

# What is a National Forest?

## Public Lands

### National Science Education Standards

- ✿ Standard C: *Life Sciences* — Populations and ecosystems.
- ✿ Standard F: *Science in Personal and Social Perspectives* — Populations, resources, and environments.



## OVERVIEW

Everyone in the United States lives within a day's drive of a National Forest, so chances are there is one not too far from you. (If there isn't, you can do this activity by finding a choosing another National Forest or one of 'America's Rain Forests'.) Investigate the nearest forest with your students to help them appreciate the value of the National Forest and the challenges forest managers face.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Use the internet and reference materials to research a National Forest near them.

## SUBJECTS

Science, Geography, Social Studies

## VOCABULARY

Public lands, multiple use

## TIME

2, 50-minute periods

## MATERIALS

"A Guide to Your National Forests" road maps of your state and neighboring states that identify National Forests, brochures, photos, slides, or video from the National Forest nearest you.

To find the nearest National Forest to you, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/> and then search by state or Forest name.

## TEACHER TIPS

If you're lucky enough to live near a National Forest, arrange a field trip to this special place. In many cases, you can also invite a Forest Service employee to visit your classroom and work with your kids. Use your research tools to locate a contact, and give them a call!

## BACKGROUND

---

National forests are America's great outdoors. They encompass 191 million acres (77.3 million hectares) of land, which is an area equivalent to the size of Texas. National forests provide opportunities for recreation in open spaces and natural environments. With more and more people living in urban areas, national forests are becoming more important and valuable to Americans. People enjoy a wide variety of activities on national forests, including backpacking in remote, unroaded wilderness areas, mastering an all-terrain vehicle over a challenging trail, enjoying the views along a scenic byway, or fishing in a great trout stream, to mention just a few.

Congress established the Forest Service in 1905 to provide quality water and timber for the Nation's benefit. Over the years, the public has expanded the list of what they want from national forests and grasslands. Congress responded by directing the Forest Service to manage national forests for additional multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation. Multiple use means managing resources under the best combination of uses to benefit the American people while ensuring the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service is a Federal agency that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the purpose of the Forest Service—"to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run."

The job of Forest Service managers is to help people share and enjoy the forest, while conserving the environment for generations yet to come. Some activities are compatible. Some are not. You, as a concerned citizen, play a key role. By expressing your views to Forest Service managers, you will help them balance all of these uses and make decisions in the best interest of the forest and the public.

The Forest Service motto, "Caring for the Land and Serving People," captures the spirit of its mission, which they accomplish through five main activities:

- Protection and management of natural resources on National Forest System lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resource utilization.
- Community assistance and cooperation with State and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-Federal forest and associated range and watershed lands to improve conditions in rural areas.
- Achieving and supporting an effective workforce that reflects the full range of diversity of the American people.
- International assistance in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world's forest resources.

## **BEFORE THE ACTIVITY**

---

Collect reference materials that will help students research a National Forest. Many of these materials are available online, or can be requested from Forest Service offices. Consider inviting a Forest Service educator to visit your classroom as an extension of your activities.

## **ACTIVITY**

---

### **A Forest Near You!**

1. Have students examine the “*A Guide to Your National Forests*.” Ask them to locate the National Forests in your state. Which forests look closest to you? Are there any forests in neighboring states that are near you? Have students consult maps of your state and neighboring states to identify the names of the nearest forests. As a class, determine which forest is closest to you.
2. Of course, it would be ideal if you could take your students to visit the forest, but that may not be practical. If anyone from the class has been to that forest, have the other students interview him or her to find out what the forest was like. Show photos, slides, a video of the forest and have your students look at any brochures you were able to obtain. What animals and plants live in the forest? Is the forest home to any threatened or endangered species?
4. Have students use the “National Wildlife Forest System’s Visitor Guide” and maps of your state or neighboring states to find the approximate latitude and longitude of the forest. Then help the students pinpoint the location of the forest on a physical map of the region. What major physical region does the

forest belong to? Have students read the description of that physical region on the map. What natural features are near the forest?

5. Ask students to look at a road map of the area around the forest. What does the map tell you about the area around the forest? Is the area densely populated? Are there any major cities nearby? Is there an airport or a major highway near the forest?
6. Discuss how the forest might be affected by what the students see on the map. Assign students to investigate what is happening in the area around the forest. How have recent natural events (storms, floods, drought) affected the forest? Are there any building projects or industries near the forest that might affect it? Students can examine local and regional newspapers and news reports for information. You may want to help them contact local conservation groups or the forest itself.
7. Based on your research, complete the Student Page.

## **OPTION B**

---

### **America’s Rain Forests**

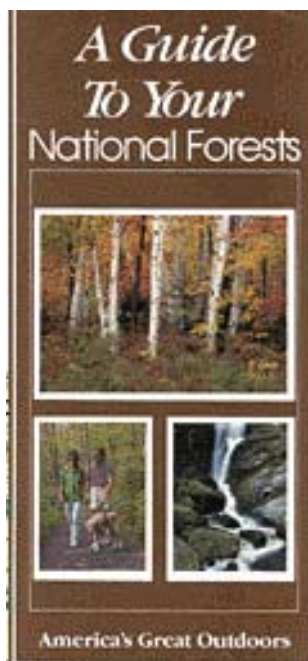
1. If you find it difficult to locate a National Forest near you, you can research one of America’s Rain Forests — the Caribbean, Chugach, Tongass or Olympic NFs.
2. The “*America’s Rain Forests*” website offers a great collection of research materials. Visit the project website, or go to <http://www.fs.fed.us> and navigate to the National Forest.



## EXTENSIONS

A National Forest is a great place to visit with your class, and chances are there's one within a reasonable distance from your school. If possible, arrange a visit to the 'your' National Forest.

If a visit is not possible, consider inviting a Forest Service educator to your classroom. Each National Forest has education programs and resources that may enrich your studies. To locate these resources, visit the National Forest website and call the main number. You will be directed to the right person.



## CREDIT

This activity is adapted with permission from the US Fish and Wildlife Service WildThings '04 - "Bringing Them Back-Recovering Endangered Species" program. Visit the program website at <http://www.wildthingsfws.org/> for more information on this program.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Student Page

## What is a National Forest?

**Group Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Group Members:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You and your group are about to become EXPERTS on a National Forest. The challenge is that you will not be able to visit this forest in order to see the area firsthand. All you have, is what you can find in brochures or on-line.

You will be presenting what you know to your classmates, and you will need to show them exactly what you know! You need to make your classmates believe that you know everything there is to know about this forest.

When speaking to the class, you will be able to use your notes, so use this worksheet to write down information that an expert would know about the forest. The questions listed below will help get you started, but you will find that there are other interesting tidbits of information you want to write down and share with the class to prove to them that you know a lot about this forest.

**1. Basic information**

a. What is the forest's name?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. How long ago was the forest established?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. In what town and state is the forest located? *(Be ready to place a marker on a map to show where the forest is located.)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. What kinds of plants and animals are found on this forest?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. What are three things that make this forest special?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. What activities can people do on this forest?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. What are two reasons this forest should be preserved and protected for future generations?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other information about the forest:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What is a National Forest?