

LESSON 4

SAVING OUR STURGEON

Activity 1: Who Speaks for the Sturgeon?

Students take on different roles related to sturgeon conservation and evaluate policy related to sturgeon population management.

Activity Preparation

Pre-Reading

In “Saving Our Sturgeon,” have students read Chapter 3: Whose Fish Are They, Anyway? p. 24–37 and Chapter 6: Name and Nama’o p. 59–71.

Key Vocabulary

Congress: the legislative branch of the US government, divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Legislature: an assembly with the legal authority to make laws.

Shareholder: a person or organization who has interest or investment in a cause.

Superintendent: a person in charge of overseeing an organization.

Treaty rights: the rights in legally binding agreements made between sovereign powers—in this case, between Native nations and the United States.

Files Needed

- Group Name Tags
- Who Speaks for the Sturgeon? Pre-Activity (handout)
- Who Speaks for the Sturgeon? Group Presentation (handout)

Objectives

After participating in this activity, students can:

Compare and contrast the roles and perspectives of various professionals who are involved in setting policy related to sturgeon populations.

Evaluate sturgeon population management from multiple perspectives and assess how perspectives affect outcomes.

Analyze and evaluate a speaker’s argument, considering the logic of the reasoning; the relevance, accuracy, and sufficiency of the evidence; and potential bias and irrelevant information.

Understand the role of cultural and science-based evidence in evaluating sustainability.

Wisconsin Academic Standards

Covered

English Language Arts

SL.6.3, SL.6.4, SL.7.1.d, SL.7.3, SL.7.4, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d, SL.8.3, SL.8.4

Covered

Environmental Literacy and Sustainability

ELS.EX3.A.m and ELS.EN6.B.m

Covered

Science

SCI.ETS2.B.m

Great Lakes Literacy Principles

Principle 6

The Great Lakes and humans in their watersheds are inextricably interconnected.

Principle 8

The Great Lakes are socially, economically, and environmentally significant to the region, the nation and the planet.

Activity Steps

Preparation

This activity requires four groups: Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (WDNR) scientists, non-profit Sturgeon for Tomorrow members, fishers, and tribal scientists. The tribal scientists can be grouped with the WDNR scientists, or not, for a total of three to four groups, depending upon class size.

1. To prepare for the activity, review the information about treaty rights shared in the book. Two Wisconsin Native nations described in the book have cultural connections to the lake sturgeon: the Ojibwe and the Menominee. The treaty rights for the Ojibwe include the right to hunt, fish, and gather off-reservation. The Menominee people do not have these treaty rights.
2. Split up your learners by assigning each student a number 1-4 to create even groups. Have each student complete the "Who Speaks for the Sturgeon? Pre-Activity" handout for their assigned group.

Background information about treaty rights

- If you want to learn more about treaty rights for the Ojibwe people, research treaty rights on the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission's website. <https://glifwc.org/exercising-treaty-rights>
- They offer a great graphic for display in classrooms. <https://glifwc.org/education-outreach/store/essentials-posters/timeline-anishinaabe-treaty-rights-northern-great-lakes>
- To learn more about the Menominee Tribe and lake sturgeon, the People of the Sturgeon StoryMap has a great summary. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cdcf2518e14d488fada5e18f94dbfd71>
- For a more detailed review, the "People of the Sturgeon" book is a great resource. <https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/people-of-the-sturgeon-wisconsins-love-affair-with-an-ancient-fish-paperback-edition-3>
- Brandeis University has a great summary video of lake sturgeon conservation and tribal nations. <https://www.brandeis.edu/mandel-center-humanities/lectures-videos.html>

On the day of the activity

1. Pass out "Who Speaks for the Sturgeon?" handout.
2. Break into groups and give the students five to ten minutes to talk about their new identities and roles in sturgeon conservation. Part of the discussion will be to create an agreement on group values, concerns, and beliefs.
3. Come back together as a whole group and share this background information with the students. The spearing season on Lake Winnebago opens in February. The WDNR needs to set harvest limits for the season in order to make available the spearing license application. Fish census data from previous years show that the sturgeon population is doing well and harvest limits are being considered. It is the students' challenge to take a position on raising or lowering the harvest limits from last year.
4. Break back into groups and have each group choose a notetaker and spokesperson. Allow five minutes to discuss initial thoughts. Some questions students may ask (and include in the group presentation handout) include:
 - a. Do they have enough information to set harvest limits?
 - b. Discuss why or why not harvest limits catch size and age of fish should be raised or lowered.
 - c. What other questions should be considered?

5. Allow up to 15 minutes for the groups to craft a three-minute speech for the spokesperson to share during the upcoming public hearing. Inform students that rather than selecting a single speech that was written for their individual homework assignments, they should combine elements from all of the speeches to create a new group speech. Craft a speech that a person in your role might share at a public forum that:
 - a. clearly states your position on the matter.
 - b. provides factual information related to your position/perspective on the matter.
 - c. provides an emotional, cultural, historical, or other reason for your position on the matter.
 - d. anticipates what other groups' positions might be and attempts to refute their positions.
 - e. summarizes your views and attempts to persuade others to your perspective.
6. Reconvene and conduct a public forum. Give each spokesperson three minutes to present their group's thoughts and their final decisions. Allow groups to pose questions to other groups in a round-robin style format.
7. Take a whole class vote to either:
 - a. Option A. Raise harvest setting limits
 - b. Option B. Lower harvest limits.
 - c. Option C. Keep the levels the same.
8. Have students discuss as a class whether they feel the values, concerns, and goals of each role has been considered.