



## Theme: Animals (Grades 3-5)

### Post-Visit Activity #1

### The Effects of Development on the Ecosystem

#### Overview:

In the late 1990s, there was a proposal to run U.S. Highway 95 through the north side of the Springs Preserve. The expansion of U.S. 95 onto the North Well Field, with a maximum 200-foot right-of-way, would have impacted vegetation (the bear poppy) and wildlife (pocket mice). Many people protested the proposal, which resulted in saving the vegetation and wildlife.

#### Objectives:

- Students will explore the environment they live in.
- Students will examine the impact of construction on wildlife.
- Students will discover that people can make a difference within their community.
- Students will write a point of view paper.

#### Materials:

- Copies of "Hearings set for widening of U.S. 95" for each student

#### Activity:

1. During lunch or recess, block off a section of the classroom or move a group of desks to one side of the room.
2. Have a sign up prohibiting the students from getting to their desks, simulating a construction site.
3. Continue teaching a lesson as planned, listening to the comments that are being said.
4. As you are teaching, block off another section of desks and ask the students to find another place to work.
5. Continue to listen to the comments.
6. Continue with this experiment for as long as is needed to get the point across.

#### Debrief:

Talk to the students about how they felt when their work space was removed. Discuss the crowding and loss of personal space. What thoughts were going through their heads? What solutions did they come up with to solve the problem? Did they work together? What could they have done differently?

**Task:**

Explain to students about the potential encroachment of U.S. 95 and how it would have affected the ecosystem at the Springs Preserve. Read the accompanying article (which can also be found online at <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/1999/jun/07/hearings-set-for-widening-of-us-95/>). Have students write a paper (either individually or in groups) from a particular point of view: the bear poppy, the pocket mouse, the Springs Preserve, or the Nevada Department of Transportation. Students should state the problem from “their” point of view, and determine how the problem should be solved. Have students present their work to the class.

**Suggested Reading:**

1. ***Alejandro’s Gift*** by Richard E. Albert. A lonely man living in the desert builds an oasis to attract the desert animals around him. Inspires children’s appreciation for the desert’s beauty.
2. ***Desert Voices*** by Byrd Baylor, Peter Parnall. Readers are given messages about the beautiful desert and its animals through text and illustrations.
3. ***Draw Desert Animals*** by Doug DuBosque. Inspires creative kids to draw animals like the ones they see in Desert Discovery.
4. ***How Jackrabbit Got His Very Long Ears*** by Heather Irbinskas. Jackrabbit learns about the traits of many different animals in the desert and how they use them
5. ***Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children*** by Joseph Bruchac, Michael J. Caduto. A rich collection of uplifting Native American stories and creative nature activities.
6. ***Listen to the Desert/Oye al Desierto*** by Pat Mora. A very simple text, with each line repeated twice in English plus twice in Spanish, becomes a rhythmic, lyrical bilingual chant suggesting the onomatopoeic powers of both tongues.
7. ***The Desert Is Theirs*** by Byrd Baylor. This beautifully illustrated 1976 Caldecott Honor Book depicts animal life and adaptations in the desert.
8. ***Voices from the Wild*** by David Bouchard. This winner of a 1997 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award features poems about how animals use their senses.

## Hearings set for widening of U.S. 95

*Las Vegas Sun*, June 7, 1999

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/1999/jun/07/hearings-set-for-widening-of-us-95/>

Of three alternatives offered by the Nevada Department of Transportation for expanding U.S. 95 from six lanes to 10, the preferred route will preserve the birthplace of Las Vegas while moving northwest valley traffic faster.

The draft environmental impact statement outlining the valley's growth pains goes to the public this week.

The project, which will widen the freeway to 10 lanes from Rainbow Boulevard to I-15, is expected to displace 188 single-family homes, 138 apartment units and about 36 businesses.

The sticking point in the plan involves two possible routes for the new freeway between Decatur and Martin Luther King boulevards -- through 62 homes bordering the north or through the Las Vegas Springs Preserve south of the freeway.

