



N C S R News

Northwest Center for Sustainable Resources

Current Events – A New Use of an Old Strategy by Lester W. Reed, Jr., PhD

Most all of us can recall our schooldays experience with “Current Topics”. Find something in the local newspaper, cut it out, and tell the class about it. Often it was fun and helped us be in tune with what was happening now, not years ago as reflected in our textbooks.

Well, that old strategy has a place in teaching today and not only at the K-12 level but in college courses as well. In natural resource subjects the use of “Current Events” is a way of covering topics that are the news of the minute without extensive modification of the curriculum materials. It also engages students and focuses them on an actual issue within the myriad of topics that can envelop the field. The topics can range from local issues such as preservation of park lands, broader issues such as state wildlife management plans, regional issues including reestablishing gray wolf populations, to national or global issues such as forest management policy or climate change. However, care must be taken to limit the topic to a manageable size, therefore, national or global issues normally are less desirable than local or state-wide issues. The use of current events in courses can also help meet sub-objectives such as honing writing or speaking skills,

strengthening research and analytical abilities, and sharpening teambuilding skills (if used as group project).

The key approach to using this strategy is:

- Include it as an assigned task independent of the normal course materials
- Focus the selection on recently covered topics (no longer than an month ago) in the local newspaper
- Provide process guidelines as a student handout that specify the approach to be used (e.g., independent or team effort, data to be gathered and analyzed, and reporting method)
- Sharing of information either in oral reports or by providing the class with copies of the report

A report format that has proven effective for reporting results contains:

- Topic to be researched (Original source to be attached to report)
- Brief description of the topic
- What will be the focus of the research/question
- The findings
- A succinct conclusion
- List of reference and or sources



Summer 2007: Fire Ecology Institute

This institute will feature a week-long classroom and field experience related to the role of fire in forest ecosystems. With emphasis on “the science behind wildfire issues”, it will assist college faculty in integrating this information into their courses. Participants will receive lodging and meals during the institute and will be paid a stipend for attending.

To receive information on this activity please contact NCSR by [clicking here](#).

Authors Note

The focus of this exercise is to find a current topic in the popular media, preferably a local newspaper, and then research the issue and present the results of the research effort. If the instructional strategy is to evaluate the potential bias or veracity of an article, faculty should review and adapt the process provided in the NCSR module *Evaluation of Media Coverage of an Environmental Issue* available at www.ncsr.org.

NCSR News











New Modules and Guides Available

Visit www.ncsr.org to see the new NCSR instructional modules and educational guides listed below:

- **Town Meeting: An Approach to Exploring Environmental Issues** – A case study approach in a “town meeting” format for evaluation of a complex environmental issue.
- **Evaluating Human Impacts** - Activities to evaluate human impacts on the environment using several different approaches and resources.
- **Forest Regeneration – An Evaluation of Seedling Mortality, Growth and Stand Development** - A field-based laboratory that evaluates tree seedling growth and mortality and stand development as part of a reforestation project.
- **Willamette Valley Land Use Change** - Students examine various images and prepare a detailed analysis of land use changes.
- **The Impact of Land Use on Water Quality – a Watershed Evaluation from Canoes:** This module provides information on conducting a multiple session classroom, laboratory, and field-based experience to determine the impact of non-point sources of pollution on watersheds.
- **Evaluation of Media Coverage of an Environmental Issue-** This module provides students with some skills and practice in evaluating claims made in written accounts of environmental issues.
- **A Toolbox for Curriculum Documentation and Testing** - Contains detailed strategies for documenting curriculum products and protocols for testing curriculum products.
- **Imaging Technology Using Google Earth and NASA World Wind** - Provides information and instructions on access to and manipulation of high resolution remote sensing imagery.
- **Natural Resource Education Student Outreach and Recruiting Presentation** - This guide provides a PowerPoint presentation with accompanying notes designed to advise students about natural resource employment opportunities and education requirements.
- **Student Questionnaire - Science as a Process** – An instrument to assist in determining student knowledge of the scientific process.

NCSR News Critter by Valisa Brown

As you may have noticed, every issue of the NCSR News has had a little ladybug moving about the pages from issue to issue. I have decided it's time to choose a new critter friend for the newsletter. I have left the ladybug in this issue for reference. Please help me by sending me an email with your favorite pick. The critter with the most votes will be the new newsletter critter friend for the next few issues. Thank you for your help with such a difficult decision and very important part of the NCSR News. ncsradm@chemeketa.edu

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|---|--|---|--|
| 1. FROG.1  | 3. DRAGONFLY.1  | 5. DRAGONFLY.3  | 7. SNAIL  |
| 2. FROG.2  | 4. DRAGONFLY.2  | 6. DRAGONFLY.4  | 8. CATERPILLAR  |

HOT TOPICS

In the rapidly changing fields of natural resources and environmental science faculty face the challenge of keeping their curriculum updated. One approach is to integrate an instructional unit designed to address newly developing topics or new data on previous topics. NCSR's *HOT TOPICS* feature will highlight these topics and provide some links to supporting information and discussion concerning the issues raised about the topic.

