

Role Playing Game on Wetlands RPG-Step 1: Introduction

Activity: Brainstorming/ Introduction to wetlands

Estimated duration: 30'

Material: Blackboard, chalk or marker, big pieces of carton

Goal: To provoke thought and any existing knowledge students may have, exchange of information, entertainment.

Description of the activities

- Ask the students to say the first thing they can think of when they hear the word 'wetland' and note the answers on the blackboard¹.
- Ask in particular, their personal experience of wetlands (from TV? Newspaper articles? Books? Visits to wetlands? Parents or family members that work close to wetlands?)
- Other questions you can use:

- According to you what are the advantages of a place situated next to a big lake?
- Why do you think wetlands are considered as one of the most important ecosystems?
- How many types of wetlands do you know (i.e. rivers, lakes, bogs etc)?

- Write the key words mentioned by the students on the board and then ask them to cluster them in wider categories for example: environmental importance, benefits and disadvantages of wetlands to humans etc. Write the categories on the table and choose the most suitable ones² (Look at Table 1 for inspiration)

ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE	HUMAN ACTIVITIES	PROBLEMS
Water Water-birds Biodiversity Floods Fish	Fishing Hunting Bird-watching Walking Farming Houses	Pollution Garbage Climate change

Example 1: *Potential categories and the words linked to them.*

- Once this process is complete, ask the students how each category is related (or not) to each other. For example how are human activities related to problems in the wetlands and how does this affect their environmental value? (see Table 2)

¹ Alternatively, each student can be given a post-it note and asked to write the ten first words that come to mind. The students then stick the post-it notes on the board or wall.

² If the same word fits into many categories, repeat it under each one. The wider categories must be flexible to fit as many of the key words as possible.

1. People *fish* in the wetlands because there are many *fish*. If we keep *polluting* them then there will be no *fish* left and *biodiversity* will be reduced.
2. If there is less *garbage* and less *pollution*, people will be more willing to *walk fish* and *hunt* in wetlands.

Example 2: *Potential sentences that can be made by the students using words from many categories.*

- Ask students to write questions on a piece of paper (see table 3). These questions will then be posed by the students to the experts (Step 2) and will be used as research topics before the field visit (Step 3).

What are the main sources of pollution in wetlands?
Why are wetlands important for biodiversity?
Why are wetlands important for humans?
What role do wetlands play in the water cycle?
How do wetlands protect us against floods?

Example 3: *Potential questions students may have*

- At the end of this step the teacher should present the definition of wetlands accepted by the 164 countries that have signed the Ramsar Convention. The objective is to show students the diversity of wetlands.
- Explain to the students that MedWet means Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative and is the first Regional Initiative of the Ramsar Convention.

Role Playing Game on Wetlands RPG-Step 2: Visit from the expert³

Activity: Visit by a representative of the NGO and/or other experts

Estimated duration: 45'

Material: power point presentation on wetlands, projector

Goal: (A) To inform students on the values and functions of wetlands, the problems/challenges and stakeholders using a local wetland as an example.

(B) Prepare the students for the field visit.

Description of the activity

The invited expert (preferably the NGO representative) introduces him/herself and describes to the students what an NGO is, what is its role in environmental conservation and protection while at the same time prompting the students to think about other groups of people (stakeholders) related directly and indirectly to the wetlands.

After a short discussion the NGO representative can present the Power point. After that there should be a question and answer session which can possibly include the questions identified in Activity 2 also. Finally the NGO representative informs the students about what they will see/do during the visit to the wetlands and asks them what they would like to see to better prepare for the visit. The aim is to begin a discussion around wetlands as well as to increase their knowledge. The students should by now know the functions of wetlands, information on the physical environment of their local wetland, the stakeholders and relevant issues.

After this visit the teacher and the NGO representative(s) must prepare the field visit and identify important stakeholders, willing to present their views to the students as well as prepare the logistics of the field visit.

Additionally, the teacher can prepare the students by assigning them with topics related to the wetland they will visit (Geography, fauna/flora, cultural value, human activities etc). The NGO representative(s) should assist the teacher in finding these topics that are appropriate and general enough for the students.

³ If you time is limited the you can skip this step and combine it with step 1 where the teacher will make the presentation on wetlands or with step 3 where the NGO representative can make the presentation during the field visit.

