

**Outdoor and environmental studies
Teach Yourself Series**

**Topic 11: Conflicts of interest between people involved in uses
of Outdoor Environments**

SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

Conflicts of interest between people involved in uses of outdoor environments

Humans have a range of uses for outdoor environments that is as diverse as the number of groups who use them. These uses include conservation, recreation, primary industries and tourism: all of which place different demands on outdoor environments. The complex range of relationships people have with outdoor environments combined with the range of interactions leads to conflicts over the use of the environment. Some conflicts occur because people have the perception that man has dominance over nature and our environment is theirs to master and use as they please while others believe that we should have a custodial relationship that involves caring for the land and using it sustainably. When these conflicts occur it is often the responsibility of land managers to negotiate a suitable compromise between the opposing parties. Historically, environmental groups have represented those who believe in a need to protect the environment.

Conflicts of interest between people involved in uses of outdoor environments

As it appears in Unit 4

In any conflict of interest there are groups or individuals who have competing views about the use of the outdoor environment. These views may be completely polarized as in the conflict over the damming of the Franklin River where the Tasmanian Hydroelectric Commission (HEC) and the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) were strongly opposed. The HEC viewed the Franklin River as a resource to be used and it was theirs to do what they wanted with. The Wilderness Society and other groups had a custodial relationship with the land and their view was that it was unique and needed to be protected for future generations. They also argued that there would be greater potential economic benefit from tourism than from the damming. Conflicts may also occur between groups who have similar views over uses but differing needs. For example, fishermen and water-skiers both use the Murray River for recreation but conflicts occur because both groups have different needs.

Where there is a conflict over use of the environment individuals or organisations with similar views work together to promote their point of view with the aim of getting a resolution to the conflict that favours their aim. These groups are called **interest groups**. In the case of the Franklin River conflict the two **interest groups** were the HEC and the TWS. The aim of each group was to convince the umpire or **decision maker**, in this case the Tasmanian Government, that the state would benefit most by agreeing with their point of view. Each interest group used a number of **methods** to get their views heard by the decision maker and anyone else who might be able to help. The decision makers follow **processes** to resolve the conflict in a way that either favours one side or another or a compromise is reached between the two opposing views.

The VCE study design requires two conflicts over the use of an outdoor environment to be studied including at least one from the following list:

- Marine national parks and sanctuaries (Victoria)
 - Victorian National Parks Association (site search Marine National Parks) www.vnpa.org.au
- Franklin River campaign (Tasmania)
 - Australian National Parks – Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park www.australiannationalparks.com/tasmania/franklin/default.htm
- Grazing in the Alpine National Park (Victoria)
 - Mountain Cattlemen’s Association – Cattle Grazing www.cowpad.info/
 - Victorian National Parks Association (site search Alpine Grazing) www.vpna.org.au

- Desalination plant at Wonthaggi (Victoria)
 - o Friends of the Earth Melbourne – Wonthaggi Desalination Plant
www.melbourne.foe.org.au/?q=water/desal

Review Questions

1. Using one of the conflicts listed above answer the following questions. Some websites are listed as starting points for your research but there are many other sources of information that should be used.

a. Identify and briefly describe the environment that is at the centre of the conflict.

b. Name the commercial or other interest group and explain their position regarding the use of the environment (how they think it should be used).

c. Name the environmental interest group and explain their position regarding the use of the environment (how they think it should be used).

2. Outline and explain two arguments that the environmental interest group will use to support their view that this development should not go ahead.

a. Argument 1: _____

b. Argument 2: _____

3. Identify the decision maker in the conflict above and describe the role they played in the resolution of the conflict.

Solutions to Review Questions

1. Answers will vary depending on which conflict is chosen but students should research the conflict thoroughly and be able to clearly describe the outdoor environment involved in the conflict. Some suggestions are given below using the Franklin Dam conflict as an example. These are suggested responses only.
 - a. In the 1980's Franklin River formed part of the Wild Rivers National Park in South West Tasmania. It is a pristine wilderness that contains unique flora and fauna that have been untouched for thousands of years. In the 1970's the Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission proposed to build a dam on that would flood parts of the Franklin and Gordon Rivers thus destroying this fragile and isolated environment.
 - b. The commercial interest group involved in this conflict was the Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission (HEC). Their view was one that the environment was a resource to be used as they saw fit. The HEC wanted to dam the river to produce hydroelectricity and create jobs for the state.
 - c. The environmental interest group was the Tasmanian Wilderness Society and other groups that operated under the name of The South West Alliance. Their view was that this unique and fragile wilderness area should be protected for future generations.
2. There are many arguments for and against each group's position in a conflict. The responses below are only two examples of many possibilities.
 - a. Argument 1 – That the flora and fauna of this area were unique and not found anywhere else in the world. Damming the river would destroy a part of our natural heritage.
 - b. Argument 2 – That preservation of this wild area would create more jobs in the long run than constructing a dam. There were other sites available to build Hydro electricity plants in less environmentally sensitive areas.
3. The initial decision maker in this conflict was the Tasmanian Government. They supported the HEC and allowed the dam construction to go ahead. One process they used to reach this decision was to hold a referendum where Tasmanians could vote on two different dam options. This process was flawed because there was no option on the ballot paper for people to vote for stopping the dam altogether.