

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's

Wilderness Investigations

High School

INTRODUCTION

*"Is education possibly a process of trading awareness
for things of lesser worth?"*

(from *A Sand County Almanac*; Aldo Leopold)

Overview

High school students might be said to be the most *and* least informed members of our society. On one hand, they have almost instant access to once unimaginable amounts of information. On the other hand, much of that information might be easily dismissed as trivial, untrue, overwhelming, and/or distracting. High school educators operate in a place where the competition for student attention is slick, attractive, and titillating. Yet we consistently ask teachers to engage students with subjects and topics that do not come across that way. It's easy to suggest that high school students, like the information and entertainment available to them, are shallow, unimaginative, and out-of-touch with reality. While that may be true for some of them (and for many non-high school age people as well) perhaps it's because we fail to connect to topics that are relevant and, thus, fail also to help students evolve. We educators must ask if the time spent in our classrooms is spent "*raising or trading awareness.*" The answer is probably a little of both.

Wilderness Investigations is a collection of educational experiences focused on the topic of wilderness and meant to help raise awareness. The developers have taken Leopold's question as a challenge and built upon its implications:

To create a set of meaningful investigations of wilderness topics that increase:

- *awareness,*
- *inquiry skills,*
- *appreciation of natural landscapes and those who work to protect them,*
- *storytelling and communication abilities.*

Wilderness Investigations is not a science curriculum or language arts curriculum. It's not just history, art, or any other single subject. It is, we trust, a little of all of these. While versions of WI developed for younger students are designed to take multiple hours for each topic this high school collection is set-up to fit into standard one hour (+/-)

time periods. Some do take multiple periods and others just one. Some are best presented inside the classroom and others outdoors.

There are four distinct sections in WI High School:

1. **Wilderness 101**: From *no word for wilderness* to a National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)
2. **Wilderness Applications**: Exploring the opportunities and challenges of designated wilderness
3. **Wilderness Heroes**: Information and extensions to introduce those who have and do champion wilderness
4. **Wilderness Profiles**: Opportunities to explore and expand knowledge about the diverse landscapes that make up the NWPS

Because *Wilderness Investigation* teachers operate in a variety of settings and situations WI High School is designed for the teacher to pick and choose lessons and activities that suit their schedule, overall curriculum, and students. It is recommended that students be grounded in the Wilderness Act and the people and circumstances that led to its passage before moving on to tackle wilderness challenges and opportunities. Therefore, teachers should utilize the Wilderness 101 items before moving ahead.

Finally, it is expected that teachers will adapt and adjust materials to suit their needs. Perhaps these lessons/activities will be used *as is* and maybe they will simply stimulate teachers to create something more relevant for their students. If students come away with a greater feel for the NWPS and increased awareness of wild places in their area/nation then WI High School will have met its goals. Informed students, no matter how they feel about the NWPS, will be posed to make more informed choices for themselves and their fellow citizens.

NOTE: You will find **Wilderness.net** to be an invaluable resource as you use these lessons and activities. It is a safe and reliable site for teachers and students to explore and discover information about wilderness.