

Looking at the Issue:

Managing Natural Events – Unmanaged Fires

(Activity adapted from “Investigating your environment – Investigating an Environmental Issue”, USDA Forest Service publication)

Purpose: The students will discover the basics of an issue by learning how to explore sources of information from which to begin an issue analysis.

Objective: As a result of participation in this investigative process, the student will be able to:

- Identify, collect, and analyze data and information about an issue
- Summarize facts about an issue.

Preparation: The students will conduct an investigation of the recent wildland fires that have occurred in the United States and examine current fire policy and the Healthy Forests Initiative as it relates to managing these natural events that are by nature - unmanageable. Information sources include, but are not limited to: newspaper and magazine reports, data from appropriate agencies, state and federal agency reports, and internet resources. Working in small groups the students will complete the activity sheets. A class discussion follows with each group presenting a summary of their work and a brief statement that summarizes the general impact of this issue on the environment.

Activity A – Describing the Issue

Discuss with the class the issue of unmanaged wildland fires in the United States.

Discussion should be directed to determine (by listing) what they know and how they feel about this issue. Using the background material, the students should develop written responses to the questions on Activity Sheet A.

Activity B – Collect and Record Information

In this research phase, the students should work in small groups to utilize references sources to complete Activity Sheet B. With the basic problem stated, the students will use Activity B to agree on a direction to take to understand the problem.

Activity C – Exploring Interrelationships and Identifying Conflict

The students will identify interrelationships within the issue of “managing unmanaged fire” and look at some potential or existing conflicts within this issue. Students are to complete Activity Sheet C. This exercise may reveal that more information on specific topics is needed to continue.

Activity D – Analyzing Impacts

The purpose of this final activity is put the issue of unmanaged fire in its broadest context and look at the potential impacts this issue could have for our natural resources. Students are to complete the chart on Activity Sheet D and prepare group presentations summarizing their investigation.

## Activity A: Describing the Issue

Title of Issue:

Description of Issue:

What is happening?

Where is it happening? (Past history and events, etc.)

Who is affected?

How are they affected?

What are the impacts of the issue? (Economically, aesthetically, socially, politically, etc.)

What are the possible courses of action about the issue?

What agencies and/or organizations are involved that have major responsibilities in this issue?

## Activity B. Collect and Record Information

List some factors that might contribute to the issue.

Describe what you want to find out about this issue or its factors.

Describe the kind of information that needs to be collected.

Information Sources about this activity (people, agencies, websites, reports, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

Based on the information we have read and the things we've discussed, our group would like to find out more about:

1.

2.

3.

Questions we will ask to find out these things are:

1.

2.

3.

In order to find out more about these things, we will specifically look for information about:

1.

2.

3.

Activity C: Interpreting the Information Collected – page 1

Management Practices Used for This Activity	Why	Special characteristics of the land or resource (suitabilities/limitations/constraints)	Economic Considerations	Effect of current practices on the total environment

Activity C: Interpreting the Information Collected – page 2

Describe what the collected data tells you about the issue.

List comparisons, contrasts, or cause-and-effect relationships that can be inferred from the collected data.

What big ideas are suggested by the interpretation of this data?

What implications do these big ideas have to environmental management?

Extending the investigation

List parts of the investigation that can be explored more fully by more data collection.

Describe data that still needs to be collected.

Describe what might be significant about collecting the additional information.

Activity D: Analyzing the Impact

Based on the data you have collected, describe the general interest and impact, as you see it, that this issue can have in the following areas.

Area	Impact on other nearby environments	Social Patterns	Economics	Politics	Other
<b>Locally</b> (county, city)  Interest  Impact					
<b>Regionally</b> (State or states)  Interest  Impact					
<b>Nationally</b> (county, city)  Interest  Impact					
<b>Internationally</b> (county, city)  Interest  Impact					

From the chart above, your observations and the analyzing of information about the issue, construct a brief statement which would summarize the general impact of this issue on our natural resources.