

15. Planning a new national park

Aim

This role-play helps students understand the complexity of managing a natural area. The role-play presents a range of views on the use of national parks. It also allows students to apply knowledge gained through completing earlier activities.

Materials

- Resource sheet 15a: Role cards.
- Resource sheet 15b: Guidelines for park zoning.
- Resource sheet 15c: Map of Banksia National Park.
- Collected background resources. This background information can be provided from other sections of this resource, from management plans for existing parks (many of which can be accessed from Parks Victoria's website www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) and from other national park publications and resources.
- Pens, ruler, coloured pencils.

Teachers guidelines

A. Introduction

1. Present the outline and aims of the role-play to the students, and explain the following procedures.
2. Divide the class into small groups. You may decide to use all or only some of the roles.
3. Give out the role cards, map and background information to each group.
4. As a class, discuss the zoning categories and reasons for zoning described in Resource sheet: *Guidelines for zoning*. Make sure students understand the concept of zoning and the types of zones Parks Victoria has identified.

5. Students will need 1-3 periods to research and prepare the arguments in support of the roles they adopt.

B. The public meeting

1. The chairperson conducts the proceedings. Allow at least 3 minutes per speaker.
2. Check that the reporters and the secretary are keeping good records of the meeting.
3. For assessment purposes, keep notes yourself on student contributions to their roles.

C. Evaluation

This class discussion should attempt to help students clarify the issues raised by the meeting and by the zoning activity.

Key questions for students to consider include:

1. How effective was the public meeting as a means of hearing all viewpoints?
2. How fair did you find the method of one speaker to represent your group?
3. What additional information would you like to know about Banksia National Park or the activities of any particular group before making a real life decision?
4. Who should be involved in making such decisions on the future zoning of any Victorian park?
5. Who currently makes these decisions about Victoria's national parks?

Activity description for students

1. You will be involved in a public meeting called by Parks Victoria to determine the management zones of the new Banksia National Park.

2. Your teacher will allocate you to a group and give you a role – a person or group of people whose opinion you will represent.

3. Each group then meets and decides on a strategy, using the role cards and background resources you collect. You could also decide what dress would be appropriate for the presentation.

4. The chairperson, following the role card, notifies your group of the order of presentations, place and time. Each group will be given a limited time in which to speak. There may be one or more speakers from each group.

5. When the meeting is convened, each group, dressed according to its role, presents its case about the zoning of the park, referring either to the projected map or to a copy on paper. The secretary can record your points on large wall sheets or the blackboard/whiteboard. It is the responsibility of the chairperson to control the order of events.

6. The planning group (chairperson, planner and secretary) then make a summary of the points presented by the different groups and make a recommendation on the zoning of Banksia National Park. They state the reasons for their decision.

7. There will be a final evaluation discussion.



15a. Role Cards

Local residents

MAIN AIM: Although this is a diverse group you generally want the park managed in such a way that it will complement your rural bliss. You do not want hordes of tourists around, you like your cats and dogs, and you are fearful of the fire and weeds threat that could develop from the national park.

This group has a couple of very vocal locals. One is a passionate cat lover and resents the fact that her cats are not allowed in the park or could be at risk of being trapped if they go there at night. She is gathering all sorts of support including a local politician and freedom of information activities.

The other local is a retired fire fighter who lives near the park and is concerned that the bush area might provide fuel for a wildfire that could destroy his home. He would like to see a 10 metre firebreak around the entire park “just to be on the safe side”.

In general, the locals would like to see conservation values of the park preserved. They also wish to see some promotion to encourage money into the local community.

Ecotourism Tour Operator

MAIN AIM: You wish to develop the relatively new idea of ecotourism. You want the park to have very strong zoning guidelines and tour groups limited to those who are qualified to maintain the conservation values of the park.

Ecotourism can be defined as “nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable” (National Ecotourism Strategy 1994). It is a way of achieving some balance between tourists and the environment. At the same time you also need to make your tours sufficiently attractive to the public to make a living from your work.

