

Ninth Through Twelfth Grades

John Muir's Vision Lives On

Unit Concept: *John Muir's vision for the preservation of an ecologically sound natural environment persists today.*

Objective: In at least three class sessions, students identify perspectives on land management issues, research and debate Yosemite's General Management Plan, and develop personal responsibility on a local issue through citizen action.

Preparation:

1. Make copies for the students of the pages entitled Yosemite General Management Plan, National Park Service, and Viewpoints on Yosemite Management. Make an overhead transparency of Ways to Value the Environment.
2. Obtain posters, videos, slides or photography of Yosemite.

Procedure:

3. Find out what the students know about Yosemite. Explain that four million people visit Yosemite every year, impacting the park and putting pressure on wilderness and ecosystems.
4. Show a video, slides, and photos of Yosemite. Referring to the overhead of Ways to Value the Environment, ask the students to list the different perspectives people have about managing the park.
5. Distribute the National Park Service information and ask students how the national Park Service can provide for both use and preservation of the park.
6. Let the class know that Yosemite National Park's General Management Plan is under discussion for possible revision. People have many different perspectives on what the plan should include and how it should be implemented.
7. Form teams of students to research different perspectives on the management of Yosemite, using the Yosemite Management Viewpoints.
8. Each group has five minutes to present the viewpoint they researched and then may discuss the degree to which they personally agree or disagree with that perspective. The National Park Service team, which could include the whole class, evaluates the points of view and decides upon a course of action.
9. Each student should, as a homework exercise, take some action as a concerned citizen, such as writing a letter to the National Park Service with some input on the Yosemite Valley Implementation Plan, attending a public hearing on Yosemite or a local planning issue, creating an educational display or poster, composing a song, or writing a letter to the newspaper. The homework exercises may be presented in class.

Extensions:

10. Debate another national, state, or local park's management or another environmental issue, such as development of agricultural land, world population growth, and land use issues in your community.



Ways To Value the Environment*

1. Aesthetic Value

Appreciating beauty through the senses

2. Cultural Value

Maintaining the attitudes and practices of a specific group of people

3. Ecological Value

Maintaining the integrity of natural systems

4. Economic Value

Exchanging goods and services for money

5. Educational Value

Benefitting from learning and instruction

6. Egocentric Value

Focusing on self-satisfaction and personal fulfillment

7. Legal Value

Referring to the law and its enforcement

8. Recreational Value

Using leisure time

9. Social Value

Sharing human empathy, feelings, and status

*Adapted from *A Child's Place in the Environment*, sponsored by the California Department of Education in cooperation with Konocti Unified School District.

Yosemite General Management Plan

Citizen Involvement in Government Decision-Making

Introduction:

In this exercise, you will explore issues concerning national parks and draw your own conclusions. You will then choose a way to convey your ideas to government decision-makers, recognizing that in American society we have the right to vote and also to participate in the decisions being made by governmental agencies.

Description of the Issues:

Yosemite National Park is a spectacular landscape of high granite cliffs, waterfalls, forests, meadows, and wildlife. It is a part of our national pride and heritage. Four million people from all over the world come to Yosemite every year. This large number of people puts great pressure on the park, particularly on Yosemite Valley. Other problems facing Yosemite Valley include excessive commercialization and traffic congestion. The result is damage to the park's natural resources and interference with the natural experience for many people.

People disagree about the competing economic uses of national parks like Yosemite and about which of the national park values are the most important. Where to draw the line between the preservation and the use of natural resources is the most enduring of all the debates affecting America's national parks.

In 1980, a General Management Plan (GMP) was drafted in response to the problems of Yosemite. The GMP stated that too much development has occurred in the park and is colliding with our ability to preserve Yosemite's unmatched natural resources for the future. In the last few years, amendments and refinements to the GMP have been made, and further amendments are currently being studied. Today, some argue the 1980 GMP went too far, while others would like to see it strictly enforced. As a concerned citizen, you can find out more about these issues and formulate your own vision as to what you think the government should do in making an appropriate balance between preservation and use.

Project Assignment:

1. Individually or as a team, research at least two of the statements provided in the attached "Yosemite Management Viewpoints" and become familiar with the viewpoint of the author. Prepare yourself to:
 - a. Describe the assumptions, values, beliefs, and economic motivations attached to your viewpoint, and give your estimate of the number of people who might feel the same way;
 - b. Discuss your personal evaluation of the viewpoint and to what extent it should be considered in the government's ultimate decision.
2. Share your research with other class members in a panel discussion. Learn from your classmates what they have learned about the point of view they researched, and ask them questions during the debate. Try to understand the assumptions, values, beliefs, and economic motivations for each point of view.
3. Take a stand as a concerned citizen on the revision of Yosemite's General Management Plan and act upon your position. You might choose an appropriate action such as writing a letter to the National Park Service expressing your view, attending a public hearing or workshop on Yosemite or a similar planning issue, creating a display to educate other people about the issues, writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, composing a song, or doing any other creative effort approved by your teacher as modeling responsible citizen action.

For Further Information:

For information about the revision to the General Management Plan, the National Park Service request for public involvement, and sending your input to the government decision-makers, write to: Superintendent, National Park Service, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389.

National Park Service

National Park Service Mission

“To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

(from the 1916 Organic Act)

National Park Service 1980—General Management Plan Goals

Reclaim Natural Beauty

Yosemite is too valuable to use for administration, maintenance, parking, or any commercial services that do not contribute directly to a quality park experience. All facilities not contributing directly to a quality park experience, including non-essential staff housing, office space, National Park Service and concessionaire headquarters are to be removed.

