



Ask an Expert

Adapted from BTNEP/LSU AgCenter: *Coastal Land Loss and Restoration*

Focus/Overview

Students will conduct oral history interviews about how the Louisiana coast has changed during their lifetime.

Learning Objectives

The learner will...

- identify a family member or friend who is willing to be interviewed about the changes to the coast he or she has witnessed.
- conduct a survey with that individual to determine what changes to the landscape, the habitats and the fish and wildlife have taken place.
- develop a questionnaire covering key past, current and future land loss issues.
- record the interview on video or audio tape if equipment is available or make notes.
- prepare a presentation of survey findings.

Louisiana Grade Level Expectations

4: GLE-63	Demonstrate and explain how Earth's surface is changed as a result of slow and rapid processes (ESS-E-A5) (ESS-E-A1).
5: GLE-50	Describe the consequences of several types of human activities on local ecosystems (SE-M-A4).
7: GLE-39	Analyze the consequences of human activities on ecosystems (SE-M-A4).
8: GLE-20	Describe how humans' actions and natural processes have modified coastal regions in Louisiana and other locations (ESS-M-A8).
HS Biol: GLE-27	Analyze positive and negative effects of human actions on ecosystems (LS-H-D4) (SE-H-A7).

BTNEP Connection
Culture.

Grade Level
4, 5, 7, 8, HS Biol

Duration
1 week (to allow time for home interview).

Subject Area
science, history

Setting
classroom/home.

Original Source
"Ask an Expert" in BTNEP/LSU AgCenter: *Coastal Land Loss and Restoration*, Activity 8.



Materials List

- Depending on resources, students can use any of the following to record the interview: video camera, audio tape recorder, still camera, notebook and pencil.

Background Information

Conducting surveys helps students develop interpersonal and social skills while they gather valuable information about coastal erosion. They should pick an appropriate interviewee, preferably a member of their immediate or extended family who has lived long enough to witness the changes in the coastal zone, including marsh loss and shoreline erosion. A grandfather, grandmother, great-uncle or great-aunt who has enjoyed fishing along the Louisiana coast for many years is an ideal choice. The students can record or videotape the interviews and edit them before presenting their work.

Advance Preparation

none



Procedure

1. In this activity you are the reporter and will interview someone who is a wetlands expert – not necessarily a scientist (although they could be one), but a regular person who could have had any kind of occupation. The only qualification is that they have spent a lot of time in the wetlands and have witnessed first hand the changes that have taken place because of coastal erosion. The person can be a member of your family, a neighbor or a family friend. Your job is to interview the person to learn as much as possible about their experiences with coastal erosion. The person you choose must be willing and comfortable about being interviewed. Be sure to ask if they mind and to thank them for their time when you are finished with the interview. You can record the interview any way you wish. You can write the answers in a notebook (newspaper reporters do this all the time). You can record the conversation with a cassette tape recorder. You can take photographs of the interviewee, or if you have a video camera in the family and the interviewee doesn't mind, you can videotape the interview.
2. Distribute **A Sample Interview (Blackline Master #1)**. Here is a sample interview. You should adapt the questions to suit the person that you are interviewing. But remember, the objective is to find out how, when, where and why coastal erosion and habitat change have occurred and how this change has affected the people that live, work and/or recreate in south Louisiana.
3. While interviewing your person, if the interviewee wants to go off on a tangent and tell a story or talk about something else, that's O.K., you might learn something interesting! Try not to interrupt or make too many comments if you are recording. Let the interviewee do most of the talking and allow them to take their time during the interview.
4. Students identify their interviewee and adjust the questions on the sample interview.
5. Students should prepare a written summary of the interview, highlighting how, when, where and why coastal erosion and habitat change have occurred and how this change has affected the people that live, work and/or recreate in south Louisiana. They should present their summaries to the class. If time allows, and students are willing, videotapes or tape recordings of portion of the interviews could be shared in class.

Blackline Master

1. **A Sample Interview**

Assessment

- Prepare a rubric for the written summary and oral presentation.

