Bureau of Land Management

Classroom Investigation SERIES

LINK LEARNING to PUBLIC LANDS

WILDERNESS

Teaching Guide

About the Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) cares for about 245 million acres of federally owned public lands, mainly in the Western United States and Alaska. These lands, representing about one-eighth of our nation's land area, belong to all Americans. In addition, the BLM administers 700 million acres of mineral estate across the entire country.

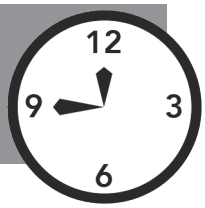
Public lands are used for many purposes. They support local economies, providing Americans with coal, oil and gas, forest products, livestock forage, and other commodities. As a haven for plants and wildlife, they play a critical role in habitat and resource conservation efforts. They embrace some of our country's most important historical, archaeological, and paleontological sites. Open spaces on public lands offer places for people to play, learn, and explore. In recent years, some BLM lands have been designated as part of the National Landscape Conservation System, a network of lands afforded special status and managed almost exclusively to conserve their scientific, cultural, educational, ecological, and other values.

The BLM is responsible for managing public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in a manner that best meets the current and future needs of the public. With so many resources and uses, the BLM's job is challenging. Thankfully, countless partners, volunteers, and communities provide invaluable support, helping the agency carry out its stewardship mission. To learn more about your public lands and how you can get involved, visit ***http://www.blm.gov.***

For the Teacher

Time Estimate:

One to two 45-minute class periods



Overview

In this activity, students examine excerpts from an article titled "The Need for Wilderness Areas," which is about the value of preserving wilderness. Students then compare the article to some of the language in the 1964 Wilderness Act. The article is by Howard Zahniser, who is also the act's main author.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to (1) explain why the Wilderness Act of 1964 was passed; (2) compare passages from an article advocating the act to an excerpt from the act; and (3) assess arguments about the relationship between wilderness and civilization.

Teacher Preparation

1. Make enough copies of "Wilderness Classroom Investigation" Handouts 1 and 2 for each student, and provide chart paper and markers for up to eight small groups.

2. Read the "Background Information" to become familiar with some of the events leading up to the passage of the Wilderness Act.

Common Core Connections

This activity addresses the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
  Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
  Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

This activity also addresses the following enduring understanding:

- Wilderness areas provide numerous benefits to natural ecosystems and to people.

Essential Questions:

- Why should the United States protect wilderness?
- Is legislation the best way to protect wilderness?

Background Information

The article titled "Howard Zahniser: Author of the Wilderness Act" (*http://www.wilderness.net/NWPS/zahniser*) provides some historical context for the article by Zahniser that students will analyze for this lesson. Below are some important highlights from "Howard Zahniser: Author of the Wilderness Act."

Early Days

- By the 1920s, supporters of wilderness preservation began to succeed at having some forest areas designated as wilderness. An example is the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico, designated in 1924.
- It was fairly easy for federal agencies to designate areas as wilderness, but it was also easy for opponents of wilderness designations to revoke them later.
- So Zahniser and his allies wanted a law that would involve Congress in selecting areas for more permanent designation.
- Advocates for the Wilderness Act received little support from Congress until the 1960s. Some federal agencies preferred to keep the power to designate wilderness areas to themselves, rather than involve Congress.

A Success and A Strategy

- In 1955, Zahniser and his allies stopped the proposed Echo Park Dam from being built in northwestern Colorado. This successful campaign showed them the importance of affecting public opinion and generating letters to Congress from numerous people and groups.
- Zahniser and his allies started journals and partnered with other groups to promote a wilderness bill. *The Living Wilderness* was the key journal, and Zahniser was its editor. "The Need for Wilderness Areas" was a seminal article that rallied public opinion behind a wilderness bill.
- By 1964, the bill's advocates had secured the support of powerful committee chairmen in Congress, such as Democratic Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota and Republican Representative John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania, and both houses passed the bill that President Lyndon B. Johnson signed on September 3, 1964 (the margins were 373-1 in the House and 73-12 in the Senate).

Like most laws, the Wilderness Act of 1964 took a long time to make it into the U.S. Code. It started as an idea discussed by conservationists decades before becoming a law. Leaders and writers such as Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir used articles, photos, and speeches to educate the public about the importance of parks, wildlife refuges, and forest preserves. Zahniser thought the best way to promote a wilderness law was to combine public awareness with advocacy by large numbers of groups, so he wrote articles and led the Wilderness Society, a large membership organization. He also drafted more than 60 versions of the bill that Congress debated, and he visited congressional offices repeatedly to lobby for it. The entire Wilderness Act can be found here:

http://www.wilderness.net/NWPS/legisAct

In this activity, students will read and discuss selections from "The Need for Wilderness Areas," which appeared in the 1956-57 issue of the journal *The Living Wilderness*. To read the

whole article, follow this link (the document is in the appendix under Howard Zahniser):

http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=toolboxes&sec=awareness#

