



Grade Level: 8-12

Duration: Preparation—15 minutes;
Activity—50 minutes

Subject Areas: Language Arts,
Resource Management

Skills: Analyzing, communicating,
developing arguments, decision-
making

Who Owns the Blast Zone?

Craft a persuasive argument to convince a private landowner to sell property to you!

Summary Students assume the roles of landowners in the Mount St. Helens area after the blast. Representing various agencies and a private citizen, students will consider how the physical characteristics of a parcel of land affect its management. They will also explore the management objectives of different categories of landowners.

Objectives In this activity, students will:

1. Identify the various land management strategies of landowners in the Mount St. Helens area.
2. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages facing organizations as they decide how and when to acquire more land.

Materials For each group, you will need:

- copies of the *Land Sale Information Sheet*
- paper
- pencils
- map of the blast zone (optional)
- research materials (optional)

Preparation Review the activity.
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
salvage logging—removing trees from an area after a disaster has killed or damaged them

Background Information

After the May 18, 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, private and public landowners within the blast zone re-evaluated their land management strategies. Private landowners ranged from citizens who owned small lots to Weyerhaeuser, a large forest products company which owned 68,000 acres. Public landowners included the U.S. Forest Service (64,000 acres) and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (12,000 acres).

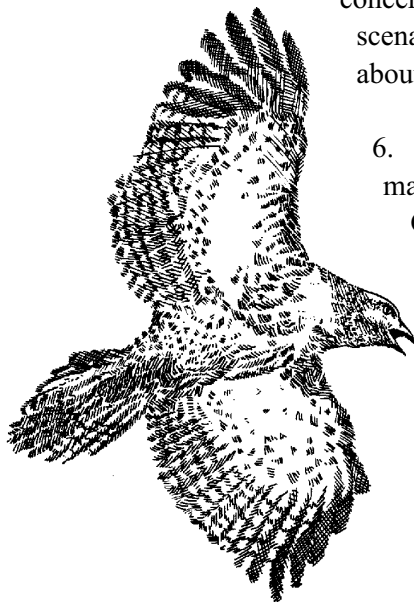
In 1982, Congress created the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, which includes 110,000 acres of public land as well as private land obtained by trade. The Monument encompasses a portion of the blast zone but also includes other special nearby features. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, a private conservation group, also facilitated the transfer of 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat from Weyerhaeuser to the Washington State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, which owns and manages the land as the Mount St. Helens State Wildlife Area.

Introductory Questions

- If you were selling a piece of property and received two identical offers, one from a developer and one from a conservationist, who would you sell to? Why?
- What if the developer offered you more money than the conservationist?
- What are some of the factors that help determine whether or not land is “valuable”?

Procedure

1. As a class, discuss the difference between private and public forest land, and then brainstorm uses for each. What activities are you most likely to find on private forest land? On public forest land? Why are there differences? Explain that when Mount St. Helens erupted, the devastation affected both private and public land.
2. Divide the class into teams of five students. Each member of a team will represent one of five landowners in the blast zone:
 - A private, forest products company;
 - U.S. Forest Service, manager of the National Volcanic Monument;
 - Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, manager of the Mount St. Helens State Wildlife Area;
 - Washington State Department of Natural Resources, manager of state-owned forests;
 - A private citizen.
3. Distribute a *Land Sale Information Sheet* to each group. Each team member should become familiar with the principles that guide the management of their property. (Note: You may choose to reproduce each page of this activity for your students.)
4. Next, assume that the student representing the private citizen has just inherited 640 acres from a long, lost relative. Since this new landowner lives in North Carolina and the property is near Mount St. Helens, he/she has decided to sell it. All neighboring landowners would like to buy the land (see map).
5. On the bottom of the *Land Sale Information Sheet* is a list of scenarios concerning the piece of property that is for sale. Assign one of the scenarios to each group for role-playing. Encourage students to think about the potential benefits associated with different uses for the land.
6. Instruct each prospective buyer to write a persuasive letter, or make a verbal proposal, to the new landowner that lives in North Carolina stating why the land should be sold to them. Proposals should include how the buyer plans to use and manage the land (timber salvage, wildlife habitat, tourist activities, etc.). The land must be sold as one whole section, and the price offered by the different groups is irrelevant. A group may also decide that they do not wish to purchase the land, but they must write down why the land doesn't suit their needs. The landowner will make the final decision about who buys the land.



Assessment

Discuss each group's land sale proposal as a class. Why did the landowner decide to sell to a particular group? How was the landowner influenced by the management strategy of the buyer? The persuasiveness of the argument?

Extension

If students' interest was piqued by this activity, encourage them to research how actual land sales work. You could even invite a guest to the class to talk about the process of buying and selling large parcels of land. Possible guests include: a representative from a forest products company; a member of a conservation group; a state or federal agency spokesperson; or a real estate specialist.

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.)



Land Sale Information Sheet

Land Management Background

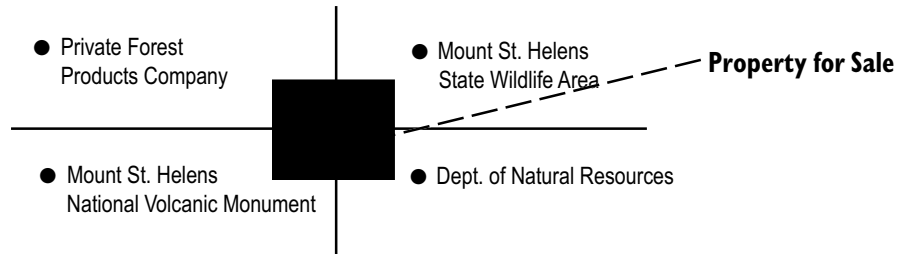
Private, Forest Products Company—The company manages their land for income which is mainly from timber production. Public access may be limited.

National Volcanic Monument; Manager, US Forest Service—The goal of the National Volcanic Monument is to preserve a portion of the unique landscape near Mount St. Helens, allowing the regeneration to happen naturally. Activities within the monument include research, interpretation, and recreation restricted to designated areas.

Mount St. Helens State Wildlife Area; Manager, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife—Generally, Fish and Wildlife departments are responsible for the overall monitoring, regulation and evaluation of a state’s wildlife. The Mount St. Helens State Wildlife Area is an area specially set aside for research and preservation of wildlife within the blast zone. Public access is restricted to hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders.

Department of Natural Resources, State of Washington—State forest lands are managed in trust to create income for public schools, prisons and other state institutions from the sale of forest products. The DNR is also charged with regulating forest practices on private and state lands within Washington. Public access may be limited.

Map of Land for Sale



Scenarios for Land Sale Proposals

- Scenario #1: The land for sale is relatively flat and contains harvestable blowdown, deep rich soils and old damaged roads.
- Scenario #2: The land for sale contains mostly grassy debris avalanche and rock cliffs, but 200 acres contain standing, dead timber that could be salvaged.
- Scenario #3: The land for sale contains high peaks, lakes, and blowdown, and has great vistas of Mount St. Helens. The blowdown could be salvaged but at a high cost.
- Scenario #4: Create your own scenario.