



**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Duration:** Preparation—45 minutes,  
Activity—2, 45 minute sessions

**Subject Area:** Resource Management

**Skills:** Comparing, problem solving,  
negotiating

# Now What Do We Do?

*Interest groups negotiate to develop a land management plan that works.*

**Summary** In the aftermath of the Mount St. Helens eruption public and private landowners, recreational users, government agencies, and many other groups had something to say about how the devastated area should be managed in the future. In this activity, students assume the roles of interest group representatives and explore avenues of compromise that lead them to create a land management plan that will work for everyone.

**Objectives** In this activity, students will:

1. Identify issues involved in land management.
2. Compare the benefits and challenges associated with both land conservation and preservation.
3. Develop and present a land management plan to their peers.

**Materials** Each group will need:

- paper, pencils
- copies of *Team Member Profiles* list, *Land Management Information Sheet*, and map of land ownership at the time of eruption

**Preparation** Review the activity and gather materials.  
Make copies of handouts.

**Key Words**

**blast zone**—the area around Mount St. Helens where trees were killed by the volcanic blast

**blowdown**—trees knocked over by high winds or volcanic eruptions

**conservation**—managing a natural area to balance resource utilization and preservation

**preservation**—keeping a natural area in a pristine state, preferably forever

**Introductory Questions** Have you ever been part of a group decision-making process? How did the process work, or not work? Did the group reach a consensus? Were you happy with the outcome? Why or why not?

## Background Information

The land surrounding Mount St. Helens has long been recognized as an area worth protecting. Many interest groups, as well as the federal government, were considering a variety of preservation proposals even before the 1980 eruption.

After the blast, the area invited exploration centered around the eruption and the return of life. Various interest groups lobbied to use the area in ways that would benefit their own agenda. Eventually, a compromise was reached. Congress and the President set aside a portion of land for research, interpretation and recreation called the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. Other devastated areas outside of the Monument were salvaged and replanted to speed forest recovery and restore the land's economic viability.

## What Actually Happened – Formation of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

National Park status was first proposed for the Mount St. Helens area in 1930, and throughout the years, concerned citizens kept the issue alive. In 1970, an environmental group in Kelso, Washington formed the Mount St. Helens Protection Association to pursue creation of a National Monument. In 1979, President Carter's review of government land for potential wilderness status included three areas near Mount St. Helens—the volcano itself, Mount Margaret and the lava formations around Ape Cave.

The entire land management planning process began anew after the 1980 eruption. Several interest groups drafted proposals that reflected their individual goals. For example, forest user groups and small mill owners put their support behind protection of 20,000 to 40,000 acres, while environmental groups advocated a 216,000 acre National Monument. Three proposals eventually reached Congress:

1) The Mount St. Helens Protection Association proposed a 216,000 acre National Monument near the volcano. Their plan included recreational greenways along the Toutle and Cowlitz Rivers. Eleven environmental groups, including the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, supported this proposal.

2) The U.S. Forest Service proposed eight options for land management. The options addressed different land uses with suggestions for preserving between 45,000 and 200,000 acres. The Forest Service identified Option 7, which called for 85,000 acres of "interpretive area," as their preference. A version of this proposal reached the House and Senate.

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## Procedure

1. As a class, define the words "conservation" and "preservation." What are the similarities and differences between these two concepts? Can there be different degrees of conservation or preservation? (In some areas, preservation can mean that no one is allowed to enter. In others, like National Parks, preserved areas invite visitors.)
2. Set the scene for your students: It's the summer of 1980, just after the Mount St. Helens eruption. The area within the blast zone represents a unique landscape that needs special consideration. There are a number of land management proposals in the works. The challenge is to design a plan that serves the public and also meets interest groups' various goals.
3. Divide the class into teams of six. Explain to the students that each team must work together to develop a land management plan for the Mount St. Helens area. Assign each team member one of the roles from the *Team Member Profiles* list. Also, provide each team with a copy of the *Land Management Information Sheet* and map of land ownership at the time of the eruption. (Note: You may choose to reproduce each page of this activity for your students.) Inform the students that they may combine the land management options or create their own. Each team should identify the pros and cons of their plan.
4. After everyone has had time to develop a management plan for the area, have each team take 5-10 minutes to present their proposal to the class. The teacher can facilitate by taking notes to identify the key points of each proposal. After each team completes their presentation, the entire class, acting as Congress and the President, votes on which plan to endorse. Another option is to ask the principal, other staff and/or parents to act as Congress and the President. The entire plan and any associated expenses (e.g., obtaining private land, building a visitor center) must be accepted.
5. After the class has chosen a proposal to endorse, compare the choice with what actually happened at Mount St. Helens.



