

Lesson Plan #7:

Public vs. Private Lands (Part 1)

Objectives

Students will:

- differentiate between public and private lands in the context of wildlife conservation.
- learn that public land is land owned by a government and may or may not be accessible to the public, while private land is owned by individuals or groups and requires permission for access or use.
- evaluate their property to determine if it is wildlife friendly.
- examine local parcels of land to determine if they are private or public.
- implement a plan to collaborate with private landowners or public agencies to benefit wildlife.

Overview

In this activity, students 'inherit' a local parcel of land and determine if it is public or private. They have the option to keep it as it was or make changes to the designated land use. Students must decide on improvements that can be made to their property to benefit wildlife.

Materials

- [Snake River Corridor Project film](#) (6:28)- if students haven't already seen it.
- [Public vs. Private](#)
- *optional- see important note below re: copies of slideshow pages 4-12 (**public** lands) and pages 14-22 (**private** lands)
- copies of [Public vs. Private Student Page](#)
- pencils
- See #8 for extension activities.

****Important note:***

Teacher decides if students will:

- use the examples of public and private local properties. ***If so, print these pages before the lesson.** Slides 4- 12 are **public** land parcels, and slides 14-22 are **private**.

OR

- choose public or private local property using the directions below. **If so, no printing is needed. However, this link, [Teton County, WY - Mapserver](#), must be shared with students before the lesson.** Slide 23 contains additional directions for this option.

Background Information

Non-profit organizations, like the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation, collaborate with private landowners, organizations, and public agencies to benefit wildlife. They build a community of citizen scientists, collect and share wildlife migration and observation data, support landscape-scale conservation, and educate the public on human-wildlife coexistence. On-the-ground projects include modifying fences to facilitate wildlife movement and implementing mitigation measures on highways in Jackson Hole to improve road safety for both people and wildlife. They also work with partners like the Wyoming Department of Transportation to compile and distribute data for informing future transportation planning.

[Working Landscapes: Public vs. Private](#)

[Public and Private Land Percentages by US States](#)

Procedure

*If students haven't seen the [Snake River Corridor Project film](#), please share it before this lesson.

1. Brainstorm the differences between public and private lands. (Use slide 1 to collect data.) What were public and private lands compared to in the video? (mosaic)

Potential answers:

PUBLIC:

-owned by government agencies (Federal, State or Local)

-managed by government agencies, such as national parks, wildlife refuges, and state wildlife agencies, which often have dedicated staff and resources for wildlife conservation

-subject to regulations and policies set by government agencies, which may include specific guidelines for wildlife conservation, habitat protection, and hunting or fishing regulations

-important to the community and wildlife for open spaces

-often accessible to the general public for wildlife conservation efforts

PRIVATE:

-owned by individuals or organizations, access is typically restricted, requiring permission from the owner for conservation activities

-managed by private landowners or organizations, and their approach to wildlife conservation may vary depending on their priorities and resources

-subject to the policies and priorities of the landowner or organization, which may or may not align with formal wildlife conservation regulations.

2. Assign parcels, either individually or in pairs. Some examples are provided on slides 4-12 (public land) and 14-22 (private land) OR use the directions provided below if

students will choose their parcels.

3. Review the first 4 questions on the student page together, using an example in the slide show, if needed. If students don't have any questions, have them begin on their own or with a partner.

4. When everyone has completed the four questions, they should divide public land/private land into two separate parts of the classroom. When in two groups, encourage discussion. At this time, it's optional for the teacher to use slide 2 to note which students are researching public parcels and which are examining private ones.

Potential topics:

PUBLIC

- Why do you think protecting federal lands and waters is important to wildlife?
To protect wildlife, preserve natural landscapes, commemorate (celebrate and remember) historical events or places, provide recreational areas for the public, manage natural resources for the future, etc.
- *Fact: In Teton County, Wyoming, 97% of the physical space of the county is public lands.*

PRIVATE

- Why are private lands important to keep in balance?
To maintain biodiversity, carbon storage, and provide natural spaces for future generations. Private lands are often voluntarily conserved in partnership with land trusts and are crucial to the conservation puzzle.
- Private lands are valuable, and protected by county codes and the Land Development Regulations.
- Fact: In the United States, 60% of the land is privately owned, but only 3% of protected areas are on privately owned land.

4. Bring the 2 groups back together to add new knowledge to slide 1.

-----BREAK-----

Lesson Plan #8:

Public and Private Lands (Part 2)

6. Review the differences between private and public by having someone that's holding a private parcel share about public, and vice versa.

7. Resume the lesson using the prompts on slide 24.

8. Optional extension activities:

- Both public and private lands are important for wildlife conservation. Students can evaluate their property and implement wildlife-friendly practices. They can share findings with parents and encourage small changes for a wildlife-friendly environment, raising awareness and promoting conservation.
- Compare the amount of private and public lands throughout Wyoming using the

map on slide 26.

→ Share the video, [Working Landscapes: Public vs. Private](#) (2:59).

Did students discover additional differences or pros/cons?

For example:

For private ownership

- *Private groups and landowners can protect the fragile environment. [0:36]*
- *Some private groups/landowners allow public use of private lands (e.g., trails). [1:44]*
- *If citizens protect land properly, then there is no need for government protection. [2:10]*

For private ownership

- *Government entities manage state parks, nature preserves, visitor centers, and hunting grounds, where people can visit. [1:06]*
- *Some residents think government intervention is necessary for the future sustainability of Loess Hills. [2:05]*

Reflection/Evaluation

As a reflection and evaluation activity, students can answer the following questions:

What are at least 3 crucial land uses for private or public land?

1. *Conservation land use: Private and public lands protect natural resources, preserve biodiversity, and maintain ecosystems, such as through establishing nature reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, and protected areas.*
2. *Recreational land use: Both private and public lands are used for parks, forests, and wilderness areas, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation like hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, and other activities that contribute to physical and mental well-being, promote tourism, and generate economic benefits.*
3. *Agricultural land use: Both private and public lands are used for crop cultivation, livestock grazing, and farming to produce food and other agricultural products to meet human needs.*

What are two ways that private landowners can assist in wildlife conservation?

Possible answers:

1. *Opening gates and modifying fences to be wildlife-friendly*
2. *Installing acopian bird savers and using UV-coated glass to prevent bird strikes*
3. *Preserving native vegetation, especially in riparian areas*
4. *Establishing conservation easements to protect and preserve wildlife habitats*