group
Markers
Masking tape
Map of the forested area under discussion

Time Required

1 hour

7. Divide the class into 5 groups. One group will serve as the city council. The other 4 will represent interests in aesthetics, development, wildlife and timber harvesting. Have each group select a spokesperson to present the group's perspective to the city council. Talk with each group separately to discuss land uses from their perspectives and to prepare their arguments for the city council. Allow the groups 20 minutes to develop their position statements.

8. Instruct the city council on their responsibilities in deciding what's best for the town. They should decide what criteria they will use to evaluate each group's proposal and come up with ideas of their own on what should happen to the land.

9. Allow each group 3 minutes to make their presentation to the city council.

10. Allow 5 minutes for the city council to deliberate and make a decision on how the land will be used. The council may select parts of each recommendation to develop a combination that suits them best. However, they must remember that their obligation is to serve the present and future needs of the town.

11. Discuss each group's reaction to the council's decision. Are they satisfied with the decision? Did the council reach a compromise? Are there any public issues (especially related to land use) being debated in the local community that can be discussed?

Helpful Hints

- Have an assistant who can help individual groups brainstorm ideas for using the land.
- Instructors may have to help the students organize logical arguments.
- Isolate the town council so that they don't hear any of the preliminary arguments.