

Backyard Conservation and Local Laws Activities

Assess Wildlife Habitat In Your Neighborhood

- 1) Discuss in class the components of quality wildlife habitat and whether the students believe they live in a neighborhood that has quality wildlife habitat. Determine as a class what students should look for in their neighborhood to assess the quality of wildlife habitat. Guide them towards looking at native versus non-native or invasive species and diversity of animal life.
- 2) Have each student take a walk through their yard or neighborhood describing the landscape and the plants or animals that they see. Suggest that they take this walk at dawn to maximize the number of species sighted. Have the students ask their parents and neighbors what kind of wildlife they have seen.
- 3) Compare the diversity between the neighborhood and an area of similar size restored for habitat. What do you find? Does your neighborhood have quality wildlife habitat. Why or why not?

Develop a Plan to Improve Wildlife Habitat in Your Neighborhood

- 4) Through your local conservation district or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, contact a farmer who has implemented conservation practices on their farm. Ask if you can visit the farm and learn about the practices or have the farmer come to the class. During the visit, ask the farmer how homeowners can implement the same conservation practices. You can find contact information for the local conservation district or NRCS office on the Internet at <http://www.wildlifehc.org/managementtools/backyard.cfm>.
- 5) Study the Wildlife Habitat Council's Backyard Conservation website <http://www.wildlifehc.org/managementtools/backyard.cfm>, which provides links to other sources. Define Backyard Conservation. Describe how you would make your neighborhood more hospitable for wildlife?

Determine if Your Community Supports the Creation of Wildlife Habitat

- 6) Study the local laws included with this lesson. Which laws support Backyard Conservation efforts? Why? Which laws restrict Backyard Conservation efforts? Why?



- 7) Complete the case study that follows about a company that created a wildlife habitat.
- 8) Research your local laws and determine whether they support or restrict Backyard Conservation efforts. Ask your local officials to speak to your class about Backyard Conservation. Potential areas of the law to check include restrictions on how high grass can grow and restrictions on planting of invasive species. If there are homeowners associations in your area, ask to see the covenants, which often have rules that impact Backyard Conservation efforts.

Educate Your Community

- 9) If your local laws support Backyard Conservation, design a program to educate your community about the importance of Backyard Conservation.
- 10) If your local laws hinder Backyard Conservation, develop a plan to educate the community about the need for ordinances that support Backyard Conservation.

Backyard Conservation and Local Laws Vocabulary

Define the following:

local government
state government
federal government
covenants
native species
invasive species
ecosystems
habitat
components of habitat
interdependency
migratory species
pollinators
indicators
amphibians
monoculture
impervious
stormwater
runoff
fertilizers
herbicides

Outline for A Persuasive Presentation

Students can use the following outline to develop a persuasive argument to present before the Mayor and City Council. Use WHC's Backyard Conservation website <<http://www.wildlifehc.org/managementtools/backyard.cfm>> for your research.

I. Introduction

State my subject: What am I going to talk about? What is my position on the issue?

II. Reason #1

Why should someone see things my way? I need to give them a good reason why my subject is valid, why it is important. I should make sure that my reasons are good enough to persuade them that I have a very good point. I should try to use both opinions and facts when I state my reasons.

III. Reason #2

IV. Reason #3

V. Counter argument

I should let the audience know that I understand that there are two sides to every argument. I should refute the counter argument.

Possible sentence beginnings for counter argument and refute:

“I realize that . . . but I believe . . .”

“I understand that you might feel differently about . . . but . . .”

“I am aware of . . . but I urge you to . . .”

“Many people might think the opposite . . . but the facts state . . .”

VI. Conclusion

I should restate what it is I am talking about. I should also write a good ending sentence and ask for a specific action.

Possible sentence beginnings for a conclusion:

“I strongly urge you to . . .”

“These facts show that . . .”

Remember to include facts you have learned.

The Wildlife Habitat Council thanks Sally Paulson, teacher at West Nottingham Academy in Colora, Maryland for allowing us to incorporate her format for a persuasive paper.