You want limited access to the habitat areas of the Left-footed Pademelon, the area above the waterfall and the fish trap sites. You also want a tourist complex to be established, but on private land adjacent to the park. You are happy to respect the rights of the local Aboriginal community and the conservation values of the park.

In general you are happy to have controlled development in a small area, a large Conservation B zone and a carefully limited Conservation A zone.

Conservation Group

MAIN AIM: To prevent damage to the natural environment and to plants and animals as a result of human activities.

You want to see a large preservation zone established.

You are happy to allow people to visit the park to view its natural features and even carry out activities provided they do not damage the environment.

You agree with scientists that research into the ecology of the park is needed if we are to protect and conserve the area but believe this research needs to be coordinated.

Continued over

You do not believe that setting up a tourist resort is in the interests of the conservation of the area since the buildings for hotels, backpackers, cabins, camping and facilities will affect the aesthetics of the park and the surrounding habitat. It will also create a demand for the supply of water, gas, electricity and food, as well as the need to dispose of waste. More people will also move into and out of the park, increasing the risk of introduced plants and animals. You only support day trips by tourists who return to accommodation outside the park at night.

You are not convinced that tour operators and large groups should be allowed into all areas of the park. Recreationists should use sites other than national parks for their activities.

Scientists

MAIN AIM: To ensure access to areas that have been little affected by human activities for the purpose of research. You would like to see “conservation A zones” and “scientific research zones” set up in the park.

Your group’s research shows that:

- a) there is a distinctive geological feature that has formed a waterfall. This site is unstable and needs further research to determine carrying capacity.
- b) there are several important habitat regions in the park. Of particular note is the Left-footed Pademelon that needs banksia flowers to survive.

You argue that it is important to protect these “islands” by making them Conservation A zone.

The anthropologists among you support the local Indigenous community in seeking a preservation zone at the dreaming place.

Local Indigenous Community

MAIN AIM: To preserve the sacred sites of your ancestors. You also have a strong commitment to the land and wish to conserve this environment.

While there are no descendants still living in this area in the traditional lifestyle there are several hundreds who still visit the sites and value the physical connection with their ancestors. A special State law allows you people access to the dreaming site. You wish to take this opportunity to remind the public that the zoning system cannot legally take away that special right.

Centuries ago your people used fish traps at the eastern side of Platypus River. This site is of particular historical value to you so you wish to see a Conservation A zone set up there. You point out that anthropologists also need this site preserved in order to study the traditional fishing methods of your people.

In general, you feel that both tourists and recreational anglers are a threat to the park and should be carefully managed.

Tourist Resort Developers

MAIN AIM: You want to establish a tourist complex within the park, similar to that at Wilsons Promontory, but leased from the park. You want to protect the conservation values of the park but demand that your clients have the right to full use of the park.

You argue that tourists today, particularly international visitors, expect excellent facilities for accommodation, eating, drinking and travel. There is also a demand for backpacker accommodation that you can meet with your tourist complex.

You want your clients to see the Left-footed Pademelon. They want to explore the waterfall and visit the fishtraps. Many also demand a boat trip along the river, fishing, swimming and walking opportunities.

In general, you want a much larger zoned "development" with easy access to and from the park and a large Conservation B zone. You are also keen to support an extensive advertising campaign to encourage people into the park.

Trail Bike Rider

MAIN AIM: To publicise the unfair manner in which your trail bike track has been taken over by a national park. You realise that you will not be allowed to ride in the park but think the government should provide you with an alternative site.

For about 20 years the site shown on the map has been used by trail bikes. The site is extensively altered and the noise has reduced the number of native animals found in this area. You see no reason why it should be included in the park, but know you have lost that argument.

In general you are quite concerned about the increasing amount of land in Victoria that is being "locked up" in parks.

National Parks Planner

You are a Parks Victoria employee and work in its planning section.

