If You Owned the Ecosystem

**Topic:** Ecosystems

**Grade Level:** 5-8

**Time to teach:** 1 hour 30 minutes

**Concept/Overview:** Understanding what an ecosystem is and how to maintain it.

**Objectives/Goals:**
The students will:

1. Describe food and habitat needs for specific species of wildlife and humans.
2. Discuss what makes up an ecosystem.
3. Discuss effects of different land use choices on the environment and other life forms.
4. Identify land uses that are considered good (compatible) versus those that are considered harmful or less desirable (conflicting).
5. Demonstrate how land use conflicts are solved.
6. Demonstrate cooperative problem-solving and decision-making skills.

**Materials:**
Writing materials
“The Ecosystem” drawing
“Role Cards”
Optional: overhead transparencies, dry erase markers

**Procedures:**
**Initiating Activity:**

1. Photocopy one ecosystem drawing for every two to three students and one last copy of both role description pages and role pictures. If possible, photocopy the pages back-to-back. Make sure to match the appropriate pages! You can also glue the two pages together. You may want to cover the cards with clear contact paper or laminate them so they can be used again. Option: Provide each group with an ecosystem drawing on an overhead transparency. They use dry erase markers to mark their changes. The transparency can also be used to make a presentation back to the class.

2. Cut the role cards apart.

**Activity:**

1. Ask: What is an ecosystem? See overview for more information. Students must understand that for every change in an ecosystem there in an effect. Everything in an ecosystem is connected at some level. Discuss “compatible use” with students. What
examples can they think of in their personal live of a common space that is run or managed with many different interests in mind? Have students briefly explain the space and how it is managed. The school building is an excellent example of compatible use if students need assistance.

2. Divide the students into small groups of two or three members. There needs to be at least eight groups, each of which represents a different viewpoint: farmers, students, environmentalists, ecosystem managers, and at least insects reptiles fish, and birds. Additional groups can represent other wildlife species.

**Sunshine State Standards:**
**SS.B.1.3.1:** Students use various maps, and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report geographic information.

**LA.A1.3.1:** Students organize information before writing according to the type and purpose of writing.

**SC.D.2.3.3.:** Students understand the need for protection of the natural systems on Earth.

**National Standards:**
**Standard 3:** How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places and environments on earth’s surface.

**Standard 8:** The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on Earth’s surface.