

Objectives

- ▶ understand the environmental impact of human activities
- ▶ work as a team to set goals and resolve conflicts

Vocabulary

tourism

Background

One of the questions government leaders of South Caicos have asked the SFS research team is: "How can we expand tourism in a way that benefits the economy without destroying our natural resources?" After all, it is the beauty, natural resources and culture of these islands that attracts tourists in the first place. If these resources are destroyed, there will be no reason for tourists to come back. The island paradise will be gone.



Using the knowledge they have gained from their research on the reefs, the SFS students will develop recommendations to help government leaders manage the impacts of expanding tourism, while preserving the unique natural resources of these islands.

Materials

copies of role play descriptions

Activity

Have students role play to debate the pros and cons of island development.

1. Introduce students to the challenge facing Paradise Island as described below:

Summary of the Situation

Paradise Island is a small tropical island, like South Caicos. It is surrounded by clean waters and beautiful reefs. There are sandy beaches, mangrove lagoons, a small town and a research station. The local fishermen catch conch and lobster.

There are no large hotels on Paradise Island. The few tourists who visit each year stay at small inns in the town. Some local business leaders would like to expand tourism, build new hotels, and start dive operations. The local environmental group wants to make the waters surrounding the island a Marine Park. The Island Council has called a Town Meeting to discuss the pros and cons of expanding tourism and to make some decisions about the future of Paradise Island. You are there...

2. Divide students into groups of five. Assign each group member one of the roles listed on the next page.
3. Begin role play. Have students present their points of view to others in their group. Then ask each group to work together as a team to make a list of the most important and least important goals for the future of Paradise Island.
4. Have each team make a plan for the future of Paradise Island that will meet these goals. Choose team leaders to present these plans at a Town Meeting.
5. Have each team make its presentation. Ask students to vote for the best plan. As a class, discuss why it is the best plan. Use these questions: Does it protect the reef? Does it provide jobs? Will it impact the fishermen? Will it be good for business? If the island follows this plan, what studies could the scientists do to see if it is working?

Extend the Activity

Create a map of Paradise Island showing its natural resources, roads, existing village and airport. Have students work in teams to create master plans for future development showing nature preserves, marine parks, hotels, new roads, housing developments, new school, etc. Use these plans to create a bulletin board display.

Obtain a copy of a local zoning map or master plan. Discuss this plan with the class: Does it set aside areas for parks or nature? Where are the residential zones? Is there an industrial zone? What other zones are shown? Ask a Town Planner to make a presentation to the class about local planning issues.

Role Play Descriptions



Business Leader

I'm a business person and I think expanding tourism is great. I want to build a big hotel on Sunshine Beach. My guests will have beautiful views of the ocean and the flamingoes in the mangrove lagoon. We will run two scuba diving trips a day to the reef from a dock next to the hotel. The restaurant will serve conch and lobster caught by local fishermen. The hotel shops will sell island arts and crafts. There will be lots of jobs. Everyone will benefit.

Reef Protector

I am a member of Save Our Reefs and I think expanding tourism is a bad idea. All that new construction. All those people. It will pollute the water. They will cut down the mangroves and the flamingoes will leave. Dive boats will drop their anchors on the reef and SCUBA divers will collect coral and shells until there is nothing left. They will rename our island Paradise Lost. I say "Tourists go home!"

Island Council

I am a member of the Island Council and I don't know what's right. I know more tourism will mean more jobs, but I don't want to do anything that will damage the environment on our beautiful island. If we had a master plan we could conserve the areas near the reef and the mangroves and let businesses build in other parts of the island. We could also write new laws to protect the environment. I need more information to make these decisions.

Research Scientist

I am a scientist who has been studying your reefs and fisheries. I think you can expand tourism, but you must do so carefully. If you build hotels, you must not let them pollute your water. If you build roads, try to go around the mangroves, not through them. Start to expand slowly, and watch what happens to your island as tourism grows. Maybe my research will help you.

Fisherman

I am a fisherman with two children. Tourism could help me and my family. If there are more restaurants, I will be able to sell more conch and lobster. The hotels will pay taxes that will help the schools and our hospital. But what if we start to take too many fish and lobsters from the reef. And what if our sewage treatment plant can't handle all the waste from the hotels? Maybe we should just leave things as they are.