

## **ACTIVITY: Diverse Perspectives**

Time: 2 hours in class

Supplies: Perspective handouts (per group), State management summary (per group), Management Plan Form (per group), Writing instrument (per group), Item used as a 'talking stick'

### **Teacher Information**

Wolves have established populations in a small number of states in the United States. States such as Colorado and California have had lone wolves travel into their state from surrounding areas. There is a chance that these and other states might one day have established wolf populations, and it is important to have a well-developed management plan if, and when, wolves do move into a state. As with other controversial species, creating a management plan that meets the needs of all vested individuals is challenging. This exercise will allow students to explore the controversy surrounding wolves and to consider the viewpoints of others. Students are to imagine that a breeding pair of wolves has just entered your state and established a territory. A community meeting is being held to discuss how the wolves will be managed. Students will split into groups to represent the varying perspectives on wolves. These perspectives will be discussed in the meeting and a compromise will need to be reached to determine how the current and/or future wolves will be managed in the area.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Set the students up for the imaginary scenario that wolves *have* established themselves (a breeding pair living and reproducing) in a rural county in your state. The local government wants to create a wolf management plan with respect to the needs and opinions of the community. NOTE: At some point in the activity, let the students know that wolf management plans are established by either state, federal, or tribal governments. This activity does not represent the actual process for creating a management plan, but rather a reflection of the viewpoints government officials must consider when creating a plan and the challenges that can occur with compromise.
2. Divide the students into groups representing the varying attitudes on wolves. The following are examples of interest groups that can be used:
  - a. Hunters and trappers – will hunt any species, legally
  - b. Ranchers – have variety of range livestock (sheep, cattle, etc.) and dogs
  - c. Environmentalists – interested in protecting species, habitats, and ecosystems
  - d. Community leaders – interested in the cost/benefit of wolves for the community as a whole (inform the community leaders that the renewal of their contract is

dependent upon the satisfaction of the majority of local citizens on the management plan. As the teacher, determine what the majority opinion will be for your region. It does not have to match the opinions of any of the listed groups.)

3. Once the groups are established, hand out the summary of an existing wolf management plan, the articles from varying perspective, and the 'Perspective' sheet to guide them in research on their stance on wolf management. They will be required to fill out this work sheet and use it in the community meeting (these documents are provided).
4. After the papers have been written, students will gather in their groups to prepare for the "Community Meeting".
5. The instructor should act as a moderator and ask each group questions from their "Perspective" sheet. Pass around the 'talking stick' informing the students that they are only allowed to speak if they are holding the stick. Students should take turns acting as spokesperson for their group. The moderator can write some of the costs/benefits of wolves in the area on the board as the meeting proceeds.
6. After all sides had been heard, begin discussing ideas for a wolf management plan that attempts to incorporate the wants and needs of all vested individuals. Come up with a draft of a management plan. Remember that all opinions matter. While *group* management plans might propose the removal of all wolves, this is not an option for the *community-wide* management plan.

\*\*\*If a certain group believes their opinion is not considered in the plan they are allowed to file a 'lawsuit' in opposition to the suggested plan. This forces the community to rewrite the specific section of the management plan.\*\*\*

### **DISCUSSION IDEAS**

- How do you think a real-life community meeting about wolves would be different from the classroom meeting?
- Do you think everyone takes the time to educate themselves on the differing viewpoints in a disagreement?
- Do you think the information you read about your perspective and those of others was from credible and non-bias sources? How do you know?
- What criteria should wolf management plans be based upon? Economics? Science?
- Can you think of other groups not mentioned that might have a vested interest in the management of wolves in your area?

- The community leaders were focused on the interest of the community. How could things turn out differently if the leaders were still concerned about keeping their positions, but were more vested in the opinions of citizens in another town or state?

### **EXTENSION**

- Experiment with a variety of methods of selecting management plan options. Try strictly democratic voting on management issues such as whether hunting is allowed to see if the plan changes in any way.
- Prior to beginning this activity, have the students vote (with their personal opinions) on aspects of a management plan. Then have them vote on the same questions with their personal opinions after the community meeting is finished. Discuss with the students about how they felt voting before and after the activity. Were their perspectives the same both times? Was it easier or harder to make a decision after learning different perspectives?
- Students can write a short 'statement' on wolf management based on their readings, the 'Perspectives' worksheet, and discussions with their group members. These statements could be written individually or in groups and then read at the community meeting.
- If the activity moves too quickly, change the community leaders' perspective. For example, if ecological tourism is the leading industry in your area and they are supporting whatever group wants more wolves, try informing the leaders that ranching has become the leading industry and they must side with the ranchers to keep their jobs.