

A FILM BY KEN BURNS
THE NATIONAL PARKS
America's Best Idea

THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA'S BEST IDEA
LESSON PLANS

**LOOKING FOR A WINDSHIELD
EXPERIENCE**

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www.pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/

Looking for a Windshield Experience

Overview

Before World War I, the National Park Service managed a haphazard collection of scenic places best accessible by train. After the war, the U.S. auto industry expanded and built cars affordable for the growing middle class. Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, wanted the parks to be one cohesive system reachable by all Americans. He understood that in order for the parks to survive and thrive, they would need to increase park attendance. Mather embarked on a program to encourage visitation by making the parks more accessible for the automobile. The numbers grew and by 1928, park visitation exceeded three million people per year. Mather claimed by giving access to so many people the parks were contributing to the democratization of the country. But not all were enthusiastic with the way the parks were being promoted. Several individuals worried that the parks' scenic beauty and pristine environment would be damaged by the automobile.

In this lesson, students explore the Stephen Mather's policy of encouraging automobile use to and through the park system. They will examine the costs and benefits of this policy. Then they examine a contemporary issue concerning the use of off-road vehicles in the national parks and role-play interested advocacy groups to develop a sound policy for regulating their use.

Objectives

The student will:

- Examine early 20th century methods for increasing visitation in the national parks
- Assess the costs and benefits of providing automobile access to the national parks
- Discuss how the national parks promoted democracy in America
- Understand the various positions regarding the use of off-road vehicles in the national parks
- Examine the costs and benefits of off-road vehicles in the national parks
- Participate in a mock-policy committee to develop policies for use of off-road vehicles in the national parks

Estimated Time

Two class periods plus homework

Materials Needed

- TV/DVD player or computer with overhead projector
- Copies of Students Handouts:
 - Graphic Organizer for video segment, "Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 1"
 - Graphic Organizer for video segment, "Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 2"
 - Building Roads to and through the Parks
 - Article, *Establishing a Policy for ATV and Off-road Vehicle use in the National Parks*
 - Deliberations Procedures
 - Stakeholders' Points of View
 - Negotiation Records
 - Agreement Form

Activity/Procedure:

Day 1: Video Segment Review

This activity sets up the main activity below. Tell students in this activity they will be exploring the efforts of the National Park Service's first director, Stephen Mather, to increase visitation to the parks and further insure their status and existence. Mather understood that since the national parks belonged to the people, park attendance could easily make or break the National Park Service. As he had done with the railroads, Mather partnered with various automobile organizations to make the parks more accessible to the American public.

1. Divide student into pairs to view the first video segment "Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 1" (pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/lesson-plans/#windshield).
2. Distribute the first graphic organizer, **Promoting Greater Access to the Parks** to each pair for students to take notes on the video segment. Stop the video as necessary to allow the student pairs to discuss information on questions 1, 3, and 5.
3. After students have filled out the graphic organizer, debrief this activity with the class by discussing ideas on questions 1, 3, and 5.
4. Review the following questions with the entire class. Write their ideas on the front board under five columns that read ID Problem, Explain Why, Actions Taken, Expected Results, and Possible Problems.
 - a. List Stephen Mather's problem in trying to meet his goal of wanting all Americans to experience the national parks.
 - b. Why is this a problem?
 - c. What actions did Mather and Albright take to address the problem?
 - d. What were the expected results of these actions?
 - e. What were some of the possible negative effects of these actions?
5. Now with students back in their pairs, distribute the second graphic organizer, **Building Roads to and through the Parks**, and show the second video segment "Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 2" (pbs.org/nationalparks/for-educators/lesson-plans/#windshield). Stop the video as necessary to allow the student pairs to discuss information on questions 1 and 4.
6. After students have filled out the graphic organizer, debrief this activity with the class by discussing ideas in questions 1 and 4.
7. Now revisit the problem analysis on the front board and focus specifically on Actions Taken, Expected Results, and Possible Problems.
8. Discuss with students:
 - a. What changes or complications are revealed in this second video segment?
 - b. What are some of the extended problems for Stephen Mather and the national parks that might occur with the emergence of the Wilderness Society?
 - c. What actions could Mather take to address the problem?
9. Tell students that this activity exemplifies the process project planners and policy makers go through to address issues in a very simplified format. In the next activity, students will be looking at a more contemporary concern in the national parks, the use of all-terrain and off road vehicles.
10. Assign for homework the article, *Establishing a Policy for ATV and Off-road Vehicle Use in the National Parks* and the graphic organizer. Explain to students that the next day they will participate in an activity to see what solutions they can find for use of ATV and off-road vehicles in the national parks.

Day 2: Establishing Policy

Tell students in this activity they will be role-playing interested parties who seek to find a workable solution to the issue of ATV and off-road vehicle use in the national parks.

