

Proposed “Public Lands” BSA Merit Badge

We propose to create a “Public Lands” BSA Merit Badge. This course of study will enable Scouts to understand how the U.S.A. holds and manages these land and water treasures. The goal of a “Public Lands” Merit Badge would be to get Scouts to:

- Gain knowledge of these diverse resources
- Visit each type of resource to obtain maps, photos, etc.
- Interact with resource management officials: plan and conduct an interview
- Gain an understanding how each type of resource is held and managed
- Make a presentation to their Troop about what they have learned

Types of Public Lands in the proposed MB course of study:

1. **National Parks** – managed in the Department of the Interior
 - a. Philosophy: Visit and leave no trace
 - b. Commerce: Allowed in controlled areas such as lodges, campsites
 - c. Access: Fee entry and camping use permits
 - d. Personnel: National Park Rangers

2. **National Forests** – managed in the U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - a. Philosophy: protect timber, land for sustainable harvest, mining
 - b. Commerce: recreation inholdings (ski resorts, snowmobiling, offroad)
 - c. Access: controlled access by general public except inholdings
 - d. Personnel: managed by USDA personnel

3. **National Wildlife Refuges** – managed in Fish & Wildlife Division of Interior
 - a. Philosophy: Protected areas for wildlife habitat, enjoyment, study
 - b. Commerce: Duck Stamps, permits, annual passes support FWR’s
 - c. Access: open to public; most are free; over 100 charge a fee
 - d. Personnel: Biologists and Resource Managers

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Broad Requirements:

1. Present FACTS AND FIGURES that require the Scout to demonstrate their knowledge of these national treasures
 - a. ID by type: NWR, NF, or NP from a list of 50 natural resources
 - b. By naming the 9 regions of NP’s – North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, National Capital, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, Rocky Mountain, Western, Pacific Northwest and Alaska
 - c. Name by decade – number and size protected: describe trends
 - d. Make a Troop presentation on knowledge, visit, and interview

2. In ONE REGION: Require the Scout to visit TWO of these resource types and to describe their visit:
 - a. Physical size, state(s) of location
 - b. Unique characteristics and use
 - c. Which type of resource?
 - d. How is it managed?
 - e. When was it protected?
 - f. Show the resource stamp

3. Require the Scout to meet with a NWR, NF, or NP Ranger or Manager.
 - a. Discuss and write down the specific uses of this resource.
 - b. Review resource management and report on staffing, maintenance activities, and annual budget.
 - c. Obtain maps, and describe the recreation or study options.

4. IN ANY REGION select ONE in EACH category and be able to identify:
 - a. Location
 - b. Physical size
 - c. When protected
 - d. History: how it became a NWR, NF, or NP
 - e. Principal characteristics
 - f. Practical uses or attractions
 - g. Annual visitor volume
 - h. Fee structure

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Sample Content:

National Park facts:

Visitors have soared from 79 million in 1960 to over 300 million today. The budget of the National Parks was \$200 million a year less in 1998 than it was in 1988.

Q: How many National Parks are there?

Q: Which department of the U.S. Government manages the National Parks?

Q: What is the budget of the National Parks today?

Q: How is the budget administered?

A: The 58 National Parks are managed in the Department of the Interior. The 2015 President’s budget current request for NPS of \$2.6 billion is \$55.1 million above the 2014 enacted level. The Park Service estimates total staffing will equal 21,798 full time equivalents (FTE) in 2015, an increase of 244 FTE from 2104.

Great Smokey Mountains:

In the Great Smokey Mountains National Park over 90 percent of the native hemlocks known as Fraser firs, unique to the southern Appalachian highlands, are sick or dying from a combination of acid rain and the depredations of a moth called the balsam woolly adelgid. How is this being managed within the park?

Q: How and when did this moth arrive in the park?

Q: What kind of studies are being conducted to eliminate or control the moth?

A: Resource: http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/fhp/hemlocks/bio_control-2012.pdf

Through a combined effort of the USDA and Forest Service, a monitoring and treatment plan is in place.

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Forest Service facts:

There are 378,000 miles of roads in America’s National Forests. This roughly eight times the length of the country’s Interstate highway system.

Q: How many new miles of forest roads are planned by 2050?

Q: How many acres of timber are accessible today?

Q: How many acres of Maine are “uninhabited?” Name a foreign country of equal size.

Q: What is the long term management plan for these protected forest resources?

Q: How many ski resorts are contained as “inholdings” in the National Forests? (137)

A: 49 million acres (roughly twice the size of Ohio) is available for timber harvest today.

A: There are 150,000,000 acres of farmable timber in the U.S. About 2/3 of this is held in store for the future. The long term management plan for the National Forests calls for the addition of 580,000 miles of roads by the middle of this century.

A: Just 2% of the United States is classified as built up. One third of the American landscape in the lower 48 states is covered in trees. The total acreage of the National Forests is 782 million. The number of acres in Maine that are listed as “uninhabited” is 10 million acres. This is a land mass the size of Belgium.

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Sample Content:

National Wildlife Refuge facts:

Today there are more than 560 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts. These provide an unparalleled outdoor experience for all Americans. These serve to protect a healthy environment in a network of habitats that benefit wildlife. Most are within a one hour drive of major metropolitan areas.

Q: What is the fee basis of our NWR resources?

Q: What is the significance of the Duck Stamp Program?

Q: What is the Junior Duck Stamp Program?

Q: How many states sell the Duck Stamp? How are these stamps sold?

A: The fee basis if the National Wildlife Refuges varies; over 100 have a specific use or access fee. Most are free. Those that charge allow access by purchase of the Duck Stamp.

A: The Duck Stamp (United States Postal Services) has helped to raise \$670 million to purchase or lease 5.2 million acres for NWR protection. Duck Stamps are sold in 11 participating states as Federal E-Stamps for \$17. Each Duck Stamp is good for 45 days after the date of purchase.

A: The \$5 Junior Duck Stamp program has exposed 100's of thousands of youth to wildlife, arts, and the NWR system through a competition for the new stamp design each year.

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