

# **Project WILD and NAAEE's Guidelines for Excellence**

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), a premier professional organization for environmental educators, publishes several sets of guidelines that set standards for excellence in the field of environmental education. Below are examples from Project WILD materials on how key characteristics identified in NAAEE's publication *Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence* are met.

## Key Characteristics #1—Accurate and Inclusive and #2 Emphasis on Skills Building

"Deer Dilemma" from the Project WLD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide.

"Too many deer!" Everyone agrees, but what to do? Listen, engage, and cast your vote.



In this simulation of a board of commissioners meeting, high school students roleplay various individuals representing a wide variety of opinions on how best to respond to an ever-increasing deer population in and around a local park.

Conflicts around human interaction with wildlife are common in many communities. In "Deer Dilemma," students must consider thirteen different, and often conflicting, perspectives about the best way for the community to respond to a wildlife population that is out of balance. After reading and discussing a text that describes of dilemma, as well as a text on various strategies for managing deer populations, students are assigned roles, such as board members, community members, or townspeople. Prior to the meeting,

students are given time to develop their position based on the role they have been given and the information from the two texts.

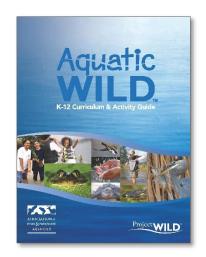
The diversity of perspectives on how to best respond to the challenge of too many deer include points of view represented by differing opinions and concerns, such as how the deer herd will affect agriculture, safety, the wellbeing of the community, and the ecosystem. Community members with diverse perspectives include a farmer, a parent, a gardener, a biologist, a member of an animal rights organization, a park ranger, a resident whose family has been impacted by Lyme disease, a hunter, and a representative of a local tribe of indigenous people. Rather than promoting a particular point of view or strategy to managing the deer population, "Deer Dilemma" provides an opportunity for students to explore differing perspectives in a balanced way and form their own point of view while also learning communication and collaboration skills. While the focus in this activity is on a deer population, the process students undertake can apply to any environmental issue in which learners explore how different perspectives and proposed solutions can affect environmental, social, and economic systems.

Like all Project WILD materials, "Deer Dilemma" was developed, reviewed, revised, and tested in collaboration with many different stakeholders, including educators, wildlife biologists, and environmental managers.

## Key Characteristic #3—Depth of Understanding

## "Plastic Voyages" from the Aquatic WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide.





How can you help keep the plastic out?

This question helps set the stage for this upper elementary (grades 3-5) activity with an emphasis on actions each of us can take to address the environmental crisis of plastic pollution. Students examining the "voyage" in the lifecycle of plastics monitor plastic waste in their own households, learn about the effects on marine life, and propose ways to address the problem. Like all activities in the Project WILD and Aquatic WILD activity guide, the concepts in "Plastic Voyages" are connected to a larger set of unifying principles known as the <a href="Project WILD Conceptual Framework">Project WILD Conceptual Framework</a>

(https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/1115/3790/7174/Project\_WILD\_Conce\_ptual\_Framework2017.pdf).

Over 200 principles that make up the conceptual framework are organized into three broad categories: Ecological Knowledge, Social and Political Knowledge, and

Sustaining Fish & Wildlife Resources. Each activity then goes into depth on a few principles (typically 3-8) from one or more of these categories. "Plastic Voyages," for example, connects closely to two principles relating to human impacts on fish & wildlife resources. These underlying principles can be considered as the theme of the activity. They are:

- Human effects on fish and wildlife and their habitats are a driving force affecting environmental quality worldwide; and
- Humans have the capacity to sustain themselves and wildlife.

This second principle includes a sub-principle that also applies to the activity:

- The development and adoption of sustainable human lifestyles and social decisions can change the negative effects of human activity on wildlife.

Under this principle are yet more sub-principles:

- Individual lifestyle decisions including recreational choices, transportation options, housing selections, vocation, food, clothing, and energy use affect wildlife directly and indirectly; and
- Community conservation practices, plus social, cultural, and economic values affect environmental programs and activities.

The *Project WILD Conceptual Framework* helps tie together individual concepts—which are often listed as "Terms to Know" in an activity—into

Plastic Voyages

When can you kelp keep the plastic out?

Objectives

Gudents will (1) identify and describe sources of marine
Olderin; (2) describe the potential effects of plattic waste on
aquatic willfulfe and habitat, and (3) identify specific actions they
can take to help remedy the problem.

