Student Edition

California Education and the Environment Initiative

7

History-Social Science Standard 7.6.3.

Managing Nature's Bounty: Feudalism in Medieval Europe

California Education and the Environment Initiative

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California Environmental Protection Agency
California Natural Resources Agency
Office of the Secretary of Education
California State Board of Education
California Department of Education
California Integrated Waste Management Board

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Key Partners:

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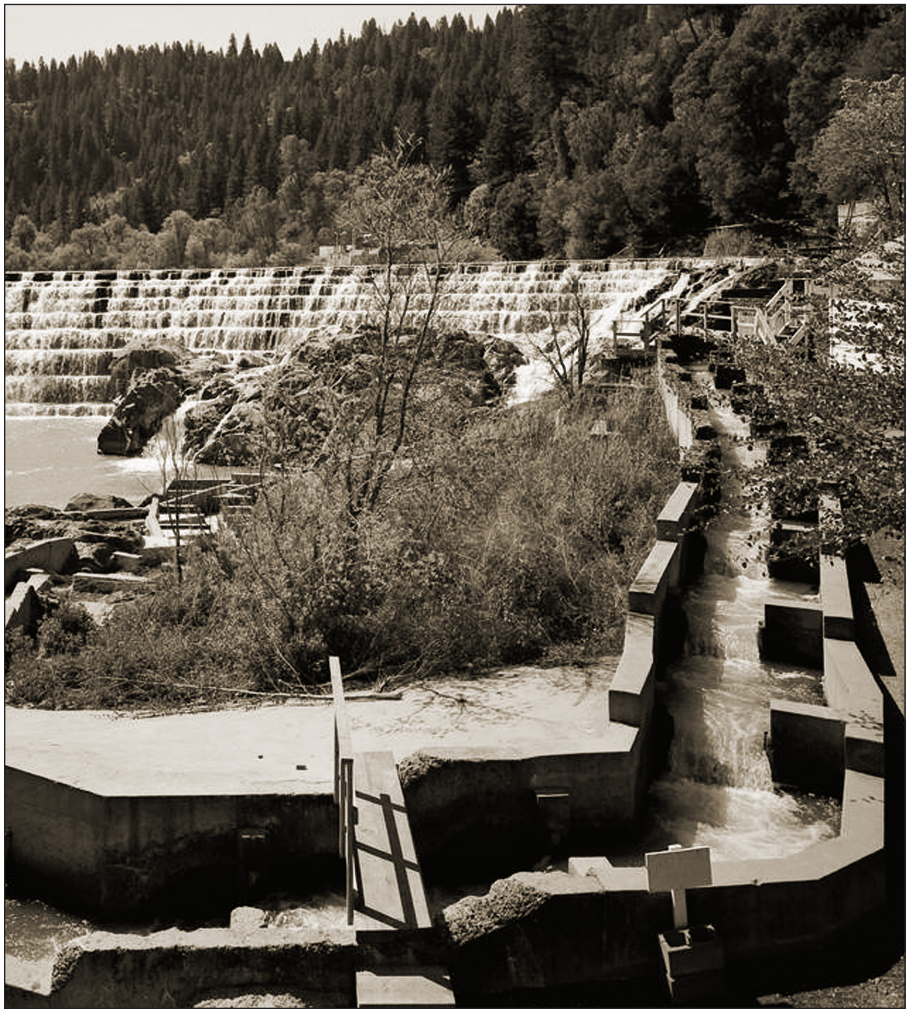
None required for this lesson.

The Department of Fish and Game

California was rich even before the Gold Rush—rich in scenery, in wildlife, and in natural resources. The mountains, foothills, and valleys of California provided a safe habitat for all kinds of wildlife, including deer, grizzly bears, and wolves. Fish filled the rivers, streams, and bays. Great forests covered the mountains, and fertile soils supported many kinds of plants and animals.

After John Marshall discovered gold in 1848, thousands of people moved to California. Small towns became busy cities. New towns sprang up from San Francisco to the Sierra Nevada foothills.

All of these new people needed food and supplies. They soon began to use up the state's natural resources. Deer and elk began to disappear. Dams, fences, and nets in streams kept salmon from returning to spawning grounds upstream. In response, the state passed its first laws to protect salmon and other wildlife in 1852.



Fish ladder on South Fork of Eel River, Mendocino County, California

Fish Were First

The number of fish continued to fall. In 1870, the California Legislature

created the Board of Fish Commissioners. It was one of the first wildlife conservation agencies in the country. Its job was to increase the number of fish. It built the first fish ladder on a stream off the Truckee River. A fish ladder is a series of pools that help salmon swim upstream when their natural path has been dammed. Soon after, it built a fish hatchery at the University of California. Eventually, this board would become the California Department of Fish and Game.

