



Investigation 3: You're the Superintendent!

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) is legally mandated or required to abide by certain laws. Two important laws that influence decisions made by NPS managers are the Organic Act of 1916 and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Read these laws. Then rewrite one law as if you were describing the law and what park managers must do to follow the law. Use the space below to rewrite the law.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The purpose of the ESA is to “protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.”

The NPS Organic Act of 1916

The purpose of national parks is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”



Investigation 3: You're the Superintendent!

Congratulations! You have been selected as the new superintendent of Glacier Bay National Park. You have a lot of work ahead of you, but there is one task that needs your attention now. Endangered humpback whales are being disturbed by boats of visitors eager to see these magnificent animals. What can be done to balance the needs of the visitors and the whales?

You need to write a brief press release stating an action the park will take. Study the facts below to make your decision. Once you have made a decision, write a press release stating your decision and why. The press release needs to have a clear topic sentence and several supporting sentences. Use evidence from the fact sheet to support your decision.

Facts

Laws

- The National Park Service (NPS) is legally mandated or required to abide by certain laws, including:
 - The Endangered Species Act (ESA)*
The purpose of the ESA is to “protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.”
 - The NPS Organic Act of 1916*
The purpose of national parks is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

Endangered animals

- Researchers estimate that commercial whaling destroyed 90% of the humpback whale population.
- Today, about 22,00 individual humpback whales live in the Pacific Ocean and about 3,000-5,000 in British Columbia and southeastern Alaska.
- The Pacific population of humpback whales is increasing at a rate of about 4-7% per year.
- Today, about 100-150 humpbacks feed in Glacier Bay every summer.
- 71% of humpbacks have scars from entanglement with fishing equipment or ocean debris.
- Vessels may cause disturbance and disruption to normal humpback whale behavior.

Humpback Whale Behavior

- Humpback whales must eat enough food in the summer to last the whole year.
- The average humpback consumes about 800 pounds of food per day.
- Humpbacks use sound to communicate. Noise from vessel engines may impair a humpback whale's awareness of its surroundings.
- While in Glacier Bay humpback whales are focused on feeding and are generally swimming slower than five miles per hour. Most vessels travel faster than this, some up to 25 mph.
- Every year in Alaska, vessels of all sizes hit whales. The effects are much like that of a person hit by a car. Sometimes the person just has minor injuries, but other accidents can be fatal, especially when whales are hit by large fast-moving vessels.

People in the Park

- As a national park, Glacier Bay is here for everyone to experience, explore and enjoy, today and for future generations.
- Seeing humpback whales is one of the top reasons people visit Alaska and Glacier Bay.
- When people see humpback whales they are likely to form an emotional attachment to the whales. This may cause them to fight to protect humpback whales.
- Almost all Glacier Bay National Park visitors come by boat or ship because the park has very few roads.
- Glacier Bay National Park is the same size as Connecticut, but has only 8 miles of hiking trails.
- More than 480,000 people visit Glacier Bay each summer. They travel on cruise ships, tour boats, private motor boats, and kayaks.