Hurricanes and Global Warming

After the 2005 storm season the impact of global warming on hurricane frequency and strength has generated a great deal of discussion. This topic can provide vehicle for examining opinions pro and con and analysis of the scientific information behind these opinions. Among the many on-line references are:

www.pewclimate.org/hurricanes.cfm

Pew Center on Global Climate Change site provides information on the question "Is there a connection between the recent severe weather events and global warming?"

www.livescience.com/forcesofnature/ap_050731_hurricanes_stronger.html

Site reports an analysis by climatologist Kerry Emanuel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the connection between global warming and hurricanes increased intensity. This research suggests that global warming is not generating more hurricanes and typhoons.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/07/060728-hurricane-warming.html>

This National Geographic article presents data that rebuts a string of papers published in the last 12 months that link global warming with a surge in the number of extreme tropical cyclones over the past 30 to 40 years.

www.realclimate.org/index.php?p=173

Site reports varied climatologist data and conclusions between global warming and storms. It includes a report of a recent model study on how storm statistics can be affected by global warming

Pacific Dead Zone

A hypoxic "dead zone" has formed off the Oregon Coast for the fifth time in five years, according to researchers at Oregon State University. This years' zone is the largest ever observed. The result is a massive suffocating of a wide range of fish, crabs, and other marine life.

www.livescience.com/environment/ap_060727_dead_zone.html

Provides a summary newspaper story of the dead zone phenomenon.

www.physorg.com/news74532802.html

Reports information on cause and impact of the dead zone.

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ncs/newsarch/2006/Aug06/dieoff.html>

Discusses OSU involvement with dead zone studies.

www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2006-07/osu-mz072606.php

Reports information about the dead zone provided by OSU researcher Jane Lubchenco.

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/MediaAlerts/2006/2006072722733.html>

NASA report of dead zone data/information.

http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/products/pubs_hypox.html

NOAA assessment of low oxygen levels in the Gulf of Mexico.

<http://enn.com/today.html?id=10948>

Article contends dead zone is due to global warming.

continued on page 4...



HOT TOPICS, continued from page 3

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Monument

Established in June 2006 the monument, at 140,000 square miles, is the largest Marine protected Area in the world. The monument supports 7,000 species, one quarter of which are exclusively native to the area. The establishment of the monument provides students the opportunity to explore the potential impact on species recovery and preservation and protection of biodiversity. Issues of how the area will be used protected and how it will be used are also topics that can be explored. Although there limited access to specific plans for the monument the references below provides some information that can assist in the evaluation of the impact of the monument.

www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060615-6.html

Site contains the official proclamations establishing the monument and a link to an accompanying fact sheet.

inouye.senate.gov/06pr/20060713pr01.html

Announcement of initial approval of research dollars to be directed toward research in the monument.

www.oceanconservancy.org/site/PageServer?pagename=press_nwhi

Provides links to information about the monument including background material and highlights how the new designation of Hawaiian waters stirs controversy, since commercial fishing will be limited.

www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2006/aug06/noaa06-r479.html

Federal agencies charged with managing the monument today published regulations in the *Federal Register* codifying the management measures and prohibitions.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and Oil

Although Congressional approval to open ANWR to oil exploration has been narrowly defeated, the debate continues. Recent pipeline failures at the Prudhoe Bay field are sure to intensify this debate. The situation provides students with an excellent opportunity to try to discover the facts behind the rhetoric and reach an "informed opinion" on the issue.

www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/data/2001/08/01/html/ft_20010801.3.html

Rich in caribou and in oil, exploration of Alaska's coastal plain is a hot topic in the nation's energy debate. A summary from National Geographic's point of view of the background of the current debate

www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/servicrpt/ogp/index.html

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) 2004 report of their analysis of oil and gas production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4542853/

A news report of the findings of a DOE analysis of the impact of ANWR's oil reserves on the U.S. market.

www.anwr.org/topten.htm

This site provides the rationale for supporting efforts to open the ANWR to exploration and drilling.

<http://ncseonline.org/NLE/CRSreports/06feb/RS21030.pdf>

A report on the potential availability of oil in ANWR.

Feedback Needed

We need your feedback to help us make the NCSR Newsletter meet its goal of providing natural resource faculty and professionals with interesting and relevant information. Please complete the brief survey by [clicking here](#). Your opinion will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

NCSR Staff

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