For additional background, a timeline of land conservation policy in the 20th century can be found at the link below. Some of the key events in the timeline include efforts to preserve historic sites, the Everglades, wilderness areas, and forests, as well as to regulate pesticides and the disposal of chemical pollution.

http://www.nps.gov/mabi/historyculture/conservation-timeline-1901-2000.htm

Procedure

This activity features a mix of individual work, small group work, and whole-class discussion. In brief, students will complete the following tasks:

- Imagine what they would see and hear in a wilderness area, and write down their expectations.
- Develop a definition of wilderness.
- Compare their definition to each other's definitions and to the one in the Wilderness Act. Also, discuss prohibited activities in wilderness areas.
- Individually, read excerpts from Zahniser's article, and write responses to questions.
- In small groups, discuss excerpts from the article and responses to questions.
- As a whole class, debrief the conversations.
- View pictures of wilderness areas, and compare these images to what they expected wilderness to look like at the beginning of the activity.

Present the following detailed steps to the students:

1. **Hook:** Ask students to imagine they are in the middle of a wilderness area. Ask them to write a short list of what they see and hear. Then ask them to write another list of what they would not see and hear in the wilderness that they would see and hear in their home communities.
2. **Individual writing:** Ask students to individually write their own definitions of wilderness and underline the two most important concepts in their definitions.
3. **Group task 1:** Ask students to share their two most important concepts with the rest of their group. One student in each group should write everyone's two concepts on chart paper. Then, ask the groups to create a consensus definition of wilderness that includes everyone's concepts. (Groups might not reach an exact consensus, but all group definitions should include each student's two most important concepts.)
4. **Whole-class discussion:** Ask a spokesperson from each group to report their consensus definition to the whole class. Ask students to comment on the similarities of the definitions. Hand out copies of "Wilderness Classroom Investigation, Handout 1" to each student. Ask students to compare the definition of wilderness from the Wilderness Act of 1964 to their definitions. Ask students to read the paragraph from the act regarding prohibited activities, and create lists of the activities they think are permitted and prohibited in wilderness areas. Ask students to compare the lists.

Note: *If the activity is broken up into two sessions, this is an ideal stopping point until the next session. Also, to save time during session 2, students could complete the questions in step 5 for homework.*

5. **Individual reading:** Distribute "Wilderness Classroom Investigation, Handout 2," and instruct students to read the excerpts and write responses to the discussion questions.

6. **Group task 2:** Place students into their groups, and instruct them to talk with each other about their answers to the discussion questions.

7. **Whole-class debriefing:** Reconfigure the class into one unit, and ask spokespeople about the discussion questions. Ask for comments about:

   - What they thought was Zahniser's most effective argument in favor of a Wilderness Act.
   - Which, if any, of his arguments they found weak or ineffective.
   - Who might oppose the Wilderness Act and what arguments opponents would use.
   - What, if any, additional arguments they would have used to promote the passage of the Wilderness Act.

8. To conclude, show photos of BLM wilderness areas, such as the ones found here: *http://mypubliclands.tumblr.com/tagged/wilderness*. Ask students to compare the photos to how they imagined wilderness areas would look.

Assessment

- Ask students to write what they think wilderness is a metaphor for, and ask them to develop a poem, story, or multimedia presentation on why wilderness is important and what it means to them.
- Assign an explanatory essay on the question: Why have a Wilderness Act? It should include historical context of the Wilderness Act, benefits of wilderness, arguments raised in opposition of passing the act, and contemporary consequences of designating wilderness.

Adaptations to Consider

- In step 4, read "The Oxford English Dictionary" definition of wilderness: "an uncultivated, uninhabited, and inhospitable region." Ask students to compare this to their definitions and to Zahniser's.
- Ask students to research wilderness areas that may be in the state or region, addressing questions such as when the area was designated, who wanted it designated, and who opposed designating it and why.
- Hold a classroom debate on the merits of a Wilderness Act.
- Ask students to read Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution, and identify which power Congress used to pass the Wilderness Act.

Evidence-Based Responses to Student Discussion Questions in Handout 2

1. What kinds of human needs are supported by wilderness areas? [Spiritual, emotional, educational, recreational.] How does Zahniser support his view that wilderness is a fundamental human need? [The idea of wilderness is man's own concept. The preservation of wilderness is a purpose that arises out of man's own sense of his fundamental needs.] Do you think he is right? Support your answer with evidence from the article and other evidence as needed. [Various]
2. How does Zahniser argue that preserving wilderness helps preserve civilization? [Civilization depends on the resources extracted from wilderness areas and on wilderness as a retreat from hectic modern life.] How well does Zahniser support his claim that destroying wilderness would threaten civilization? [Wilderness sustains us, and we create civilization.] Do you agree with him? Why do you think he argues that wilderness has to be saved in order to save civilization? [Various]
3. What groups might object to the following being prohibited in wilderness areas: permanent and temporary roads, structures, motorized vehicles and equipment, and commercial enterprises? [Various, possibly homebuilders, mining companies, all-terrain vehicle riders, loggers, tourism industries.]
4. What is paradoxical about the lessons wilderness teaches modern people? [It shows we are both dependent on other life and must survive independently of modern services and conveniences.] In what ways are modern people both independent and interdependent? [Various]

