

MAINE'S ISLAND SIMULATION

Activity 40

AGE LEVEL = 10 and up
DURATION = 60-90 min.
LEARNING STATION = Classroom
RELATED ACTIVITIES = None

WHEN =  



UNDERSTANDING: To consider all socioeconomic, psychological and environmental factors in the governmental process of land-use decision making.

SPECIAL NOTES: This activity has been used successfully with 5th graders and has no upper age limit. However, younger groups need more supervision. Number of participants: minimum 12, maximum 36.

MATERIALS:

For each special interest group, agency and town board:

- Paper with pens or pencil
- Maine's Island background
- Map of Maine's Island
- Name tags (Optional)

PREPARATION: An understanding of basic ecological concepts and how humans can affect (and are affected by) the environment is needed. This activity isn't for the very young, but it's an effective way to pull together previous experience, awareness and conceptual learning.

LESSON:

Warm-up: Explain that each person will be joining an agency or special interest group. Their aim is to convince the town board that their group's proposal for the recently acquired Maine's Island is the best — for the island and for the people in the surrounding area.

Activity: Divide the students into six groups. One group will become the town board. Assign each remaining group to one of the agencies or organizations described in the Background Information, or have them choose which they would like to be. Explain that each group is to develop a presentation to convince the town board that their idea is the best. Stress that they should consider many factors. Give them 20 minutes to develop their arguments.

Have the board members think up humorous names for themselves (Dr. Bill Kollecter, Sister I. M. O'Kaye). Write these on large name tags. Funny names can make the activity more fun, but don't dwell on them. Each member of the board should choose or be assigned an area of interest. (For example, Dr. Bill Kollecter may be concerned with costs and returns or taxes).

Convene and give each group five minutes for their presentation. Ensure total participation. Allow the board members one or two questions after each presentation. Have a one- or two-minute rebuttal if there's time.

Wrap-up: Give the board five to 10 minutes to make a decision. Have present their decision and reasons to the group.

OPTIONS AND FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

Compare this situation to current environmental problems, especially local problems, such as the location of landfill sites or sewage disposal treatment systems.

Maine's Island Background

Old Hermit Merganser recently passed away. He was a well-liked old fellow and he thought a lot of the area. His will states that the island he owned, called Maine's Island, is to be given to the town board and dealt with in the most beneficial way. Maine's Island is a 300-acre island in the middle of the Salmon River. It is totally natural at this time with no developments. The western side is a famous stopover and nesting site for many bird species, including the endangered roseate tern.

Bird droppings are easily collected on the flat rock surfaces and are a highly sought commercial fertilizer. Because of the high quality natural fertilizer from many birds, this area has the potential to grow ginseng of the highest quality and quantity per acre in the northern hemisphere. A large Chinese population in Boston could provide an available market, with lower transportation and shipping costs than from China.

Recently, Professor Al U. Minum from the University of Gedunk accidentally stumbled upon a bauxite deposit while leading a field trip on the island. This is the only deposit in the country, but although it is deemed profitable, it is not excessive.

The land is located 14 miles from Lobsterville, a highly populated city that desperately needs a new source of energy. The location of Maine's Island is perfect for a nuclear power plant or a double-dam complex (one dam on each side of the island). A giant electrical storage area could be built between them, splitting the island in half and flooding the north part. The Salmon River provides fine fishing, hunting and canoeing. It has remained a natural area because of its poor accessibility. With all the island has to offer, and the ease of developing an access, the area has long been sought after by large corporations for a resort complex.

The task for each special interest group is to convince the town board that its development (or lack of it) is the best and most feasible. When preparing the presentation, they should consider: 1) Cost, 2) Public Opinion, 3) Income, 4) Labor, 5) Services, 6) Recreation, 7) Environmental Impact, 8) Other Concerns. There are several agencies that groups may want to use in presenting their cases, or they can make up some of their own. Be creative! Have fun!

The companies, agencies and special interest groups are:

Fert-A-Farm: Interested in obtaining the island because of the potential for growing ginseng. With the guano (bird droppings) as fertilizer, it would be possible to grow the highest quantity and quality of ginseng. The soil of the island is also important for ginseng growth because of its rare organic makeup.

Energy for Everyone: An electric power company. Lobsterville is in desperate need of energy, and can be helped by building either a nuclear power plant or a double-dam hydroelectric plant on the island. Incidentally, the double-dam would include one dam on each side of the island would flood one of the roseate tern nesting sites.

Paradise, Inc.: A corporation that realizes the recreational potential of the Salmon River and Maine's Island. They could make a lot of money from the development. They want to make a super development of tourist attractions, but don't want the information to leak out. Fert-A-Farm got another place this group was interested in and they don't want to see that happen again.

Preservation for Peaceful Existence (PPE): A group of concerned citizens from all over, but some local people are included. This group wants the area preserved because of the roseate terns and the wide

variety of other wildlife. They are aware of Paradise, Inc.'s history of saying they will leave an area unharmed, but they usually commercialize so much that nothing remains natural.

Mining My Business Company: Extremely interested in the bauxite deposit. The development of a bauxite mine would bring many jobs to the area. The total time from start-up to close-down is only 10 to 12 years. Professor Al U. Minimum has been hired by the company's board of directors. They are determined to get the island. (This group also believes that the PPE is a communist group trying to undermine the nation's economy.)