1. Divide students into five groups. Assign the following roles and give each group about five minutes to meet and discuss their findings from last night's reading:
 - Preservationist who wants to keep out all motor vehicles and preserve the park for a walking experience
 - Recreational off-road user who wants access to designated areas of the park
 - National Park Service official who wants to find a policy that works for all parties concerned
 - Local community businessperson who wants to make sure any policy in the near-by park helps the local economy
 - Facilitator who works with the interested parties to arrive at a policy all can agree upon
2. Distribute the **Deliberation Procedures** handout to students and review the procedures and graphic organizers. Answer any questions that come up.
3. Rearrange the students into groups of five making sure that at each of the five roles are represented in the new group.
4. Have each group proceed through the activity to develop their agreements. If time permits, have each group present their options to the entire class.
5. Then have students individually complete the agreement form.
6. After students have completed their agreement form, they should compare their results. How are solutions similar? Different? You might want to tell them how the National Park Service and a coalition of concerned conservation groups settled a 2005 lawsuit regarding the use of ATV and off-road vehicles in the national parks. Summary of the settlement can be found at The National Parks Conservation Association website www.npca.org/media_center/press_releases/2008/orv_052208.html

Assessment Suggestions:

- All graphic organizers can be submitted for assessment.
- Students will individually complete the Agreement Form
- Students who disagree with the policy group's final agreement could write up a paragraph explaining their disagreement with the policy group and suggest a policy they feel is better.

Related Academic Standards

This lesson meets the following curriculum standards set by McREL - Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning:

U.S. History:

- Standard 16: Understands how the rise of corporations, heavy industry, and mechanized farming transformed American society
- Standard 22: Understands how the United States changed between the post-World War I years and the eve of the Great Depression

Historical Understanding:

- Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

Civics:

- Standard 26: Understands issues regarding the proper scope and limits of rights and the relationships among personal, political, and economic rights
- Standard 28: Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals

Language Arts:

- Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
- Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
- Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Geography:

- Standard 4: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
- Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions
- Standard 14: Understands how human actions modify the physical environment

Greg Timmons is a freelance curriculum writer, and educational consultant of web-based and broadcast media materials. After a 30 year career as a social studies teacher in the public schools, he has written and consulted for several national news and educational organizations including FRONTLINE, the NewsHour, History Channel, Colonial Williamsburg, and several Ken Burns series.

Graphic Organizer for “Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 1”

1. Trace Stephen Mather’s thinking of how the national parks had evolved in the quote below.

The first idea of national parks seems to have been that they were stupendous natural spectacles...Then came the great out-of-doors movement and people turned to the national parks as places to live during their vacations ...Lastly comes the realization that our parks are not only show places and vacation lands but also vast school-rooms of Americanism, where people are studying, enjoying, and learning to love more deeply this land in which they live.

List what the national parks are in each of Mather’s three descriptions:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

Discussion Questions:

- From Mather’s last description, discuss what you think he envisioned the national parks would become for the American people?
- What did he see as one of his challenges to encourage Congress to create more parks and support the existing ones?

2. List some of the schemes Mather and Horace Albright devised to attract people to the national parks.

3. The automobile was said to be a bargain with the devil. List the benefits and costs of allowing the automobile into the national parks.

Benefits	Costs

Discussion Question:

- Discuss with your partner whether the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of allowing automobiles into the parks. State your reasons.
4. Stephen Mather was at heart a public relations man, one who knew how to sell an idea. List the organizations Mather joined forces with to lobby for a national park-to-park highway linking all the western parks. Then explain how each partnership would contribute to his goal.

Organization	Contribution
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

Discussion Question:

- Stephen Mather was also a lover of those things American. Discuss with your partner how he saw the national parks promoted democracy in America.

Graphic Organizer for “Looking for a Windshield Experience, Clip 2”

1. In the early 1920s Robert Sterling Yard claimed the parks were unifying the American public. Create a chart from the examples Robert Yard gives in quote below to show the parks were attracting Americans from every part and segment of society.

Already the national parks are beneficently affecting the national mind. . . . Nowhere else do people from all the states mingle in quite the same spirit as they do in their national parks.

One sits at dinner, say, between a Missouri farmer and an Idaho miner, and at supper between a New York artist and an Oregon shop-keeper. One . . . climbs mountains with a chance crowd from Vermont, Louisiana and Texas, and sits around the evening camp fire with a California grape grower, a locomotive engineer from Massachusetts, and a banker from Michigan.

Here, the social differences so insisted on at home just don't exist. Perhaps for the first time, one realizes the common America – and loves it.

. . . In the national parks, all are just Americans.

Occupation	State	Regional part of the country

Discussion Question:

Discuss with your partner how do such observations lend support to the idea that, in the words of Stephen Mather, the parks had become democratized?

2. In 1928, the yearly visitation at the national parks topped 3 million people for the first time. The increased visitation to the national parks was due primarily to the automobile. Describe Stephen Mather’s plan to make the parks even more accessible to the American public.

