



Classroom Activity #1

What are federal lands and waters and what do they mean to me?

Objectives:

1. Learner will understand why lands and waters are preserved for the public. (awareness)
2. Learner will locate, identify, and describe the public land or water area nearest to their home or school.
3. Learner will explain what (s)he can do to help preserve or care for the nation's public lands and waters. (relevance and stewardship)

Background:

Have you ever visited a National Park, National Forest, National Wildlife Refuge, National Seashore, National Historic Site, or National Recreation Area? If you have, then you have visited a federal land or water area. Federal lands and waters are places identified and set aside by the United States government to protect wildlife, commemorate historic events or places, preserve natural landscapes or provide recreational areas for the public use.

These areas are managed by several different government agencies including:

- Bureau of Land Management (www.blm.gov)
- Bureau of Reclamation (www.usbr.gov)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (www.noaa.gov)
- National Park Service (www.nps.gov)
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (www.corpslakes.us)
- U. S. Forest Service (www.fs.fed.us).

Federal lands and waters are places where the public can enjoy the outdoors and learn about science, nature, history and our nation's cultural diversity. People can learn, explore, relax, or play at our federal lands and waters. There are also opportunities to help care for our federal lands and waters. Understanding the importance of federal lands and waters is the first step to preserving and protecting them. The public can also help care for federal lands and waters by helping keep the areas clean and litter-free or by serving as a volunteer with the federal land and water management agencies. There are opportunities for people of all ages to help care for our federal lands and waters, even kids! Federal lands and waters belong to the people of the United States and the responsibility to preserve them extends to us all.

Leading question: What is the nearest federal land or water area to our school and what are some ways that our class could help care for that area?

Vocabulary: federal, agency, recreation, stewardship, relevance, resources

Activity: Have the class divide up into groups of three or four and ask them to locate the nearest federal land or water area using the following internet links. Most federal land and water agency websites offer a search tool using zip codes or maps.

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>

<http://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm>

<http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/nlcs.html>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/>

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/mapNew.cfm>

<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/visitors.cfm>

After the groups identify their nearest federal land or water area, have them discuss the following questions as a class. The teacher can write the responses up on the board or flipchart:

1. What is the name of the federal land or water area nearest our school?
2. What agency manages that area?
3. What is important about this area that it should be protected by the U.S. government?
(some answers could include that there are important natural landscapes or wildlife living there or that an important historical event took place there)
4. What does this area mean to me as a student/citizen/kid? (have students try to describe the relevance of the area to themselves as kids/students)
5. What are some ways that our class can help care for this area or other federal lands and waters? (students could discuss not littering; learning about the resources that are protected at that area e.g. fish, wildlife, or historic buildings; telling others about the importance of protecting federal lands and waters; etc.)

Have the class create their own federal land or water area by describing what kinds of elements make up a federal land or water area and what kinds of activities they would like to have available in their new area. Write the students selections from the following categories up on the board or flipchart.

Kind of area:

Natural land area
Historic area
Water area

Landscape type:

Mountains	Desert
Beach	Prairie
River	Lake
City	Forest

Activities I can do there:

Camping
Hiking
Swimming
Exploring
Learning

Biking
Boating/Canoeing
Fishing
Picnicking

Things I should bring with me:

Water
Sunscreen
Food
Hat

Sunglasses
Backpack
(students can come up with additional suggestions)

Things people should not do there:

Leave litter
Vandalize or destroy the resources
Make loud noises
(students can come up with additional suggestions)

What will the area be called?:

Have the groups of three or four each make a poster of their newly created federal land or water area. Each group can present their poster to the rest of the class and describe what their new federal land or water area will be like and what people should or should not do at their areas. Posters could be displayed in the hallway or the classroom.