

Tinicum Marsh Animals and Autos on Collision Course Lesson Plan

Main Points/Rationale

Using a role-playing format, students will become aware of the complexity of decisions affecting the environment and the many different social, economic and ecological considerations. They will also examine their own values toward the environment. This lesson may take place over the course of several days.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify and describe social and ecological situations where human uses of land conflict with each other and wildlife management.
2. Students will be able to describe the importance of land-use planning.
3. Students will be able to select and articulate at least three reasons for their perspective in a town council meeting.
4. Students will be able to productively participate in the process of conflict resolution by working with people who have opposing viewpoints to reach compromises.

Standards

PA Standards

1.6 Speaking and Listening; 4.1 Watersheds and Wetlands; 4.3 Environmental Health; 4.8 Humans and the Environment; 8.2 Pennsylvania History; 11.2 Balancing Family, Work and Community Responsibility

NJCCCS

3.3 Speaking; 3.4 Listening; 5.10 Environmental Studies; 6.1 Democratic Citizenship; 6.7 Geographical Understanding/World in Spatial Terms; 6.9 Geographical Understanding/Environmental and Society; 9.2 Consumer, Family and Life Skills

Prior Knowledge

- Vocabulary: conflict, compromise, negotiations, perspective, point of view

Materials & Equipment

- Background Information Sheet, Interest cards

Warm-Up - 5-10 minutes

- Present students with the background information. You may either copy the entire sheet for the students or select key ideas from the history of Tinicum Marsh to present to your students.
- After you have presented students with the background information, set up your rules for the mock town council meeting.
- Example rules:
 - 1. Students must speak one at a time. They will be recognized, or called on, by the mayor.
 - 2. Each student must speak slowly and carefully, allowing time for the council to take notes.
 - 3. Everyone will have a turn to present his or her group's position.

Transition

- The students will be divided into different cooperative groups in order to examine the issue of whether or not to drain the marsh in order to build the expressway. Some groups will be in favor and some will be opposed to it.
- Divide the class as follows:
 - One group of seven students (the town council)
 - Six groups of four-five students each (special interest groups)

Activity One - Reviewing Roles - 10-15 minutes

- Explain the role of a town council to the students. You may want to be mayor to keep control of the session.
- Go over each of the special interest groups to ensure that the students understand what their role will be in the public hearing.
- Distribute the special interest cards to the groups.

Transition - Special Interest Groups Meet - 10-15 minutes

- Allow the groups to meet for ten to fifteen minutes to decide what they will say and who will say it. The town council members may roam freely from group to group, eavesdropping.

Activity Two - Presentations by Special Interest Groups - 15-30 minutes

- Each separate special interest group should be given an opportunity to address the town council.

Transition

- After all the special interest groups have presented their opinions, open the floor for a public hearing.

Activity Three - Public Hearing - 10-15 minutes

- Before beginning the public hearing, remind the students of the rules.
- During the entire process, the town council should be encouraged to take notes and ask questions.

Transition

- Council members will vote secretly, recording their votes on paper ballots. The mayor will collect ballots and read them aloud, revealing the final results.

Activity Four - Discussion - 5-20 minutes

- A teacher-led discussion should follow, bringing out important points. This could include a discussion on the complexity of decisions like this, that there is not always a clear right and wrong answer. Ask the students if there are any compromises that could be made. Discuss what other factors may be important. If there is a similar situation in your own neighborhood, talk about who might have a special interest in it, and what factors are important.

Other questions to guide the discussion:

- What are some things we have learned about land-use decision-making?
- What factors influence land-use decision-making?
- What differences and similarities were there between how decisions were made in this activity and how they are made in our community? Other areas? Other parts of the world?
- What responsibilities do we have as citizens?

Closing - 2-3 minutes

- Review with your students the decision they have made regarding the road construction project.
- Ask your students: How does habitat loss affect local animals? Does this situation connect to any of the other ideas presented through HIPPO?
- To close the lesson, assign your students one of the additional activities as a homework task.

Additional Activities

- Instead of putting all your students on the town council and in special interest groups, select some students to take part as news reporters, outside experts, concerned citizens, etc. They may ask questions of people testifying. They can then be required to write news articles or letters to the editor regarding the public hearing and its decision.
- Journal Activity: What I learned.
 - Present your students with the following paragraph so they can examine the ideas of compromise and negotiation.
 - Write a paragraph stating what you achieved through this conflict resolution exercise. What skills have you learned? How will you use this information in your every day actions? What is the importance of teamwork? How do personal beliefs and attitudes affect decision-making?
- Have the class check into current environmental issues in their area. What legislative steps are being taken and by what groups?
- Invite a speaker (wildlife biologist, forest ranger, local commissioner, etc.) to talk to your class about land-use decisions and policymaking.

Assessment of Student Performance

- Students will participate in a town council meeting in which they will argue and defend their point of view.

References

- Philadelphia Zoo: Tinicum Marsh: Animals and Autos on Collision Course, Lesson Plan
- *Project Wild: K-12 Activity Guide*, "To Zone or Not to Zone." Bethesda, MD, 1997.
- Community in Crisis: An exercise in conflict resolution
<http://www.kidsplanet.org/tt/wolf/socialstudies/Cri.PDF>
- Defenders of Wildlife - Habitats (provides information on their campaign, links to law, policy and governance, as well as a glossary pertaining to road vocabulary)
<http://www.defenders.org/habitats/highways>