3. List the developments that were added to the national parks so that they would be more accessible for automobiles.

4. Keeping in mind the original idea behind the national parks was to preserve the scenic beauty of nature, why did some people like Robert Sterling Yard disagree with Mather’s plan to build major roads through the national parks?

Discussion Question:

Discuss with your partner the irony of the National Park Service being confronted by the Wilderness Society for its attempts to increase the numbers of visitors.

Establishing a Policy for ATV and Off-road Vehicle use in the National Parks

Since its inception in the early 1900s, the dual mission of the National Park Service is to preserve the natural wonders in the United States and make those natural wonders accessible for all Americans. It was Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, who took that mission and turned it into a noble cause. Recognizing that the survival of the parks depended on with will of Congress, he felt that, in the spirit of democracy, the American people would be the best advocates for the parks. He and many others like him believed that if Americans experienced the parks themselves, they would favor government support for them. To that end, Mather enticed visitors to the parks first with the help of the railroads and later with the help of the automobile.

Today, the mission of the parks is still to preserve America's natural wonders and make them accessible to the public. The future of the parks is dependent on the support of Congress and ultimately, American citizens. The National Park Service has much more "competition" for Americans' leisure time now than it did in the early 20th century. Amusement parks, wild environment experiences, and wilderness areas all compete for Americans' attention. When groups of citizens find new uses for the parks, the National Park Service is open to new ideas for enhancing Americans' enjoyment of the parks, but the proposed uses have to be evaluated against the park service's mission, the limits of its resources, and the interests of all Americans.

In recent years, the National Park Service has had to consider whether to allow off road and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) access to the parks. This also includes water craft such as pleasure boats and jet-skis on national parks' lakes and rivers and aircraft such as charter planes flying over Grand Canyon or private ultra-lights. The Park Service has stated that it is willing to accommodate any new policy change to increase use of the parks. However, new policies create difficulty for the parks to enforce rules and regulations with declining funding and lack of adequate staff. To address this issue the parks service has set up a series of policy deliberations to allow all groups to voice their views on what policy would be best for all parties and the national parks.

Deliberations Procedures

You represent members of your constituency that is interested in developing a resolution for ATV and off-road vehicle use in the national parks. You will meet with other representatives of constituent groups who want to find a workable resolution, but have different views and perspectives than you. Use the following procedure to guide your efforts.

The group's goal is to answer this question: *What is the policy to protect the national parks while continuing to allow ATV and off-road vehicle use?*

1. Opening Statements

Each person (except the facilitator) will make an opening presentation, not longer than one minute. Use the notes you took from the reading to formulate your point of view. Your statement should answer the questions: *What group do I represent? What policy would I like to see enacted?*

After your statement, write a one-sentence summary of your point of view on the chart called **Stakeholders' Points of View** (next page). Do the same for the other groups on the chart

The facilitator keeps track of time and moves from one presenter to the next.

2. Statement of Premises

Think about each person's opening statement. Be able to summarize their position and concerns. What are the common assumptions your group as with any of the others? List them on the **Negotiations Records** chart. One assumption is already listed on the recording chart to get you started.

3. Identifying Options

From the **Negotiations Records** chart, the group makes a list of options for how to deal with overcrowding. The facilitator asks the group: "Based on the information in the chart, what are our options for dealing with ATV and off-road vehicles in the parks?" Make a list of options in the left-hand column of the **Pros and Cons** chart. Come up with five options. (You may find you have more, but it will be difficult to have enough time to explore more than five.)

4. Evaluating Options

The facilitator says, "Let's look at Option 1. What are the benefits of Option 1?" The facilitator lists them on the chart. "What are the drawbacks?" Have all students list them on their chart.

The group moves through all five options in this manner, making notes of pros and cons on the **Negotiations Records** chart.

5. Deciding on the Best Option

The group studies the chart. The facilitator asks: "Which options have the most benefits? Which have the fewest drawbacks?" He or she circles those options. Then the facilitator asks: "Is one option clearly superior to the others?" If not, each group member should have a chance to state which option he or she favors and why. Does one option appear to be the best one now?

6. Completing the Agreement Form

On your own, complete the Agreement Form in class, if there is time or as homework if there isn't.

Stakeholders' Points of View

Who	Point of View
Preservationist	
Representative of the tourism industry	
Park Service employee	
Park Visitor	

Negotiation Records

Common Assumptions

1. The natural resources at the national parks must be protected for the enjoyment of all.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Pros and Cons

Option	Pros	Cons
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Agreement Form

(Fill in names and roles here of those who are participating in this agreement):

I. Background

We are studying the issue of off-road vehicles in the national parks. We understand that the parks are facing the following problems:

II. Premises

We have reached the following basic understandings, and have based our conversations on them. (e.g. parks must be protected.) List at least four.

III. Possible Solutions

We have discussed the following 5 possible solutions.

IV. Solution on which all parties agree:

We have agreed on the following solution to the problems stated above. (Explain why you believe it is the best option.)