A storm of residential protest from Summerlin, the newest community along the freeway, to neighborhoods built in the 1960s is rising as people learn more about the plan.

Those concerns will be expressed at two public hearings scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday.

Residents living next to the proposed project worry about more dust, higher air pollution from car exhausts spewing carbon monoxide, noise and the loss of older homes.

For Barbara Roth, who lives between Upland Boulevard and U.S. 95, the state's environmental impacts do not look at the whole picture. Will air pollution affect birds gathered at the Las Vegas Springs Preserve and in Lorenzi Park? Can the state justify taking homes in older, poorer neighborhoods?

"Each house is a resource, each neighborhood is a resource as far as I'm concerned," Barbara Roth said.

Roth is a member of the Charleston Neighborhood Preservation group, numbering 13,800 households that will be affected by the project.

For Vicki Arnold, secretary of the preservation group, the impact statement is disappointing.

"We suggested alternate routes as well as a rail system," Arnold said. The group offered Cheyenne Avenue to Martin Luther King Boulevard or connecting to the proposed beltway through Desert Inn Road.

Jean Withers faces the loss of her home on Pyracantha Circle and is concerned that the broader freeway will not relieve the crush of traffic.

"If this was a long-term solution, I wouldn't mind sacrificing my house, but it is not a long-term solution," Withers said. "Increasing pollution is not the solution."

The federal Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing the Transportation Department's draft environmental impact statement, Laura Fujii of the EPA's Office of Federal Activities in San Francisco, said.

The highway project will have to meet the air quality requirements spelled out in Nevada's state implementation plan, Fujii said.

The Las Vegas Valley does not meet the air quality limits for carbon monoxide or dust. Both pollutants are considered at "serious" levels in Southern Nevada. Clark County officials have submitted a revised plan with proposals for reducing them.

The Transportation Department's plan says the wider freeway will not increase air pollution. Noise barriers will be built to block increased traffic sounds near residential areas, the plan says.

The state did rule, however, that a 170-acre island of wildlife in the middle of concrete suburbs was worth saving. The Las Vegas Springs, where artesian waters bubbled thousands of years ago until the 1950s when a growing population drew so much ground water that it stopped the flow, attracted people to the valley more than 5,000 years ago.

This area is surrounded by urban development including U.S. 95 on the north, Alta Drive on the south, Valley View Boulevard on the west and Rancho Drive to the east.

After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last December recommended saving the springs that provide a living space for the desert pocket mouse and the Las Vegas bearpaw poppy, the state ruled in favor of taking the 62 homes north of the springs. The pocket mouse and the bearpaw poppy do not live anywhere else in the valley.

The Las Vegas Springs is listed on the national register of historic places because people have visited the artesian waters from 3000 B.C. or earlier, according to archaeological studies performed by UNLV for the impact statement.

At a cost of \$300 million, the freeway expansion project is expected to handle traffic growth until 2020, the impact statement says.

To handle the exploding population in the northwest valley, the state has worked with the cities of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas as well as Clark County to listen to concerns from Desert Inn Road on the south to Interstate 15 and Martin Luther King Boulevard on the east to Craig and Rampart roads on the north and west.

In addition to adding pavement, the project is expected to link the northwest by CAT bus and by park-and-ride lots to transportation offerings around the valley, such as a high-speed train serving the resort corridor.

Because both O.K. Adcock and Ruth Fyfe elementary schools will be disrupted if the expressway bulges to the north, the Clark County School District and the county plan to replace Adcock on a portion of Torrey Pines Park. The school and the park will share space for recreation.

After the public and written comments are considered, the Federal Highway Administration will decide on whether the project will be built.

The approvals are expected in the fall, Transportation Department spokeswoman Kathy Razor said.

After that, the right-of-way necessary to move major utilities such as power lines, water, sewer and natural gas pipelines and a water well are necessary. The project will be built in phases.

Each city and Clark County will work with their respective public works managers to build the various parts of it.

Private property owners who could be affected and want further information on the progress of the proposal should contact LoAnn Weight, right-of-way agent, at 385-6542.