Resources

BTNEP Materials

When You Were My Age

*Oral history interview techniques and information on the Bayou Lafourche Oral History Project. LA Grade Level Expectations for 8th Grade. **Downloading Instructions:** Go to <http://educators.btnepp.org/default.asp?id=49>. Click on link When You Were My Age (PDF 380 k). Pages are meant to be printed front and back in the order they download. Staple down the center for a completed booklet.*

Tradebooks:

Hubbs, Susan. 2000. **Dig up Your Roots and Find Your Branches: A Child's Guide to Genealogy.** iUniverse, Inc. 108 pp. ISBN: 059513162X

A fun guidebook for children hoping to uncover facts about their family history. Includes simple, yet thorough instructions, puzzles, charts, and ideas for Internet searches! Age Range: 9 to 12

Leavitt, Caroline. 2005. **The Kids' Family Tree Book.** Sterling Publishing Company, Inc. 96 pp. ISBN: 1402709420

Who are my ancestors? What nationalities were they? What work did they do? Kids are always bursting with questions about their family history; they want more stories, more details, more facts. With these research ideas and creative projects, young would-be genealogists can get the knowledge they crave. Information on how to interview family members. Age Range: 7 to 11

Websites:

Allee, Virginia. Council on Foundations. 2003. **A Guide to Interviewing Family Members**, accessed July 7, 2005, at <http://www.cof.org/Content/General/Display.cfm?contentID=496>.

119 questions divided into several topic areas. Abstracted from Virginia Allee's "A Family History Questionnaire" in October 1978 Family Heritage Magazine.

References:

Gift to the Future2000, Inc. 1996. **Your Story: A Guided Interview through Your Personal and Family History**. Stack Resources LLC. 64pp ISBN: 0963424947

This 64-page hardbound book uses a easy to follow "guided interview" format that includes more than 150 sets of questions designed to generate memories, thoughts and experiences, while providing plenty of space to write responses to those questions, and attach pertinent photographs. Each page is acid-free, archival quality paper.

Greene, Bob, and Fulford, D.G. 1993. **To Our Children's Children: Preserving Family Histories for Generations to Come**. Doubleday & Company, Inc. 211 pp. ISBN: 0385467974.

An attractive and engaging guidebook that makes recording a personal hisrory as uncomplicated and easy as writing a letter. A brief introduction sets the tone of fond remembrance, followed by chapters of questions designed to elicit answers that will form the patchwork of a fascinating personal history.

LoVerde, Mary. 2000. **Touching Tomorrow: How to Interview Your Loved One to Capture a Lifetime of Memories on Video or Audio**. Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group. 144pp. ISBN: 068487380X

McLaughlin, Paul. 1993. **Family Remembers: How to Create a Family Memoir Using Video and Tape Recorders**. Self-Counsel Press, Inc. 160 pp. *OUT OF PRINT*. ISBN: 0889082936.

Rosenbluth, Vera. 1997. **Keeping Family Stories Alive: Discovering and Recording the Stories and Reflections of a Lifetime**. Hartley & Marks, Inc. 232 pp. *OUT OF PRINT*. ISBN: 0881791490.

Name _____ Date _____

A Sample Interview

Interview Deadline: _____



You are the BTNEP scientist interested in learning how, when, where and why coastal erosion and habitat change have occurred and how this change has affected the people that live, work and/or recreate in south Louisiana. You have been assigned to the task of conducting an interview to begin to understand this topic. Follow the steps below in developing and conducting your interview.

Step 1. Identify the person(s) you will interview: _____

You should choose an older member of your family, a neighbor, or a family friend who has spent some time in the wetlands and have witnessed first hand the changes that have taken place over the last half century. They should be willing and comfortable about being interviewed.

Step 2. Summarize why you picked this person and what you know about their life.

Step 3. Develop a list of questions you want to ask them during the interview. You need to tailor the questions so they fit the person you will be interviewing. Ask open-ended questions and not "yes or no" or "one word answer" questions. Here are some ideas:

- What is your name?
- Is there a place in the Louisiana coastal area where you have been many times to recreate, fish, hunt or work? If so, where is it?
- When did you first go there?
- What kind of fish and wildlife did you see or catch when you first started visiting that place?
- What did the landscape look like then?
- Has it changed in appearance since then? If so, how?
- If you fish, do you catch as many fish as you used to?
- Have the species of fish changed over time?
- If so, why do you think these changes have occurred?
- What other changes have you seen?
- What do you think are the big problems facing coastal Louisiana?
- What do you think the future holds for your special place?
- Do you think potential solutions to the problems will work?

Additional Questions:

Step 3. Make an appointment for your interview.

Bring the equipment you need to record the interview. Remember to be patient and listen carefully to your interviewee so that you can learn about the coastal change that this person has witnessed over their lifetime.

Step 4. Send your interviewee a thank you (written or verbal) for their time and for sharing their knowledge of coastal Louisiana with you.

Step 5. Summarize in writing what you have learned about coastal land loss from your interviewee. Prepare a short oral summary of what you have learned to share with the class.