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Student Worksheet

Wildland/Urban Interface
Investigation

Conflict Resolution

Read the following scenario and answer the questions on the next page.

Fire has always been a natural component in the Santa Monica Mountains. Chaparral, the dominant vegetation, is the most flammable type of vegetation found in the United States. One chaparral plant, *Ceanothus*, has leaves that are coated with flammable resins and the seeds require intense heat for germination. Over time chaparral plants become less productive. Fire replaces older plants with younger ones creating a healthier ecosystem by thinning the plant life, renewing soil, cracking seed-casings, and supporting wildlife.

An increasing number of people have homes and businesses in the Santa Monica Mountains. As a result, fires that once burned as part of a natural process are now considered a threat. Because of the threat to homeowners and businesses, any fires that erupt are extinguished promptly. This causes fire-starved vegetation to grow more dense and more likely to burn at a high intensity in the event of a wildfire.

Dead and dying plants add fuel to any fire, making fires hotter and more destructive. Land management agencies want to use *prescribed fire*—the intentional igniting of a fire by trained specialists with the intent to confine it to a certain area. These fires would remove dead vegetation, and other organic debris, that decays very slowly in a dry environment, reducing the chance of high intensity wildfires.

One conflict that arises is the use of prescribed fire near homes. Many people are concerned that any fire is a threat and that controlled burns can not only destroy the aesthetic beauty of the area, but also decrease the air quality.

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Student Worksheet

cont.

Wildland/Urban Interface

Investigation

1. What do you think is the main problem?

2. What do you think is the issue?

3. Who do you think the stakeholders are and what are their positions?

4. What do you think might be some strategies to resolve the issue?