



## Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust Activity Guide for Teachers

Activity: Environmental Decision-Making Game

Age range: Grade 10-12

### Supplies:

- Environmental scenario print outs
- Paper
- Pencils

### Instructions:

- For this game, students will be divided into six groups.
- Each group will be given a different scenario on a sheet of paper. Each scenario presents a different environmental challenge based on real issues we experience in the Oak Ridges Moraine.
- The students will take on the roles of different types of environmental decision-makers, including politicians and everyday citizens. They will be given 10-15 minutes to come up with a solution for the environmental challenge they've been given.
- When the time is up, each group will present their issue and their proposed solution to it to the class.
- The teacher will ask questions about how they arrived at their decision, and what potential pitfalls and victories their choices may lead to.

### Environmental Decision-Making Game Scenarios:

(Print out the scenarios and give one to each group of students)

- Scenario 1: You're the head of a conservation authority that manages a popular conservation area called Cedar Lake. It's used by community members for a wide variety of purposes, including camping, hiking, dog walking, birding, swimming, school trips, and picnics. It's also home to a breeding population of Blanding's Turtles, a species at risk. A road cuts through the conservation area with a speed limit of 70km/hr. Each year, several Blanding's Turtles are hit and killed by cars. Their numbers seem to be going down in the park. Each year, several of their nests are dug up and predated by raccoons and skunks. Recently, a visitor informed staff that they saw someone digging up one of the nests. When the staff arrived, all the eggs were gone. The park just received a \$10,000 grant. What do you do with the money to help protect the turtles?

- Scenario 2: You live in a neighbourhood next to a busy road and a ravine. The ravine is full of wildlife, including raccoons, foxes, coyotes, skunks, and a wide variety of birds. Your next-door neighbour has an outdoor cat named Buster. It seems like every week Buster catches and kills some kind of animal, usually a bird. You've explained the problem to your neighbour, but they keep telling you that "it's natural" for cats to kill birds. They tell you that he deserves the right to roam where he wants to and enjoy the outdoors. They believe that indoor cats aren't as happy as outdoor cats. You've had this conversation several times, but your neighbour is firmly entrenched in their beliefs. You keep finding dead animals around the yard. What do you do?
- Scenario 3: You work in a tall office tower in Toronto's financial district. The building is covered in glass windows. It's May, and several mornings when you've arrived at work you've seen dead birds on the sidewalk in front of the building. At night, most of the lights in the building are left on. You've noticed that a few other buildings in the neighbourhood have little dots on the windows to help prevent bird strikes. You ask your manager if you could get something similar at your building, but she tells you that your boss would never support this idea. Your manager tells you that it's too expensive to put them on every window. She insists that there's no law requiring these stickers on the windows. What can you do to help the birds?
- Scenario 4: You're the head of a municipal parks department. One of the most popular parks in your town is called Black Ash Park. Black Ash Park is home to a wide variety of species. This includes birds that nest on the ground like the Wood Thrush and American Woodcock, as well as rare wildflowers like the Yellow Lady's Slipper. It's very popular with hikers and dog walkers. There's a bylaw requiring dogs to be kept on a leash in the park, but pet owners routinely ignore this. There are signs in the park reminding walkers of the leash laws, but they don't appear to be very effective. Dog waste is common throughout the park. Both dogs and hikers have created their own trails off the official trails. These unofficial trails go through protected habitat where people and pets aren't allowed. Invasive species are being spread and vulnerable native vegetation is being trampled and destroyed. Signs asking people to remain on the official trails are similarly ignored. Recently, a dog ran off trail and killed a bird. You have a budget of \$2,500. What do you do to help protect the park?
- Scenario 5: You live in a small town. There's a big old tree in your town that many residents are familiar with. It's a Bur Oak that's about 300 years old. The tree is in the backyard of a private residence. New owners just bought the house. They recently had an arborist come over and mark the tree to be cut. When concern was raised by neighbours, the new occupants insisted that it's their right as a homeowner to cut the tree down. They claim that because it's private property, nobody can stop them. You're not sure if there's a local law to protect trees like this, you've heard different claims from different people. Many members of the community are upset about the situation but aren't sure what to do. What could you do to help protect the tree and prevent it from being cut down?

- Scenario 6: You're the mayor of a small town on a lake. Tourism drives the economy of your town. In the summer, cottagers come to the lake from the GTA. Many of these cottages are worth millions of dollars. A member of a local First Nation is harvesting wild rice from the lake, a culturally important food source. In line with her cultural values about caring for the environment, she's been throwing some of the wild rice into the lake to help new plants grow. Wild rice is a native species that's naturally found in the lake. The wild rice has begun to grow within view of some of the cottages. Cottagers are complaining that it looks ugly, ruins their view, and makes it hard to use their motorboats. They're threatening legal action and want you to put pressure on the First Nation to stop its members from planting wild rice in the lake. The Chief and Council of the First Nation argue that planting and harvesting wild rice is their treaty right. What do you do?

### **Curriculum Connection:**

#### **Grade 10:**

- Academic Science - B. Biology - tissues, organs, and systems of Living things
- Academic Science - D. Earth and Space Sciences - climate change
- Applied Science - D. Earth and Space Sciences - Earth's Dynamic Climate

#### **Grade 11:**

- University Biology - Diversity of Living things
- University Biology - Animals: Structure and Function
- University Biology - Plants: Anatomy, Growth, and Function
- College Biology - Anatomy of Mammals
- College Biology - Plants in the Natural Environment
- University/College - Regional Geography
- University/College - Environmental Science
- Workplace - Environmental Science

#### **Grade 12:**

- University Biology - Population Dynamics
- University/College - The Environment and Resource Management
- Workplace - Living in a Sustainable World
- University - Earth and Space Sciences

**More Resources:**

- [The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust](#)
- [Species at Risk - Government of Ontario](#)
- [Species at Risk - Government of Canada](#)
- [Wild Rice - Anishinabek Agriculture](#)
- [Manoomin \(Wild Rice\) - Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site](#)
- [The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre](#)
- [All About Birds - The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)