



Exploring Federal Lands and Waters

Essential Question:

What are federal lands and waters, and why do they exist?

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to define what federal lands and waters are and state why these lands and waters are preserved for the public to visit and use.
2. Students will conduct short research projects to identify and describe federal land or water areas in their state.
3. Students will write, edit, and publish an informational brochure.

Common Core Skills:

- Write informative/explanatory texts
- Produce clear and coherent writing
- Conduct short research projects

Time Required:

Two 40-minute class periods, plus homework

Materials:

What Would You Protect? activity sheet, **The Many Uses of Federal Lands and Waters** activity sheet (optional), Internet access, paper for brochures, markers and pens

Vocabulary: federal, agency, recreation, stewardship, relevance, resources, commemorate, prohibited, recreational, multiple, preserved, purpose, diverse, ecosystems

Getting Prepared:

Before you teach this lesson, find the federal land or water area nearest to your school. Answer the questions listed in Step 6 and prepare to project your answers on the board for the class to see. Pull up **recreation.gov** and print out or project your state's map.

Getting Started:

1. Go to **recreation.gov**, type in your state, and project the state map shown on the right. Point out the icons and explain that those icons show federal lands and waters. These are bodies of water, landscapes, and historic parts of cities and towns that are protected by the government through federal law.

2. Explain that the land and water areas protected by the government have a variety of environments and multiple, or many, uses. Federal lands and waters include forests, mountains, seashores, lakes, grasslands, wetlands, rivers, historic buildings, monuments, deserts, and other types of environments. Federal lands and waters have many purposes—they help provide clean air, water, food, and habitats for wildlife; they offer scenery, recreation, and jobs for people; and they are places for people to learn about the environment, history, and culture.
3. Explain that the diverse wildlife, landscapes, bodies of water, and historical and cultural areas that are part of federal lands and waters protect important ecosystems and other environments that make your state unique. Federal lands and waters also protect historical and cultural areas in your state so that visitors can learn about the past. But federal lands and waters are not just about preservation and education, they are also about fun. Thousands of people visit federal lands and waters every year to hike, swim, bike, ride horses, and engage in lots of outdoor activities.
4. Explain that everyone is welcome to visit federal lands and waters. One way that the government protects these areas for all visitors is by setting rules that will keep the landscapes, bodies of water, wildlife, and historical areas safe. For example, in wildlife sanctuaries hunting is not allowed or is carefully controlled. Historical areas are protected from graffiti and other forms of destruction. People are not permitted to build or dig into protected natural landscapes.
5. Round out the discussion by asking students: *What are five reasons the government protects federal lands and waters across the nation?* As students answer, sort their responses into the following four categories and write those categories on the board:
 - protect wildlife
 - preserve natural landscapes
 - commemorate (celebrate and remember) historic events or places
 - provide recreational areas for the public
 - manage natural resources for the future
6. Project a sheet titled: *“What is the nearest federal land or water area to our school?”* On the sheet provide the following information:
 - a. What is the name of the federal land or water area nearest your school?
 - b. How would you describe the landscape, body of water, or physical structures in the area?
 - c. Why is this area protected by the government?
 - d. What activities can be done in this area?
 - e. What are some ways that we can help care for this area or other federal lands and waters? (Not littering; learning about the resources that are protected at that area, e.g., fish, wildlife, or historic buildings; telling others about the importance of protecting federal lands and waters; volunteering; etc.)

Getting Engaged

7. Hand out the student activity sheet and challenge students to identify local areas in nature or of historical significance they would protect. After students complete the sheet, you may choose to provide the assignment in Step 8 as homework, then allow students to share the local areas they would like to protect. If time permits, pass out the word scramble for students to complete. (Answers: clean air, history, scenery, jobs, food, culture, wildlife habitat, recreation, clean water.)
8. Now that they have imagined what local areas they would protect, students will learn about areas in their state that currently have federal protection. Divide the class into groups and have them copy down the five questions you displayed in Step 6. Tell them they will visit **recreation.gov** to select an area of federal land or water in their state to research. They will work with their groups to create well-organized informational brochures about their selected areas that include: an introduction, a glossary, an activity map of the area, images of the area, and answers to all five of the provided questions.

Extending the Learning

9. Display the completed brochures on your bulletin board, but don't stop there. Arrange for your students to visit other classes to make presentations about the federal land or water area they researched. You may also choose to have groups make three-dimensional representations of the area they researched using clay and other craft materials to support lessons on land features.
10. You can further extend learning by planning a class trip to your closest federal land or water area. The Every Kid in a Park initiative provides fourth-grade classes with fee-free passes to enter federal lands and visit federal water areas. Go to **everykidinapark.gov** to download passes and plan your trip.

Name: _____

What Would You Protect?

Pretend you work for the government and you have to decide what will be the next body of land or water in your community that will gain federal protection. What natural or historical resources do you see in your neighborhood or city that need protection? Using the information below, identify the land, body of water, or historical area that you would choose to protect.



1. Location: *(Where is it located?)* _____

2. Kind of area: *(Circle one.)*

Natural land area Historic area

Water area

3. Type of environment: *(Circle all types in the area.)*

Mountain Beach River

City Desert Grassland Prairie

Monument Lake Forest Building

4. Activities in the area:

(Circle all activities in the area.)

Camping Hiking Swimming

Exploring Learning Picnicking

Rock Climbing Horseback Riding

Biking Boating Canoeing Fishing

Wildlife Watching Winter Sports

5. Rules visitors will need to follow:

(For example, do not litter, do not destroy the buildings or nature, do not make loud noises.)

6. Why did you decide to protect this area?

The Many Uses of Federal Lands and Waters

People rely on federal lands and waters for many purposes. Unscramble the following words to find out what the nationally protected areas in the United States provide for animals and people. Then complete the word search at the bottom of the page to explore all the fun activities you can do at federal lands and waters.

NEALC RIA

IDEWFLIL ATIBAHT

SBJO

ITSOHYR

DOFO

SENERCY

RETRECIONA

ULCRUTE

NELCA REWAT

Word Search

CAMP
LEARN
CANOEING
NATURE
EXPLORE
OUTDOORS
FISHING
ROCK CLIMBING
HIKE
SCIENCE
HISTORY
SWIM
HORSEBACK RIDING
WILDLIFE

D	F	I	N	W	L	Z	E	G	X	F	T	U	U	Y
C	I	Z	E	M	X	Q	W	U	J	I	N	T	K	X
L	S	S	R	O	O	D	T	U	O	E	A	G	H	T
C	H	S	C	A	M	P	E	N	J	O	T	N	I	D
Y	I	A	Z	S	S	S	R	V	A	M	U	I	S	T
R	N	L	T	R	W	X	O	B	S	J	R	E	T	F
J	G	E	W	I	L	D	L	I	F	E	E	O	O	I
T	W	A	M	C	K	M	P	N	V	T	C	N	R	A
Q	L	R	H	P	S	U	X	S	F	J	R	A	Y	P
V	A	N	E	F	B	Z	E	E	T	W	G	C	Y	M
H	O	R	S	E	B	A	C	K	R	I	D	I	N	G
L	P	P	V	Y	J	H	M	Y	M	V	Y	S	D	P
V	X	E	S	X	K	E	C	E	C	N	E	I	C	S
I	T	U	H	D	D	D	I	R	D	E	K	I	H	E
G	N	I	B	M	I	L	C	K	C	O	R	Z	V	W