



RECREATION AND CONSERVATION (Part III)

GRADE Grade 7

PART 3 of 3

TOPICS Conservation, recreation, stewardship

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Grade 7 Science

Unit A – Interactions and Ecosystems

1. Investigate and describe relationships between humans and their environments, and identify related issues and scientific questions
 - Identify examples of human impacts on ecosystems, and investigate and analyze the link between these impacts and the human wants and needs that give rise to them
 - Analyze personal and public decisions that involve consideration of environmental impacts, and identify needs for scientific knowledge that can inform those decisions
4. Describe the relationship among knowledge, decisions and actions in maintaining life-supporting environments
 - Identify intended and unintended consequences of human activities within local and global environments
 - Analyze a local environmental issue or problem based on evidence from a variety of sources, and identify possible actions and consequences

DURATION 60+ minutes

MATERIALS

- Stakeholder descriptions

OVERVIEW

Wrapping up what students learned in Part I and II, this lesson will look at some of the approaches that governments and non-profits might take for addressing complex land-use questions when multiple user-groups are involved. Students will assume the persona of different stakeholders with the goal of resolving a land-use question through dialogue. Finally they will apply what they have learned through a public education initiative.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand some of the barriers to compliance with strategies for minimizing disruption to wildlife
- Students will develop their own messaging to promote WildSmart practices among different user groups

KEY TERMS

- **Advocacy** – public support for a particular cause
- **Buy-in** – acceptance of and willingness to actively support and participate in something
- **Proposal** – a plan or suggestion put forward for consideration or discussion by others
- **Town hall** – an event at which politicians or public officials answer questions from members of the public

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are some of the challenges that arise when different user-groups try to find solutions to land-use questions?
- What are some of the factors that prevent people from following best practices for human-wildlife coexistence?

ACTIVITY – TOWN HALL

Students discuss the merits and problems associated with a local land-use **proposal** from the point of view of different stakeholders, with the goal of arriving at a solution that meets the needs of the maximum number of stakeholders.

This activity works well as a follow-up to the ‘*Land-Use Planning*’ activity from Part II or as a stand-alone activity. It can also be adapted to meet a variety of science and/or social studies learning outcomes.

Set-up

1. Divide the class into groups and introduce students to the different stakeholders (*Note that if you have completed the ‘Land-Use Planning’ activity from Part II, students will already be familiar with different stakeholders*).
2. Introduce the land-use proposal. This could be entirely fictional or related to a real land-use proposal that is being considered in your community. The chosen proposal should present the



various challenges that could arise and consider the social, economic and environmental impacts. For example students could discuss a proposed expansion of a residential development into a wildlife corridor.

3. Students should research the land-use proposal in question, considering the local context and the perspectives of the stakeholder group they are representing. Consider the following prompting questions: *What are the values of your group? What are the needs of your group? What are the goals of your group?*
4. If time permits for multiple classes to be devoted to this activity, students can interview real members of their stakeholder group to gain additional information and to answer the questions above.
5. The goal of the **town hall** meeting is to find a solution that meets the demands of the maximum number of stakeholders. Students should seek to create the following:
 - a. A list of common town goals
 - b. A general plan outlining how to achieve the proposed goals
 - c. A list of responsibilities for who will carry out the proposed goals

Conducting the Town Hall

6. Arrange tables and chairs into a circle so that all stakeholders can see and hear each other. The meeting will be chaired by a representative from the town who will invite different stakeholders to speak.
7. Inform students that each stakeholder will have a set amount of time to introduce themselves (time allocated to each stakeholder will depend on the amount of time that is available for the activity and the number of stakeholder groups).
8. Each stakeholder will have a set amount of time to present their opening views and state their needs. Students should support their positions using research and facts. Consider the following prompting questions: *Why is your perspective valuable (i.e. why do you have a seat at the table)? What are the goals that you have identified? What is your proposed plan? Consider advantages and disadvantages of this plan from your perspective and from the perspective of other stakeholders.*
9. Each stakeholder will have a set amount of time to respond to other stakeholders' statements. This can be conducted 'popcorn style' by taking statements as they come, or by



addressing each group in turn. The representatives from the town are then responsible for proposing a solution that meets the needs of the maximum number of stakeholders.

10. To debrief the activity, ask students to step out of their stakeholder roles and take a few minutes to consider or record their thoughts on the process. Consider the following prompting questions: *What could have made the discussion flow better? Which stakeholder group had the least just/fair outcome? Did all the stakeholders have equal input on the outcome of the town hall? How did you feel about representing a viewpoint that wasn't necessarily in line with your own? What sorts of factors shape community decisions? Was this a realistic process? Why or why not? Is it possible for people to fall under multiple stakeholder roles?*

Follow-up

11. Students can follow-up with what they have learned in this activity by sharing their outcome with town officials (particularly if you have explored a real land proposal that is being explored by your community).
12. If students identify environmental challenges that may arise from the proposal, reach out to local non-profits or government agencies for advice on how to take action. Youth have an incredibly powerful voice and participation in local politics is a great way to engage them as active citizens.