Background

The United States produces over 250 million tons of trash
revery year, and the amount continues to increase. In 1960,
Americans produced 2.66 pounds of trash a day per person, but
Disposing of all that waste negatively affects wildliff. Although
the production of cheap and disposable plastics has made life
more convenient, it causes a great deal of concern regarding
litter and quantity of waste. It is not surprising that 13 percent
of waste produced each year in the U.S. (34.5 million tons) is
plastic, and only 9 percent of plastic waste (3.1 million tons) is
plastic, and only 9 percent of plastic waste (3.1 million tons) is
plastic, and only 9 percent of plastic waste (3.1 million tons) is
plastic. The pelastic even reaches our hands, the petroleum compounds
(examples include polyethylene, polystyrene, and polypropylene)
are refined and shaped into everything from water bottles
to pipes used in onstruction projects. After being formed, the
resin pellets are transported to processors for modding and can be
spilled along the way. Similar to other litter, unless picked up, the
pellets will be carried by rainwaker to draining systems that lead
into creeks, rivers, and ultimately, the ocean.

In addition to plastic resin pellets, plastic waste is a large
component of marine debris. While most of the waste produces
dealy in the United States is recycled or deposted in landfills,
this wasn't always the case. Heavily populated coastal ciries
often loaded trash onto barges and dumped it into the open
ocean until the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972. Many

unifying themes, patterns, and interconnections associated with environmental literacy. The Framework also helps educators connect the activity to social, cultural, and ecological contexts relevant to their students or audience. In Plastic Voyages, students must think systematically to examine plastic waste from their households, within their community, and from industry. Students are prompted to ask questions and examine how plastic pollution moves into the ocean, the challenges of keeping plastic out of the environment, the damage plastic pollution causes, and how actions they can take to reduce plastic pollution. These questions and discussion points help students explore actions at the levels of the individual, the community, as a nation, and globally.

## Key Characteristic #4: Personal and Civic Responsibility

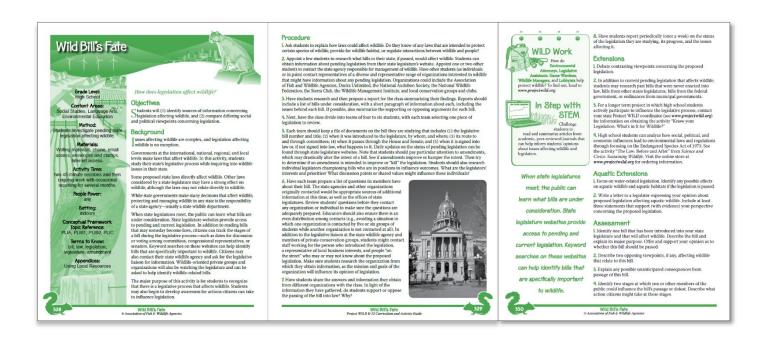
## "Wild Bill's Fate" from the Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide

ASSOCIATION of FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Project WILD

How does legislation affect wildlife?

"Wild Bill's Fate" introduces high school students to the legislative process and how the system by which laws are created is tied to environmental decision making and action. While investigating wildlife-related pending legislation from their own state, students compare and report on differing social and political viewpoints concerning the legislation. Students also increase their awareness for how individuals and groups influence the outcome when laws are made as well as their own possible role in that process. By engaging learners through research on pending legislation, they reflect on their own opinions, the effects of their own actions regarding pending legislation, and potential outcomes and unintended consequences of bills. Through increased understanding of the legislative process, as well as building research and presentation skills, learners become more equipped for civic engagement and brining about positive, community-based changes that address environmental quality.



### **Key Characteristic #5: Instructional Effectiveness**

## "Lights Out!" from the Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide



Lighting up the night sky comes with a cost. Excessive, misdirected, or obtrusive artificial light, or "light pollution" adversely affects economic, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental resources—including our wildlife species. While it is a problem in most communities, and one that connects to learners' everyday lives, many opportunities are available for students to take action to help reduce light pollution. The Project WILD activity "Lights Out!" is designed for a wide range of grade levels, with options for younger students in the upper elementary grades, as well as older middle and high school students. Students investigate light pollution and its impacts, read a case study of a real world "Dark Sky Hero," conduct a lighting audit of their school grounds, and then design an action plan to reduce light pollution in their community.

"Lights Out!", like other Project WILD activities that have the "field investigation" designation, involves students in going outside to collect data in order to answer questions about or solve problems in their local environment. While many Project WILD field investigations use a student-centered approach for formulating research questions, in "Lights Out!" the questions are presented to students as part of a series of steps for conducting a school light audit:

- Does the lighting (on the school site) fall where needed?
- What types of bulbs are being used in the lighting fixtures on the school grounds? and
- When are the lights on, and for how much time?

