Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
A Subject-Integrated Curriculum for Grades 9 – 12
High School

Wilderness Applications/Lesson 9
Creating and Completing a Wilderness Character Monitoring Checklist

Goal: Students will learn about Wilderness Character, Wilderness Character Monitoring, and will create their own Wilderness Character Checklist and Assessment sheet in preparation for a field experience.

Investigation Objectives
Audience: 9-12 grades
- Students will:
    - Learn about wilderness character and wilderness character monitoring
    - Create wilderness character monitoring checklists
    - Participate in a wilderness character monitoring field experience in wilderness or a wild local landscape
    - Present what was learned from field experience

Common Core Standard Connections
NOTE: See Common Core Standards sections to see listed objectives for this and other lessons/activities.

Time Requirement: Classroom and field project (times will vary)

Materials/Resources Needed and Pre-Investigation Tasks
- Paper & pencils and/or computer for each working group
- Computer access
- Clipboards with assessment sheets or digital tablet with assessment sheets downloaded

Teacher Background:
Wilderness managers are charged, by law, to protect and preserve wilderness character (Wilderness character: The combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic ideals that distinguish wilderness from all other lands.). To do so they must regularly assess the status of that character. This lesson and activities will allow students to assess the character of a designated wilderness or place with wilderness-like attributes in order to understand the challenges and opportunities afforded wilderness managers as they seek to follow the law as established in the Wilderness Act.

<u>**Step-by-Step Presentation Instructions**</u>
Briefly **discuss** the *Wilderness Character Investigation.*
- **Each field group will be assigned a certain area within the wilderness area in order to assess its *wilderness character* (a term from the Wilderness Act) OR all groups will assess the same wilderness location and compare/contrast at the conclusion of the activity.**
- First we better make sure we know what *wilderness character* means!
    - ➢ DEFINITION: "Wilderness character may be described as the combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic ideals that distinguish wilderness from all other lands."

    - ➢ Here are the *Five Qualities of Wilderness Character* with some examples of each.
    1. <u>Untrammeled</u>
        - Not manipulated by human actions (Examples of manipulation: weed spraying, fire control, predator control, etc.)
    2. <u>Natural</u>
        - Vegetation, wildlife, air, water, soil, and ecological processes go along as they always have without human influence
    3. <u>Undeveloped</u>
        - Without permanent improvements (no structures, roads, machinery, aircraft, etc.)
    4. <u>Outstanding Opportunities</u>
        - Solitude (few people), primitive (unimproved camping areas), unconfined (wild)
    5. (May have) <u>Unique Qualities</u>
        - Ecological, geologic, scientific, educational, scenic, historical, cultural features (geothermal activity, ancient rock art, old mining evidence, fire regeneration, etc.)

Determine which categories/specific items that may be most easily investigated during the wilderness visit.
- Examples:
    - ➢ DIFFICULT: Air quality (because of its transient nature) may be difficult to connect to a specific wilderness area.
    - ➢ CHALLENGING: Native/non-native plants may not be known by students well enough to make a judgment.
    - ➢ DOABLE: Permanent improvements, opportunities for solitude.

Create a *Status of Wilderness Character Checklist* composed of things to look for during the upcoming wilderness experience.

NOTE: Those chosen should provide a snapshot of how well its *wilderness character* is being preserved in the particular wilderness you are visiting (as mandated by the Wilderness Act).

- Examples: _____   No permanent structures (list any seen)
               _____   Vegetation seems to be living naturally
               _____   Wildlife is wild (not collared, living without human aid-i.e. winter feeding of elk, animal sign indicate expected wilderness populations, etc.)
               _____   Campgrounds are primitive
               _____   Trail(s) are single-track, not too wide (road-like)
               _____   Soundscape lends itself to feelings of solitude/ wildness

Conduct a *Wilderness Character Assessment* once checklists are completed.
- Small groups with each member having specific responsibilities will work best for the field portion of this investigation.

Compare and contrast *Wilderness Character Assessments* once students have completed their field work, organized their findings, and determined an efficient way to communicate what they've discovered.

Extension Ideas
- Invite a wilderness manager to present their Wilderness Character Monitoring experiences.
- Have a wilderness manager present at group presentations so that they can ask questions, clarify data collected, provide feedback for improvement, etc.