Role Playing Game on Wetlands RPG-Step 3: Field Visit

Activity: Field visit in a wetland and discussion with stakeholders

Estimated duration: to be defined (one or more visits, depending on the time, budget etc)

Material: Ask students to wear good shoes, long trousers, bring a mosquito repellent if necessary and water/food for the field visit

Goal: To give students a hands-on experience of a wetland and its users, allow them to understand the importance of wetlands and the challenges (presented in Step 1 and 2) in real life.

Description of the activity

The field visit aims for students to see a wetland in real life and to talk with various stakeholders for example the wetland manager if there is one, a person that works in an NGO, a scientist, farmer, fisherman etc.)

If there is a possibility for the students to be involved in some kind of scientific activity like bird watching, observing and identifying the flora, measuring the salinity or water quality it is recommended. Talking to any/some stakeholders and getting their point of view is also an important part of the field visit

The students should be encouraged to take notes during the field visit and their discussion with stakeholders. They should also take pictures, at the minimum having one hand held camera for the whole class is sufficient.

Once the students are back in the classroom they can make a discussion on some questions (look below for examples). These questions aim to relate their field experience with the discussions and points raised during Steps 1 and 2

- What made an impression on me?
- If I was asked to summarize the visit in one sentence what would that be?
- How are the categories identified in Step 1 relevant to the field visit and how?
- Did we see or hear something that is different to what we thought or had discussed before the field visit?
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Role Playing Game on Wetlands RPG-Step 4: Research

Activity: Research

Estimated duration: 45'

Material: articles from newspapers or internet, pen, paper

Goal: To give students a better-rounded and more profound understanding of wetlands, their functions and their problems.

Description of the activity

Choose topics that were identified as important during the field visit or the discussions with the stakeholders (i.e. ecotourism, pollution, pesticides, success stories etc). The choice of topics can be made either by the teacher or the students.

According to the level of the class, the teacher may bring photocopies of various articles on the same topic and distribute them to the groups of students or the students themselves can bring relevant articles by using the school library or the internet. Give the same topic to 2 or 4 students who will later need to work in a group⁴.

- Each student (or sub-group depending on the size of the class) must read the article they have and note on a piece of paper the central idea/argument of the article, their impressions and the questions it raises.
- Then, the students (or sub-group) that have worked on the same topic must find each other and work together by exchanging information on their common topic.
- Each student in the group (or each subgroup) that had the same topic must present the conclusions and central arguments to the rest of the class, so that everyone hears information on all the articles.

⁴ Depending on the size of the class, each topic may be given to students individually or to small groups of students that will then form a bigger group.

Role Playing Game on Wetlands

RPG-Step 5: Process of the Role Playing Game

Activity: Role playing Game

Estimated duration: Depends on the time available- the RPG should be finished preferably in two days but can be shortened to take only one day with a minimum of 1:45 for Phase A and 1:30 for Phase B.

Material: empty sheets of paper, pens, a video or photo camera to document the game, power point presentation on wetlands, projector, some tracing paper to overlay on the map and a copy of the map for each subgroup.

Goal: To understand the notion of dialogue- crucial for successful environmental management and for reinforcing collaboration. More specifically, to introduce students to their roles (assigned or chosen), to discuss with other stakeholders and to understand the multitude of interests present in all environmental problems.

History: *A wetland site is claimed by many stakeholders (see map 1); in order to make sure that all stakeholders are represented in the decision making process, the Local Authorities assisted by the experts, have decided to create a management meeting, involving all the stakeholders- (see Role Cards). The aim of the management meeting (and the game) is to find the best possible scenarios for the management of the wetland and its resources while assuring that all stakeholders have been heard and have agreed in a common strategy.*

Phase A- Preparation and presentation of the stakeholder sub groups

Estimated time: 1:30

1. Presentation or reading the scenario

Estimated time: 15'

Material: projector or copy of the scenario for each student

Goal: Explain the scenario of the RPG by setting the scene in terms of geography, stakeholders and demands on the wetlands.

- The teacher presents the scenario either through the PowerPoint presentation (if a projector and PC are available) or by distributing a copy to each student. Read it page by page and explain if necessary.

2. Stakeholder subgroups

Estimated time: 45'

Material: copies of the role cards; copies of the worksheets for all the roles.

Goal: Prepare the students to play their role and to discuss and negotiate the point of view of each stakeholder/role.

- Divide the students into groups depending on the size of the class. Bear in mind that there are 8 roles, 6 are direct users of wetland resources (fisherman, farmer, stockbreeder, industrialist, residents and developer) and 2 are institutional stakeholders (NGO and experts).