You have four main tasks:

1. Draw up a poster to announce the public meeting.
2. Sketch various zoning ideas on the map of the new park.
3. Help other members of Parks Victoria's team to decide on zoning of the area.
4. Draw a map after the meeting to show the zones decided upon by Parks Victoria.

Reporters (print, television and radio)

You are interested in reporting:

1. The purpose of the meeting.
2. The general attitude of the people attending the meeting
3. The main issues of the meeting.
4. Any clash of interests among groups.
5. What Parks Victoria plans to do next.

You may “broadcast your report live from somewhere outside the classroom or you may tape or videotape the meeting to edit and play back later.

You could present a newspaper report after the meeting to report on the main decisions. Display it on the wall or use it in the school magazine. Your report will be made more interesting if you capture short interviews with several of the leading figures at the meeting.

Secretary to the Meeting

You are an employee of Parks Victoria. Your job is to make sure that the main points of each interest group or person is recorded.

You need to:

1. Ensure that each group gives you a summary of their main points for your use.
2. Clarify any points that you think are not clear.
3. Write up a summary sheet of the main points presented, either on the blackboard or on a sheet to be photocopied.

After the meeting you will meet with the planner and the chairperson to make recommendations on zoning. You must record the reasons for these decisions.

Chairperson of the Meeting

You are an employee of Parks Victoria. You are to run this meeting and then, with the secretary and planner, make a decision about the zoning of the park.

Make sure you:

1. Are in charge of proceedings.
2. Are fair to all viewpoints as well as to national park guidelines.
3. Ensure the group listens to each speaker and that all speakers are able to present their points of view.

Start the meeting by saying something like this: “I declare the meeting open. The purpose of this public meeting is to listen to the points of view of groups of people interested in the new national park”.

Set out the order of presentation, and call out the name of each group at the beginning of their speech.

After all cases have been presented and the spokespeople questioned, formally close the meeting. Your group may then discuss the key issues and later you will announce your recommendations for zoning Banksia National Park.

15b. Guidelines for zoning parks

Zoning

Parks Victoria has developed a zoning scheme to assist with management of its parks. The park management zoning scheme aims to:

- Indicate which management directions have priority in different parts of its parks;
- Indicate the types and levels of use appropriate throughout the parks;
- Assist in minimising existing and potential conflicts between park users and activities, or between these and the protection of park values;
- Provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.



Management zones

Reference area zone

Aim: To protect samples of land types that are relatively undisturbed for comparative study with similar land types elsewhere, by keeping all human interference to the essential minimum and attempting to keep any long term changes to those caused by natural processes.

Wilderness zone

Aim: To protect or enhance the unmodified natural condition of the area and provide opportunities for solitude, inspiration and appropriate self-reliant recreation that does not damage the environment.

Conservation zone

Aim: To protect sensitive natural environments and to provide for minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities, subject to ensuring minimal interference to natural processes.

Conservation and recreation zone

Aim: To protect less sensitive natural environments and to provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.

Recreation development zone

Aim: To provide mainly for high use visitor nodes with a concentration of recreation and/or visitor information and interpretation facilities.

Education zone

Aim: Provide primarily for environmental education in a relatively undisturbed setting.

Example

Zones				
	Conservation	Conservation & Recreation	Recreation Development	Education
General management aim	Protect sensitive natural environments and provide for minimal impact recreation activities and simple visitor facilities.	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and modest visitor facilities without significant impact on natural processes.	Provide primarily for high-use visitor nodes with a concentration of recreation and/or interpretation facilities.	Protect primarily for environmental education in a relatively undisturbed setting.
Example for Port Campbell National Park				
Values	Coastal habitats of high conservation significance.	Important natural values and visitor facilities.	High-use visitor nodes with park management facilities.	Discrete area of high education value.

Source. *Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Management Plan*. September 1998. Parks Victoria.

15c. Banksia National Park

