Post Service-Learning Experience Resource Module
Topic: Environment and Sustainable Communities

DISCUSSION

1. How did your service experience inform or alter your views on the environment and the development of sustainable communities?
2. How does what you eat and use impact the environment? What can you do about this?
3. Think about your city or neighborhood environment. Does your local government recycle or run any other environmental programs? What industries are there? How do people get to work and school? Do you have parks or other green outdoor areas? How clean would you say the water and air are, and why?
4. What does a sustainable community look like to you? What does it require?

PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS AND PERIODICAL ARTICLES

1990 Clean Air Act (Plain English Guide)
Provides a brief introduction to the 1990 Clean Air Act, which is the most recent version of a law first passed in 1970 to clean up air pollution. This summary covers some of the important provisions of the 1990 Clean Air Act.
http://www.epa.gov/air/peg/index.html

Definition of Sustainable Communities by the National Resources Defense Council
http://www.nrdc.org/sustainable-communities/default.asp

Article – “Planet Earth Takes Center Stage”
This article outlines the history and legacy of the environment movement.

Article – “Is Your Lunch Causing Global Warming?”
http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f011810_food

Video – “Yes, the Climate is Changing”
People around the world show how climate change is already affecting their lives.
http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/connect-the-dots-on-climate-change

Video – TED Talk – Birke Baehr “What’s Wrong With Our Food System?”
This five-minute video features 11-year-old Birke Baehr who presents his take on a major source of our food -- far-away and less-than-pictureque industrial farms. He discusses how our food is made, where it comes from, and what's in it.
http://www.ted.com/talks/birke_baehr_what_s_wrong_with_our_food_system.html
ACTIVITIES
1. Show students the 5-minute TED Talk by Birke Baehr. Follow this with the “Understanding our Food Systems” lesson in Ecological Justice: A Call to Action. This lesson uncovers the roots of our food system and help students understand the ecological/social crisis of our current food and farming system. It also illustrates the relationship between racial, economic, and ecological justice through the example of food and agriculture. Download less here: http://www.movementgeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Food-Systems.pdf

2. Read the article, “Planet Earth Takes Center Stage” and pose the following questions to students:
   • The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created in 1970. What environmental issues existed in the U.S. prior to 1970, and what caused them?
   • How has the nation’s environment changed, for better or worse, in the 40+ years since?
   • Why was the E.P.A. created? What does it regulate and protect?
   • Why did Americans pay little attention to the environment prior to the 1970s? What were some of the results of the landmark environmental laws passed by Congress?
   • What problems have yet to be addressed?
   • What is NEPA? How does it encourage interaction between citizens and the government?

3. Ask students to create a series of public-service announcement skits or posters that encourage peers to be environmentally conscious. They should use slogans, facts, and images to drive home their ideas.

4. Debate: Do laws protecting the environment and addressing climate change warrant a sense of urgency or do other issues demand more attention and resources?

5. Debate: Should the government enforce stricter environmental regulations, even if they will make U.S. businesses less competitive with companies in less environmentally conscious countries?


CHICAGO CONNECTIONS
The following is a selection of advocacy organizations in Chicago whose work directly addresses issues related to environment and creating sustainable communities.

Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT)
Founded in 1978, the Center for Neighborhood Technology has been a leader in promoting more livable and sustainable urban communities. In fact, our work focused on sustainable development before the term became as popular as it is today. As a creative think-and-do-tank, we research, invent, and test urban strategies that use resources more efficiently and more equitably.
http://www.cnt.org/

Chicagoland Environmental Network
The Chicagoland Environmental Network (CEN), a group of more than 200 environmental and natural resource organizations, can get you connected. This is an excellent clearinghouse of resources and organizations. CEN is a resource for anyone interested in nature or conservation-related activities in
northeastern Illinois and surrounding areas. CEN organizations are involved in important work, including habitat restoration; wetland, prairie, and watershed projects; urban gardening; energy conservation; composting, wildlife conservation; and recycling.
http://www.chicagoenvironment.org/

Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance is a nonprofit organization that seeks to strengthen community through the combination of the Garfield Park Conservatory Campus and the engagement of community members. The Alliance enhances the environmental, social and economic vitality of Chicago’s West Side and encourages the large community to explore the fundamental connection between plants and human life.
http://www.garfield-conservatory.org/

Growing Home
Growing Home’s mission is to operate, promote, and demonstrate the use of organic agriculture as a vehicle for job training, employment, and community development.
http://growinghomeinc.org/

Openlands
Founded in 1963, Openlands protects the natural and open spaces of northeastern Illinois and surrounding region to ensure cleaner air and water, protect natural habitats and wildlife, and help balance and enrich our lives. One of the nation's oldest and most successful metropolitan conservation organizations, Openlands has helped save, secure, and provide public access to more than 55,000 acres of land for prairies, wetlands, and greenway corridors, as well as parks, forest preserves, and urban gardens. Their work includes school and teacher programs.
http://www.openlands.org/

CURRICULUM RESOURCES
Center for Environment Education (CEE)
CEE works with K-12 schools to address climate change issues and to cultivate healthy lifestyles. CEE believes that children learn best through experience and if their schools are green, children will learn to live that way.
http://www.ceeonline.org/

Creative Change Educational Solutions
Creative Change Educational Solutions is a nonprofit organization focused making education for sustainability a focus of K-20 policy and practice. They serve leading educators who understand the ethical need to educate for a greener economy, revitalized communities and a more equitable society. Their mission is to provide and promote innovative education that helps create a sustainable world: a healthy environment, a fair economy, and a just and equitable society for current and future generations. Curriculum Resource Center here:
http://www.creativechange.net/crc

Ecological Justice: A Call to Action by Movement Generation and Ecology Project
These curriculum tools reflect strategic thinking and action around ecology within the racial, economic and environmental justice movements in the United States. The lessons highlight the intensifying nature of the ecological crisis faced by our planet and how it’s severely impacting poor communities, indigenous communities, and historically marginalized communities. It also supports the formulation of ‘ecologically just’ solutions to our planet’s problems that are rooted in the voices of impacted communities.

http://www.movementgeneration.org/resources/curriculum

The Story of Stuff Project
This site features short, easily shareable online movies that explore some of the key features of how we make, use, and throw away Stuff, including how we can make things better. The project provides high quality educational resources and programs and we support the learning and action of the over 350,000 members of the Story of Stuff community. View videos here:
http://www.storyofstuff.org/ Download two-week curriculum “Buy, Use, Toss: A Closer Look at the Things We Buy” here:
https://www.facingthefuture.org/Curriculum/PreviewandBuyCurriculum/tabid/550/CategoriaID/16/List/1/Level/a/ProductID/1/Default.aspx

Additional Information:
Comprehensive List of Resources Collected by the Center for Eco-literacy
http://www.ecoliteracy.org/resources/organizations