- The students may be assigned their roles at random or they may choose themselves. Make sure that the number of students in each group is as equal as possible.
- Once the students are put in their groups, make sure everyone has their role card and the worksheet they will need for the debate.
- Ask each group to carefully read their role card and to discuss their role based on the worksheet.
- The teacher must supervise each group and make sure that the students have understood their role. Each group should designate one or two students as their representatives in the management meeting.

3. Presentation the position of each stakeholder

Estimated time: 45' (5' per role, 5' for the introduction)

Material: 5' presentation

Goal: Present each stakeholder, their situation and demands to the whole class.

- The teacher represents the Local Authorities. He/she will explain the reason why the management meeting is being held and what the process will be. *The Local Authorities have organized this management meeting in order to find a commonly accepted solution for the management of the shared, local wetland.* The 'expert' will briefly remind the management meeting the functions and values of the wetlands.
- Each stakeholder representative will present their case (situation, problems, future plans) and each member of the meeting has the right to pose questions, to intervene and ask for clarifications. Each presentation last approximately 3' and the 2' for questions.
- The experts are responsible for the facilitation of the meeting and their job is to emphasize the environmental and social impacts of each activity mentioned (they can use their Environmental Impact Table for assistance).
- The students should be taking notes on the main arguments of their role and of others, as well as ideas or questions that come to their mind during the presentations.

Phase B- Dialogue

Estimated time: 1:30

1. Discussion in mixed groups

Estimated time: 45'

Material: pen and paper

Goal: To create mini-management meeting groups in order to start the dialogue between the different stakeholders on the best strategy for using the resources of this shared wetland.

- a) Create new subgroups which mix the students that play the roles of the different stakeholders. In a class of 28 students, 3 or 4 groups should be created where there is minimum one representative of each role (at the minimum one farmer, one fisherman, one industrialist, one developer, one NGO representative, one expert and one stockbreeder). The point of this exercise is to create smaller management groups so that all students can participate in the dialogue, so each subgroup is a representation of the management meeting.
- b) Each management meeting discuss in detail the demands and propositions of each stakeholder. The propositions discussed can be put up for a vote one after the other. The experts are responsible for noting down these propositions. Each student has one vote, either positive or negative. The experts must gather the propositions that were voted for into a quick management plan and see whether there are any conflicting propositions. If there are none then write down the propositions and demonstrate the plan on the map.
 - *If two conflicting propositions were voted for (i.e. the farmer and stockbreeder both expand in the same location) there are two steps to be followed. Initially, the two stakeholders can discuss between them and see if they can agree on a common solution.*
 - *If not, the other members of the management meeting have to vote again between the two propositions. The two stakeholders have two minute to present their case and try to convince the other members to vote for them.*

2. Presentation of the different management scenarios and final vote.

Estimated time: 45'

Material: pen, paper, transparent paper

Goal: To present the conclusions of each mini-management meeting groups and find the best ideas.

- Each mini-management meeting group must select one or two representatives who will present their management plan of the wetland in front of the class. Once all the management plans have been presented the class must discuss the similarities and difference of the plans presented and vote for the best scenario (or mix the best parts of each management plan)
- Take a transparent sheet and show on the map how the wetland can be managed.
- Link the RPG to the actual wetlands that was visited.

Role Playing Game on Wetlands
RPG-Step 6: Create a game based on your local wetland

Activity: Create a game and a map based on your local wetland

Estimated duration: 60'

Material: large pieces of paper- any paper, colored pencils or pens, scotch tape, camera or video camera to film the procedure if possible, some slides may be helpful. Bring a map of the wetland to help students see how it looks.

Goal: To make a synthesis of all the previous steps and activities and create a new game adapted to their local wetland.

Description of the activity

1. Divide the students into small groups of 3-4 students
2. Ask the students to make a map- inspired by the one used during the RPG in Step 5- which illustrates their local wetlands (which they visited during their field trip). Ask them to situate if possible the stakeholders and to quickly describe their situations, objectives and challenges on the paper. These papers will become the role cards for each of the stakeholders in the new game.
3. Get together the whole class and present the maps and role cards of each group, ask the class to decide which map-or which elements of which map they prefer- and decide also which role cards they want to keep. The important part of this activity is to relate the experience to the local wetland and to understand the problems faced there.
4. Congratulations, you have just created your own RPG. The map and role cards represent how the students view the wetland, their problems and stakeholders.