These questions requiring direct observations are combined with research questions to be explored online or by accessing data made available by the school administration, including "what is the annual cost of operating outdoor lights on the site?" The questions support multiple ways by which students build understanding while conducting a lighting audit: through direct observation, research, reading, and discussion on wildlife and light pollution, mapping the locations and reach of outdoor lighting, and conducting calculations (of power use, annual costs, carbon emissions).

A hallmark of Project WILD materials that "Lights Out!" exemplifies is encouraging educators and learners to engage with community organizations. Project WILD activities underscore the importance of collaboration by highlighting and connecting to the work of many types of organizations involved in environmental stewardship, such as The International Dark-Sky Association, which helped establish categories of light pollution as seen here in the image to the right.

"Lights Out!" takes an interdisciplinary approach and clearly spells out the goals and objectives of the activity. The topic of light pollution is used to integrate content across the curriculum, with the

#### Illuminating Light Pollution

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving dark skies worldwide through education and responsible outdoor lighting, describes four common instances of light pollution: urban sky glow, light trespass, glare, and clutter. Artificial lighting that causes these types of light pollution reduces our ability to see distant stars, planets, and other objects—thereby reducing opportunities for many people to learn about and develop an appreciation of the cosmos.

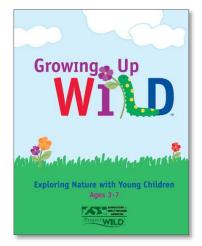
	Type of light pollution	Description
	sky glow	illumination of the night sky often associated with artificial lights of cities and other urban areas
	light trespass	occurs when light spills into areas where it is not needed, wanted, or intended such as into a neighbor's windows
	glare	the presence of excessive bright light that causes discomfort and interferes with depth perception. Example: bright LED billboards on highways
	clutter	excessive grouping of artificial lights, frequently occurring in urban areas. Example: large parking lots (such as car dealerships) and areas around a sport stadium

Lights Outl
Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide

areas of study (social studies, environmental education, science, and language arts) identified on the first page reference information. Also clear at the beginning of the activity are the measurable learning objectives. These objectives directly relate to the assessment strategies provide to the educator. A detailed background section to build both educator and student knowledge concludes with a purpose statement, "... for students to understand the effects of light pollution on wildlife and consider real-life examples of how to address light pollution. Students are encouraged to become active in reducing light pollution and to become "Dark Sky Heroes" in their community."

#### "Spider Web Wonders" from Growing Up WILD: Exploring Nature with Young Children





Materials within the Project WILD family of programs are developed with the goal of ease of use for a variety of audiences—for educators who are new to the field or lack any formal training in education, for parents and caregivers involved in homeschooling, and for veteran formal (Pre-K through 12) and nonformal educators.

Every activity within Project WILD publications follows a common activity template intended to make the information provided easy to understand and reference. In the Growing Up WILD activity "Spider Web Wonders," for example, graphic organizers direct the educator's focus to several categories of information that will help in planning how to use the activity: correlations to standards (Head Start Domains as well as to accreditation criteria set by the National Association for the Education of Young

Children), suggested age ranges of learners, additional resources, "Quick Facts" background information, key vocabulary, materials and prep, and various categories of procedures—such as the "Warm Up," "Ready, Set, Go!" and the "Wrap Up" which provides suggestions for assessing learning and development. Additional activity sections found in every Growing Up WILD activity include "Healthy Me" (how can we stay safe around spiders?), "Helping Hands" (create a spider refuge), and "Might Math" (how many legs does a spider have? how does this compare to other animals?). A section on "Art Projects" (creating a spider with craft materials) helps the educator connect the theme across the learning and development domains through creative expression using easily accessed materials. The Music & Movement and the Centers & Extensions sections also offer easy to use, clear, and engaging activity ideas that are easily adaptable to most education settings. A "Snack" suggestion for each activity (hummus on crackers with eight pretzel legs) provides instructions for snacks that young learners can help create. Snacks featured focus on healthy diets, the needs of economically disadvantaged communities, and diverse cultural traditions.

Developed by teams that include early childhood educators, Spider Web Wonders was field tested prior to being published. Input from educators on the



activity will continue to help guide future versions. Like all Project WILD materials, Spider Web Wonders is available as part of a larger activity guide that educators typically obtain when participating in professional development training.

Home Connections