## Assessment

After completing the activity, discuss the following questions as a class:

- How did the group judge which proposal was best?
- What are the merits of the successful proposal? Any drawbacks?
- What are the primary differences and similarities between the students' plan and what actually happened?
- If the students were called in to consult on a similar situation occurring today, what recommendations would they have for local land managers?

## Extensions

- Research each group's role at Mount St. Helens in more detail. Encourage students to contact the various agencies and interview land managers about the process of establishing the Monument.
- Have students ask agency representatives to describe their roles in the current management of the Monument.
- Visit the Forest Learning Center's web site to learn about the eruption and to view pictures of the volcano. ([mountsthelens.weyerhaeuser.com](http://mountsthelens.weyerhaeuser.com))

## Audio/Visual Resources

Unless otherwise noted, the following resources can be purchased through the Northwest Interpretive Association. Call (360) 274-2124 for a NWIA catalog.

*The Fire Below Us*. Earth Images. (Video)

*Fire Mountain: The Rebirth of a Volcano* (Video)

*Message from the Mountain* (Johnston Ridge video presentation)

"Mount St. Helens: A Changing Landscape"  
(80 slides featuring the ecological recovery near Mount St. Helens)

"Weyerhaeuser at Mount St. Helens: The Days After."  
(Educators pack of 20 or 60 slides available from the Forest Learning Center)

*Weyerhaeuser's Forest Cycle*  
(Video covering forestry, lumber mill workings and paper making, available from the Forest Learning Center)

## Print Resources

Lauber, P. *Volcano: The Eruption and Healing of Mount St. Helens*. 1986.

Quiring, J. *Mount St. Helens: The Continuing Story*. 1991.

Rochelle, J. A. "Natural Resource Recovery Following the 1980 Mount St. Helens Eruption: Lessons in Ecological Resilience." Tacoma, WA: Weyerhaeuser Company, 1990. (Scientific paper available from the Forest Learning Center.)

## What Actually Happened, con't

Timber interests, President Reagan and the Department of Agriculture all supported the 85,000 acre Volcanic Area proposed by the Forest Service.

3) Washington state also submitted a management plan. After examining the issues related to land management and public safety, Governor John Spellman and a group of congressional delegates proposed that 110,000 acres be set aside as the Mount St. Helens Volcanic Area.

There were several controversial issues surrounding these land management plans:

- Timber salvage—The question of how much timber to salvage and how much to leave on the ground required a swift answer. As policies and plans evolved, insects and diseases attacked valuable logs. Landowners began salvaging logs from private land that might later become part of the preserved Volcanic Area.
- Preservation of special areas outside the blast zone—These areas included old growth forests near Smith and Goat Creeks and the lava formations around Ape Cave.
- Acquisition of private and state land for the monument—Originally, the Forest Service proposed cooperative management for some of the area. Private individuals, companies, and state trust lands rejected this idea favoring land exchanges and cash purchases.

After subcommittee bargaining, public comment and political posturing, a compromise was reached. In October, 1982, Congress established the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument which included 110,000 acres of devastated land, unique caves, and ancient forest. The U.S. Forest Service now manages the Monument for research, recreation and interpretation. Three Forest Service visitor centers, as well as many viewpoints and interpretive areas, attract over 1 million visitors annually.

