

Activity 3:

Activities versus Resources

Summary: Participants will discuss the history of state parks and focus on the types of recreation activities available through state parks. They will define the network of people and communities impacted by recreational choices. They will discuss how the communities impact the public lands. They will discuss the impacts of activities to the natural resources and develop strategies to help balance between the use of the land, the character of the community and the protection of the resource.

Questions: How does Pennsylvania manage public recreation and the conservation of natural resources on public lands? How do recreational activities impact natural resources? How do communities enhance recreational experiences? What choices could enhance experiences while protecting resources?

Preparation

- Develop groups.
- Provide a collection of mini maps, greenway maps or watershed maps.
- Provide a copy of the Recreation Impact Worksheet (p 192) for each group along with photos of Recreation and Activities (pp 193-195).
- Provide writing paper and implements.

Procedure

1. What is the primary purpose of State Parks in Pennsylvania? The Bureau of State Parks is part of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. There are 117 state public parks in Pennsylvania (2008). The primary purpose of state parks is to provide oppor-

tunities for enjoying healthy outdoor recreation, to protect the natural, scenic, aesthetic and historical values of each park and to serve as outdoor classrooms.

Before 1883 there were no state parks in Pennsylvania. Industrialization in the 19th century was booming. The appetite for natural resources threatened to overwhelm and destroy natural areas. Forests were harvested by lumbering companies without reforestation. Mountains of mining refuse overshadowed coal towns. By the 1880s it was clear that to save our natural heritage, we had to find ways to protect it. First it was a national movement that grew slowly into a state movement encouraged by Dr. Joseph T. Rothrock and Gifford Pinchot (governor from 1923 to 1927 and 1931 to 1935).

By the early 1920s, 29 of the 48 states had no state parks. The first state park in Pennsylvania was established at Valley Forge in 1883. Now there are 117 state parks located in every region of the state so that every Pennsylvanian is within 25 miles of a state park.

2. Find the state parks nearest your home. Write down the directions from your home to the state parks using the roads on the map.

3. What type of activities can you and your families and friends enjoy while visiting this park?

Decisions on how to manage and develop a state park involve knowledge and sensitivity to our natural resources and knowledge of the best management practices for developing the park for public visitation. Many of the skills and concerns needed to develop a park can be applied to community planning. Today we are going to develop a state park model.

4. How does a state park manage land for public recreation and the protection of natural resources? Distribute different state park mini maps or recreation guides so that each group is responsible for examining one mini map or

guide. Have each group examine their mini map or recreation guide. Using markers, locate and circle natural features such as streams, fields, forests, wetlands and create a list of natural habitats that appear to be protected by the state park. Discuss animals and plants that might inhabit those habitats. Write the habitats on a flip chart. Discuss why it is important to protect the habitats.

5. Distribute Recreation Impact worksheet: “What do people enjoy doing in our state parks?” The task is to work in groups and make a list of recreational activities.

Distribute photos of different recreational activities to each group to use as a reference. Have participants complete the first column of the worksheet. Have participants discuss their list of activities.

Discuss how every action can impact the natural environment. Review an example such as camping and discuss what is needed to support the activity. Discuss how the activity and infrastructure impact the natural resources.

6. How do activities affect others in the community and region? Identify the nearby communities and townships. How do they impact the park? How does the park impact the community?

Each group selects one or two of the activities in state parks (e.g. camping). Have each group select a different activity. Using a concept map design, write the activity in the center of the page and think of the services and infrastructure needed to maintain that activity in the park. Include the support, resources and materials needed outside the park.

Add additional connections to demonstrate the infrastructure needed to support each item. Remind participants to include signage, brochures, mapping and other elements that may be taken for granted. Include the elements provided by surrounding communities.

Discuss ideas on what communities can do to enhance the experiences of park visitors.

Optional: Participants could investigate careers and jobs associated with each aspect of parks and recreation management.

7. Discuss the concept maps with the whole group.

Participants could complete the worksheet as groups present. Have participants discuss the impact of each activity and its support structures (infrastructures) on the environment and the consequences of that activity on natural resources. What new recreation activities do people want to do in state parks? What changes might be implemented to meet these needs? What pressures do these activities have on the natural resources such as wildlife...birds, amphibians, wildflowers?

Challenge participants to look at their concept map and consider ways to conserve and lessen the impact to the environment. Select aspects of the concept maps to discuss such as water conservation devices to lessen water use. Parking surfaces could be turf parking to provide better runoff and recharge. Restrict camping to certain areas to protect sensitive areas.

8. Review the activity by discussing important reasons to have a park or greenway. Solicit answers from the participants and write them on a flip chart to include the following:

- Protect natural resources and ecological health
- Provide healthy recreational opportunities
- Conserve land for the future
- Preserve and protect open space
- Educate about nature, history and environmental issues
- Protect scenic beauty
- Protect areas of historical significance
- Connecting trails

- Economic development
- Tourism
- Raise land values in surrounding communities

Which are important to communities? Which are important to users of the park? Which are important for communities far away from a park? Which are important to people in other states?

Activity 4:

Who is Your Audience?

Summary: It is important to identify the “users” and “potential users” of public lands and to assess their profile and needs. Knowing your audience is imperative before developing services. This activity involves the development of surveys and researching the needs and wishes of the audiences. It provides a basis for the types of services that parks could provide for present and future generations while managing for the conservation of the natural resources.

Question: Who are the visitors to public lands? What services do they want? What services will they use? How can public lands better meet the needs of the audiences?

Preparation

- Develop groups.
- Provide examples of survey questions.
- Provide clipboards, writing materials, surveys.

Procedure

1. How can we determine the audience and their needs?
Your group will be a team of “Park Planners” involved in developing a park and recommending land use sug-

gestions for adjacent communities. Your first task will be to develop a survey (questionnaire and an opinionnaire) to gather firsthand information about your site. By developing surveys, participants will gather information from people who use the park and compile the data so that it becomes useful to make decisions.

People who work at the park, people who use the park and people living near the park have important perceptions that will help to define actions.

2. There are different types of surveys. According to Dr. Harold Hungerford, a questionnaire is a special kind of survey which collects factual information through a carefully written set of questions about a subject that is given to a selected population. The questions in a questionnaire collect facts. (How many people in your family hike this trail?) The questions in an opinionnaire collect perspectives on beliefs or opinions. (Where should the bike path be developed to avoid sensitive areas of the park?)

Participants will work in groups and develop questions that will help them design their park based on input from users, neighbors and employees of the park. They could develop one type or a mixture of both.

3. The task is to develop a survey with about 12 questions that will gather information and opinions from people to guide you in park development decisions. You will compile the data so that it is summarized in a useable, visual format.

Here are some rules to follow when developing and administering the survey:

- 1. Keep questions simple, direct and useful to your goal.**
- 2. Introduce yourself and be polite.**
- 3. Do not argue or disagree.**
- 4. Record accurately.**