In 1952, 100 years after the first laws protecting wildlife were passed, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) was established. The DFG works to "manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public." This means that the Department of Fish and Game cares for native fish, wildlife, and plant species and protects their habitats. It makes sure that each species has enough habitat to survive. The department protects California's plants and animals because each one is a valuable part of nature. Many also provide direct benefits to people. The department also wants to help people enjoy and learn from the many resources of our state.

The DFG

The Department of Fish and Game has a big job. Today, more than 36 million people live in California. The population may reach 40 million in the next few years. Cities continue to expand into areas that once were home to wildlife. People have diverted and dammed rivers and streams. Each day, fish and other wild creatures must compete with human beings for food and living space.

When people and animals come together in wildlife-protected areas, problems can occur. For example, black bears sometimes cause problems for campers and hikers. They tip over trash

White sturgeon

California Fish and Game officer checking fish

cans or destroy property. If visitors have a problem with bears, they can call their local Fish and Game Office for help.

From time to time, people cause the problems. Some people break the rules protecting wildlife, land, or water. The DFG has many local Fish and Game wardens who may arrest people for breaking laws, such as poaching, which means taking fish and game illegally. Recently, the DFG arrested six men who were illegally catching white sturgeon and selling its meat and eggs (caviar). This is a serious offense and can result in large fines or years in jail.

To manage so many different duties, the Department of Fish and Game is divided into many levels. A director, chosen by the governor, runs the DFG from its main offices in Sacramento. The DFG has offices that deal with oil spills, education, and outreach. It also has four major divisions, which are broken into smaller branches. For example, within the Administration Division, the department's License and Revenue Branch sells over 150 kinds of licenses and permits for fishing and hunting. These licenses are sold at many places throughout the state. Some are sold in small local stores, and some in huge sporting goods outlets. The DFG tries to make it easy for the public to get the licenses.

Dividing Up the State

Under the Regional Operations Division, California has been divided into seven geographic regions. For example, there are regions for the Sacramento Bay Delta, the inland deserts, and the southern coast. Dividing

California Fish and Game officer at Nimbus Hatchery

the state into regions helps experts like wildlife biologists make decisions at a local level. The experts can listen to the people living and doing business in the region before making decisions. The DFG also studies wildlife populations by region. If the data collected show that a certain animal population is decreasing, the DFG can develop a plan to help its population grow.

The DFG does not protect all the land in California. More than half of the state (51%) is privately owned. Many kinds of wildlife depend on this private land for survival. Having different kinds of wildlife is important for the health of the state's natural systems. Careless planning and development can put wildlife in danger. Although the Department of Fish and Game does not have control over private land, it can encourage wise choices based on scientific data. The DFG supplies data and advice to local programs developing plans that protect wildlife while allowing people to use the land.

Monitoring and Managing

The Department of Fish and Game manages a million acres of wildlife areas, wildlands for the people of California, ecological reserves, and private lands conservation programs in California. It takes care of wildlife and natural resources, as well as security issues, public health, and safety. It maintains drainage, sewage, and electrical systems on the land. The DFG also manages recreational opportunities, like hiking and fishing. While caring for California's natural resources, the Department of Fish and Game also addresses the needs and concerns of California's citizens. It continually faces new challenges for effective natural resource management.

Farming improved after 1000 CE, in Europe. The climate warmed, and new farming tools helped increase the amount and types of crops grown on the manors. The number of people on the manors began to increase. At the same time, the manors needed fewer people to work the land than in the past.

People on the manors began to specialize in certain crafts and trades. Some of the goods they produced were cloth, tools, containers, art, and leather objects. At first, people traded these goods with their neighbors on the manor or offered them to the lord as rent. If the products were of good quality, they became highly prized, and the manor became known for such goods by people outside the manor.

It did not take long for the job of "merchant" to develop. Merchants took highly prized goods from one place to trade with people in another. This trade took place at a market. At first, markets developed along the well-traveled paths or dirt roads between the manors as gathering places for merchants. As markets became well known for certain goods, people began to settle around them. Popular markets soon became towns that operated outside the feudal system. These towns formed governments and wrote their own laws about when markets could open, who could shop and sell items at the market, how to keep the streets clean, and what to do in case of fire.

Just like the vassals and peasants, the people living and working in the market towns needed protection. The town leaders organized themselves and paid taxes to the king or the local lords for protection. Trade in these towns added to the wealth of the king and his vassals, so the king supported and protected the trade roads between the most popular market towns.

Many of these towns grew to become large cities with permanent buildings and well-kept roads. Large stone walls surrounded the city. Heavy wooden gates in the walls would be closed in case of attack or after the bell rang for curfew (eight or nine o'clock at night).

The workday usually began at four o'clock in the morning with the opening of the town gates. Most of the shops began doing business by six o'clock. Morning was the most active time for the market towns, and most shops closed at three o'clock in the afternoon. Barbers and blacksmiths usually stayed open later. On Saturdays, all the shops closed early (at noon) and few, if any, were open on Sundays.

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