Markedly Reduce Traffic Congestion

The single greatest threat to the enjoyment of the natural and scenic qualities of Yosemite is automobile traffic. The ultimate goal of the National Park Service is to “remove all private vehicles from Yosemite Valley” and substitute public transportation.

Promote Visitor Understanding and Enjoyment

The amount and kinds of information and traditional interpretive programs for visitors should greatly increase. Creative audiovisual programs and park displays will help visitors to understand the processes and events that have shaped Yosemite’s natural features and the relationship of our cultural values to preservation of the park.

Reduce Crowding

Relocate most visitor facilities outside the national park, where local businesses can compete for visitor dollars, in the best spirit of the American free enterprise system. Allow visitors to tour the Park for the beauty of the natural wonders, not because they are attracted to concession activities, food services, or “profit centers.”

Allow Natural Processes to Prevail

The primary objective of natural resource management is to restore and perpetuate the natural processes of the park’s ecosystems, recognizing that Yosemite is a dynamic natural system of interrelated and evolving forms, and not a static accumulation of geologic and biologic features. In developed areas like the Valley, facilities should be removed from floodplains and geologic hazard areas in deference to these natural phenomena.

National Park Service General Management Plan Examination Report:

In a review, published in August 1990, of the status of implementing the 1980 General Management Plan, the NPS received 19,035 letters and comments from individuals. Of these responses, over 54% supported the 1980 GMP as is, 10% asked for revisions, and 37% had no opinion. As to transportation, while two individuals stated that more cars and congestion were acceptable to them, 37% preferred fewer cars and less congestion, and 13% believed existing levels are acceptable.

National Park Service Task Directive:

March, 1993: In a Yosemite Valley Implementation Plan, the NPS will, with public involvement, create “a detailed zoning plan for Yosemite Valley that will provide more definition than the zoning included in the 1980 GMP, a cultural landscape plan, a transportation plan, and an analysis to determine what essential functions must remain in the Valley. All existing and approved plans for Yosemite Valley will be used as planning constraints and will not be substantially altered by the new plan.

Viewpoints on Yosemite Management

<p style="text-align: center;">Tourist In Yosemite</p> <p>You've been coming to Yosemite for many years. You enjoy the accommodations at the lodge and the opportunity to go out to dinner. On the other hand, you resent the crowds and traffic you have attempted to escape by coming to the mountains.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Delaware North (Yosemite Concession Services Corporation)</p> <p>You operate the hotels and business operations for a contract worth more than \$1 billion in gross revenue. You will turn back 20.2% to the federal government, which will own all major buildings in Yosemite.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Concession Worker</p> <p>You work at the lodge and have worked in the park for ten years. You like the luxury of living in Yosemite Valley. If the lodge is moved, your job will be eliminated.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">National Parks and Conservation Association</p> <p>You are a member of an organization dedicated to preserving Yosemite and other national parks. You believe facilities and development should be located outside the park and that a regional transportation system should be set up, using concession fees.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Yosemite Institute Instructor</p> <p>You are an instructor at an educational institute in the park and teach people how to protect Yosemite and other wilderness areas. You are a conservationist, but if all development is moved out of the park, your organization will be affected and will need to relocate.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Artists, Photographers and Writers</p> <p>You visit Yosemite by yourself to gain inspiration for your artistic work. You also participate in annual workshops offered in the park and meet old acquaintances. You would be willing to use public transportation if it meant less congestion in the park.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Resident of El Portal</p> <p>Your small town outside the park may become a much larger city if all the development in the park is relocated. The town is on a Wild and Scenic River, which would be affected by development.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Business Owners in Outlying Areas</p> <p>If there is a reduction in the number of people allowed in Yosemite Valley, your business could suffer. On the other hand, more people might seek your services if services inside the park were limited.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Biologists</p> <p>You study the restoration of impacted ecosystems in the park. You believe that a general reduction in commercialization and the number of cars will enable the park to restore some of its already impacted ecosystems.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tour Bus Company</p> <p>You are the owner-operator of a tour bus company, and many of your visitors are from Japan, Germany, Holland, and England. Currently, the Park Service limits the concessionaire to only 18% of its rooms for tour bus groups. You believe that if the Park Service would raise this to 22%, there would be 120 fewer cars overnight in the park and less congestion.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sierra Club Members</p> <p>You belong to the conservation organization founded by John Muir, whose primary goal is to preserve the natural systems in the park. You believe that development in the park should not exceed the limits set by the General Management Plan and support innovative, regional transportation possibilities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">National Park Service</p> <p>Your job, as a team, is to listen to all sides of the General Management Plan debate and vote on a plan for how the valley should be managed. Consider all the perspectives presented in the debate and decide on the best plan of action to fulfill the mission and goals of the National Park Service for future generations.</p>

Resources for Seventh to Twelfth Grade Projects

Brower, Kenneth, *Yosemite: An American Treasure* (National Geographic Society, 1990)

Everhart, William C., *The National Park Service* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972)

Frome, Michael, *Regreening the National Parks* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1992)

Huth, Hans, *Yosemite: The Story of an Idea*

National Parks and Conservation Association, *Our Endangered Parks: What You Can Do to Protect Our National Parks* (San Francisco: Foghorn Press, 1994)

Runte, Al, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990)

Sax, Joseph, *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1980)

Yosemite: The Fate of Heaven (video, narrated by Robert Redford)