# Team Member Profiles

## **Private Forest Landowner**

You understand the need for a special area near the volcano, but you are concerned about the future of your land and the blowdown in the blast zone. You would like to salvage and replant all of your land. You would follow all environmental regulations, create jobs and replant a young forest on the barren land. (For example, Weyerhaeuser had 68,000 acres within the blast zone.)

## **U. S. Forest Service Land Manager**

Your agency manages much of the public land near Mount St. Helens as part of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. You manage forests for multiple uses including recreation, timber and mineral production, grazing, wildlife habitat, and research. You also manage special areas such as wilderness areas, scenic areas and historically important sites. You would like to remain the manager of public land in the blast zone.

## **Recreational User**

You represent hunters, anglers, horseback riders, campers, snowmobilers, hikers and other recreational users. You enjoyed this area before the volcano erupted and are concerned about future overcrowding by tourist-related development. You would like to see much of the area available for low cost recreation, and you want to minimize the areas with restricted access.

## **Tourism and Community Development Planner**

You know Mount St. Helens will attract people from all over the world. You want to develop facilities like hotels, restaurants, and visitor centers for future tourists. You want to expand the tax base, boost the local economy and create jobs using tourist dollars.

## **Scientist**

You realize that the Mount St. Helens area provides a unique opportunity for research. You would like to preserve some of the land as a research area where tourists and recreational users are excluded. You also believe that other unique areas near the volcano should be preserved.

## **Environmental Group Leader**

You believe that most of the private and public land impacted by the volcano should be preserved without harvest or replanting. You would like the area to recover naturally with little human interference. You are also interested in preserving special areas such as old growth forests.

# Land Management Information Sheet

Each team must work together to decide the future of the Mount St. Helens area. Read through the list of land management options below, and then either choose one, create a combination of options, or come up with a completely new option before making decisions about land management within the blast zone. Your team has 45 minutes to design a plan. Use the questions at the bottom of the page to help guide you. When finished, you will be asked to present your plan to the class.

## Land Management Options

### **National Park** *Manager: National Park Service*

The President designates National Parks to manage and preserve America's most special places. Parks forbid timber harvesting, hunting, and collecting of natural features. The Parks usually allow fishing, hiking and other types of recreation, but they are often highly regulated. Parks often provide services for visitors, such as hotels, restaurants, and visitor centers.

### **Wilderness Area** *Manager: Varies, usually U.S. Forest Service*

The Forest Service manages Wilderness Areas to preserve the wild qualities of the land. No roads or permanent structures exist, and people must enjoy these areas on foot or horseback only. Timber harvest or resource extraction is forbidden; hunting is usually permitted.

### **National Monument** *Manager: Varies, usually National Park Service*

Congress designates areas as National Monuments. The Monuments are similar to National Parks but they often operate under more flexible guidelines, especially if managed by the Forest Service. They do not allow resource extraction but may allow hunting and fishing. Recreational developments, such as hiking trails and visitor centers, can be extensive.

### **Forest Products Production** *Manager (public land): U.S. Forest Service and state land managers; Manager (private land): Individuals and Forest Products Companies*

Timber within the blast zone area would be salvaged, and the land would be replanted. Private owners would retain their land to manage as desired, but most would be willing to negotiate land transfer of special areas. Public land would be managed for multiple uses. All land owners would follow regulations to promote a healthy forest and environment. Recreational opportunities would be possible.

## Land Management Questions

1. The government must compensate private groups or individuals for their land within the blast zone. Weyerhaeuser and the U.S. Forest Service own most of the blast zone. If you need to obtain private land for a special area, how will you acquire it?
2. What visitor facilities, if any, will you build?
3. What recreational facilities, like trails or ski areas, will you build?
4. What will be the general land use and access policies?
5. What timber salvage, if any, will be allowed?
6. What jobs, if any, would this option create? Would your option cause any job loss?
7. Will hunting and/or fishing be allowed? Who will manage the wildlife?
8. Who will manage any specially designated area?
9. How would you get the funds to operate?
10. Why do you think the class should choose your option?