5. The Wilderness Act says that wilderness areas are "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." The article says "with the wilderness we are at home." How do you think Zahniser would argue that these two statements do not contradict each other? [The second statement is metaphorical and the first is literal.] Do you think they are contradictory? [Various]

6. Why do you think Zahniser focuses on how wilderness areas benefit humans instead of how wilderness is valuable for its own sake? [Various, possibly appealing to people's self-interest as more likely to resonate with voters and interest groups.]

Wilderness Classroom Investigation, Handout 1

Instructions:

- Read the definition of wilderness from the Wilderness Act of 1964, and compare this definition with the groups' definitions.
- Read the paragraph regarding prohibited activities, and write a list of activities you think are allowed and a list of activities you think are prohibited in wilderness areas.

Excerpts from the Wilderness Act of 1964

Section 2(c), Definition of Wilderness:

> "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value."

Section 4(c), Prohibition of Certain Uses:

> "Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area."

Wilderness Classroom Investigation, Handout 2

Instructions:

- Read the selections from the article by Howard Zahniser.
- Read the discussion questions and write down your responses to them.
- Discuss your responses to the questions with the other students in your small group.

Excerpts from "The Need for Wilderness Areas" by Howard Zahniser (1956)

I believe that at least in the present phase of our civilization we have a profound, a fundamental need for areas of wilderness—a need that is not only recreational and spiritual but also educational and scientific, and withal essential to a true understanding of ourselves, our culture, our own natures, and our place in all nature.

This need is for areas of the earth within which we stand without our mechanisms that make us immediate masters over our environment—areas of wild nature in which we sense ourselves to be, what in fact I believe we are, dependent members of an interdependent community of living creatures that together derive their existence from the sun.

By very definition this wilderness is a need. The idea of wilderness as an area without man's influence is man's own concept. Its values are human values. Its preservation is a purpose that arises out of man's own sense of his fundamental needs.

...

Paradoxically, the wilderness which thus teaches modern man his dependence on the whole community of life can also teach him a needed personal independence—an ability to care for himself, to carry his own burdens, to provide his own fuel, prepare his own food, furnish his own shelter, make his own bed, and—perhaps most remarkable of all—transport himself by walking.

...

We are a part of the wildness of the universe. That is our nature. Our noblest, happiest character develops with the influence of wildness. Away from it we degenerate into the squalor of slums or the frustration of clinical couches. With the wilderness we are at home.

...

This is not a disparagement of our civilization—no disparagement at all—but rather an admiration of it to the point of perpetuating it. We like the beef from the cattle grazed on the public domain. We relish the vegetables from the lands irrigated by virtue of the Bureau of Reclamation. We carry in our packs aluminum manufactured with the help of hydroelectric power from great reservoirs. We motor happily on paved highways to the approaches of our wilderness. We journey in streamlined trains and in transcontinental airplanes to conferences on wilderness preservation. We nourish and refresh our minds from books manufactured

out of the pulp of our forests. We enjoy the convenience and comfort of our way of living—urban, village, and rural. And we want this civilization to endure and to be enjoyed on and on by healthy, happy citizens.

It is this civilization, this culture, this way of living that will be sacrificed if our wilderness is lost. What sacrifice!

...

It behooves us then to do two things: First we must see that an adequate system of wilderness areas is designed for preservation, and then we must allow nothing to alter the wilderness character of the preserves.

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of human needs are supported by wilderness areas? How does Zahniser support his view that wilderness is a fundamental human need? Do you think he is right? Support your answer with evidence from the article and other evidence as needed.
2. How does Zahniser argue that preserving wilderness helps preserve civilization? How well does Zahniser support his claim that destroying wilderness would threaten civilization? Do you agree with him? Why do you think he argues that wilderness has to be saved in order to save civilization?
3. What groups might object to the following being prohibited in wilderness areas: permanent and temporary roads, structures, motorized vehicles and equipment, and commercial enterprises?
4. What is paradoxical about the lessons wilderness teaches modern people? In what ways are modern people both independent and interdependent?
5. The Wilderness Act says that wilderness areas are "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." The article says "with the wilderness we are at home." How do you think Zahniser would argue that these two statements do not contradict each other? Do you think they are contradictory?
6. Why do you think Zahniser focuses on how wilderness areas benefit humans instead of how wilderness is valuable for its own sake?

Notes:

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Visit ***www.blm.gov/education*** to explore the BLM's resources for educators.

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NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT