

HOW DO WE USE OUR LAND?

Objective: To appreciate our roles in producing and sharing our natural resources.

A Few Facts

Almost all property in the United States and Canada is controlled by land use regulations. Invite your local land use official to visit your class to discuss local permit rules. Some interesting areas to explore are:

- Land use: zoning laws, building permits, sewage disposal permits, well permits and business licenses.
- Living off the land: hunting and fishing licenses, mining and lumbering permits, housing code approval.

How big is an acre? Unless you live in an agricultural community, acres and hectares are hard for most people to visualize, yet almost all land uses are related to these two measurements.

- 1 acre = 43,560 sq. feet 1 hectare = 107,600 sq. feet

A high school football field equals about an acre. A hectare equals about 2 1/2 football fields.



Student Page

Classroom Experience

Visit a football field with your class. Encourage them to measure it in many different ways. (They could measure it in time; it would take a 10-year-old nearly 3 minutes to run around one acre.) Estimate how many houses would fit in that space. How large should each house and yard be?

Cooperatively have the class decide what support space would be needed and shared, for roads, some open space, utility poles, etc. The class can then draw up a list of the people to be employed to develop the football field into housing.

Research and discuss: Not all land is suitable for all uses.

You need land (somewhere) for agriculture so you can eat.

You need land (somewhere) for houses so you have a place to live.

You need land (somewhere) for mining to make the things you need.

Our interdependence as a society relies on a limited amount of land and the need to have a continual supply of resources and different uses from that land. Is there a land use we can really do without?

Read More About It!

Check out these children's books for your class:

- *Sugaring Time* by Kathryn Lasky; Macmillan Children's Book Group
- *Cranberries* by William Jasperson; Houghton Mifflin
- *Farming* by Gail Gibbons; Holiday House
- *Reflections of a Black Cowboy* by Robert Miller; Silver Burdett Press
- *Luck of the Roaring Camp* by Bret Harte; Dover Publications

Integrating the Curriculum

1. Develop a plan for a new city, with all support services as well as transportation to other cities. Give the class a limited amount of space and have them discuss (and compromise on) use of land for athletic fields or a homeless shelter.
2. Borrow soil testing materials (and an expert if you can) from your local Soil Conservation Service. Test the soil around the school and discuss soil assays' role in land development. What soil makes the best ballpark? What soil supports a building best?
3. Read a report on the quarrels between ranchers and farmers in the settlement of the west. Suggest that your class construct and role-play a court case involving these two warring factions.
4. If a television tower needed to be put in your neighborhood, how would you feel? Why? What are the alternatives?

Dig A Little Deeper



• When the class has developed its plan for the football field (this can easily be done on a computer), ask a representative from the Planning and Zoning agency to come and discuss why—or why not—building permission would be given.

- Research the building of early frontier towns and the building of towns in the thirteen original colonies. Were housing problems different?
- After World War II, when England was rebuilding its cities, it provided for "green space" at specific distances throughout the city. What was the reason?

How Do We Use Our Land? *Part I*



Let's pretend that the picture above is your property. Look at it very closely.

Is there water? _____

Is it fresh or saltwater? _____

Does anything live in the water? _____

Are there plants and trees? _____

What animals visit or live on your property, the land, in the water, or in the air? _____

Do any animals live on or in the plants or trees? _____

Do any animals eat the plants? _____

Do you think any of the animals you see eat any of the other animals? _____

Is there anything under the ground? _____

Explain _____

The way the land looks, does it have anything to do with the animals who live here?

How does the underground affect the surface?

What do you think the weather is like? _____



Look at the property again. Draw a picture of yourself in the middle of it.

What other questions would you ask?

How do you think you would like living here?

What do you like most about this place?

What kinds of things would you do when you are on your property? What kind of hobby could you have? _____

Name your property. Write a short story about how you spend a day there.

Imagine that this property has been owned by your family for many, many years. Although your family has always lived in the nearby town, most of the time in the past you have visited the property during vacation.

What will you do with the property in the next year? _____

What could you do with the property in the next five years? How might you use it?

You have made a land use decision. You did this based on what you know about the land and how you feel about it.

As a land manager this was the first of many decisions you will make about your land.

How Will You Use Your Land *Part III*



Look at the picture again. Things have changed since you first received your land. Your family finds itself without a source of income. Your property is your only means of support. You must make a living from your property and provide food, shelter, and a cash income to provide for your other needs.

How could you provide your food? _____

How will you provide shelter for your family?

What resources on your property could you use to make money? How would you do so?

Remember, when you make decisions about how to use your resources, you are making an *economic* choice.

You have just made land management decisions based on your economic needs and wants. This is part of what a good land manager must do.

When you had to make decisions about your land, were you wishing you had more land? Maybe you wanted one piece of property with which to make money and another piece of land to enjoy. The problem you faced is the same one other landowners everywhere face. There is only so much land on our Earth from which we make our living and receive pleasure.

Being able to live off the land and also enjoy it, requires good problem solving and decision making skills. Many times, land can provide more than just one use.

Note: What might happen if you and all your neighbors created hunting lodges or recreational resorts?

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Source: Alaska Mineral and Energy Resource Education Fund (AMEREF)



When a mine is finished, the land will be reclaimed so it can be used again, whether by man or by nature, or both.