

Natural Resources

GRADES 6–8

Guiding Question

What can we do to help ensure that natural resources are used wisely?

Connecting Concepts

- Humans depend on Earth’s land, ocean, atmosphere, and biosphere for many different resources. Minerals, fresh water, and biosphere resources are limited, and many are not renewable or replaceable over human lifetimes. These resources are distributed unevenly around the planet as a result of past geologic processes. (NGSS, ESS3.A: Natural Resources)
- Typically as human populations and per-capita consumption of natural resources increase, so do the negative impacts on Earth unless the activities and technologies involved are engineered otherwise. (NGSS, ESS3.C: Human Impacts on Earth Systems)
- Resources that we use and consume every day are connected to forests. We have the opportunity to choose products (e.g., renewable, legally sourced, certified) that support sustainability. (PLT FLF, 4.A.2)

Scope and Sequence

The collection and order of content below supports an intentional student learning progression.

Activity	Description
Global Goods	Students trace the resources that go into making one product.
Exploration Energy!	Students learn about different sources of energy, conduct an audit of the electricity they use in their own homes, and create an action plan to use energy wisely.
Renewable or Not?	Students model what happens to renewable and nonrenewable resources over time and discover why sustainable use of natural resources is so important.
If You Were the Boss	Students play the role of forest manager for a public forest, exploring the complex factors that influence management decisions about these valuable natural resources.

See plt.org/academic-standards for detailed standards correlations for each activity.

Storyline

Students explore some of the ways that people process, manage, and use natural resources and how they might do so more wisely.

- Begin with the activity Global Goods, in which students examine a familiar object and identify the natural resources used to manufacture, transport, and use it.
- Next, conduct the Exploration Energy! activity to focus on the natural resources we use for fuel. Encourage students to consider how using energy more wisely can reduce the negative effects of energy sources on people and the environment.
- Follow this with the activity Renewable or Not?, in which students participate in hands-on modeling exercises that demonstrate the long-term impacts of renewable versus nonrenewable natural resources and the effects of the variable distribution of natural resources in different parts of the world. For Model 4, challenge students to design and create their own model related to the wise use of one or more natural resources.
- Conclude with If You Were the Boss, in which students develop a management plan for a forest. Ask students to explain why using natural resources wisely is important, and to share their ideas about how to use them more wisely.