BACKGROUND ESSAY

Throughout this lesson, we have learned that human activities – even those that we consider to have minimal impact on wildlife – can lead to significant disturbances. There are numerous strategies that are used to minimize disturbances to wildlife, including attractant management and trail and area closures. While enforcement by conservation and bylaw officers is one way to achieve compliance, the mission of the Biosphere Institute is to encourage a conservation ethic among visitors and residents alike.

Knowing what we *should* do is only part of the challenge when it comes to compliance with the strategies that are in place to minimize disturbance to wildlife. There are several different challenges to achieving compliance among recreationalists. These include:

1. Those who are genuinely unaware about how to behave responsibly around wildlife
2. Those who are aware and educated yet make a conscious decision to not comply with best practices
3. Those who are aware but strongly believe the rules do not apply to them
4. An individual's level of risk tolerance



5. Not fully understanding the impact their behaviour may have on wildlife, themselves and others
6. How their individual actions contribute to, and culminate in, negative impacts

The *'Human Wildlife Coexistence: Recommendations for Improving Human-Wildlife Coexistence in the Bow Valley'* (Peters et al, 2018) report was written by a group of experts from Parks Canada, the Government of Alberta, the towns of Banff and Canmore and non-profit organizations. One of the visions that the group identified is that:

"Visitors and residents maintain year-round opportunities to undertake a wide range of outdoor activities in support of a healthy lifestyle within the Bow Valley, and understand their roles and responsibilities in learning how to avoid occurrences with wildlife, consistently adhere to best practices, and comply with human-use zoning strategies and legislation, aimed at providing wildlife with habitat security where and when it is needed."

With this vision in mind, the Biosphere Institute and Bow Valley WildSmart seek to design education programs that target specific user groups such as mountain bikers, trail runners, or backcountry skiers. By identifying and working with key members of these communities, we can tailor education messaging to the values of these specific communities. **Buy-in** from different user groups is key in order for behaviour change to take place.

There is an understanding among conservationists that people will protect the things that they love. There are lots of examples of recreational groups rallying to protect wilderness areas. Often these **advocacy** efforts occur with the primary goal of protecting access to recreation, however they often also protect wildlife in the process. Some examples include the efforts by [Wildsight](#) to prevent the development of the Jumbo Glacier Resort or by the [Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia](#) to protect the popular Smoke Bluffs climbing area in Squamish, B.C. The Biosphere Institute hopes to work alongside the community to encourage people that recreate to become advocates for wildlife and protected areas.

ACTIVITY – TARGETTED EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Students will identify an outdoor user group with which they are affiliated and work to craft messages that will encourage strong conservation actions and ethics.

1. Students will start by identifying the user group with which they would like to work. Ideally this will be a group that they are already associated with such as off-highway vehicle users, hunters or cross country skiers, but could also be one that the teacher assigns to them.



2. Next, explore what impacts on wildlife and the environment might be associated with the activities of this user group. Consider the 6 challenges for achieving compliance that are listed in the preceding background essay. Which ones apply to your group? Why? What evidence exists to support this conclusion? Which of these groups might be the hardest to reach and what strategies could you use to appeal to them?
3. Identify any key organizations in your area that are already working with your user group or may be able to connect you with key members of the group. For example in Canmore, the *Canmore and Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA)* is a strong voice for the mountain biking community.
4. Once students have identified the key groups, connect with these groups to better understand their perspectives on recreation and wildlife management using a questionnaire or interview questions. What are the values of this user group?
5. Next, brainstorm ideas for how users can mitigate the impacts of their activities that you identified in Step 2. For example if you have found that trail runners are recreating at nighttime in order to avoid people, you might propose that individuals plan runs in less popular areas (note that this solution could present its own challenges). What information might this group have been lacking that you could provide them? For example, perhaps the user group is not familiar with seasonal closures and better signage is required.
6. Craft messaging to share these mitigations with members of your user group. Consider what the best method of sharing the information might be (e.g. radio, social media, posters, word of mouth).

REFERENCES

- Jacobs, M. H., Vaske, J. J., Teel, T. L., & Manfreda, M. J. (2018). Human dimensions of wildlife. (pp. 85-94). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Peters, J. et al. (2018). Human-Wildlife Coexistence: Recommendations for Improving Human-Wildlife Coexistence in the Bow Valley. Bow Valley Human-Wildlife Coexistence Technical Working Group.