UNDERSTANDING LAND USE PRACTICES  
- A Map Reading and GIS Exercise -

Procedure:

1. Duplicate and distribute copies of Worksheet 1 (Page 231) and the associated GIS map(s) in Appendix A. Transparencies of the worksheets and maps work well as teaching aids.

2. Begin by reading items from the section entitled “Notice” to the students (Worksheet1). Promote discussion by exploring the possible relationships of map-related questions to the ideas listed under the section entitled “Consider” and by suggesting avenues available for further research (“Research” section).

3. Encourage students to further explore topics related to maps and land use considerations by showing them examples of “starting points” which the educator has already located and/or obtained from the library. Outline possible directions to take when attempting literature searches in the library (e.g., periodicals, journals, books, non-print media, Internet resources).

The term “land use” refers to the many possible ways in which we manipulate our environment by using natural resources. For example, land use practices can be understood as the many ways in which we use land; agricultural areas, natural (undisturbed) areas, parks, urban areas, etc.

[Please refer to Appendix A for GIS (Geographic Information Systems) maps]

GIS maps can be used to graphically illustrate a number of pertinent features about a given geographic area. These data are graphically overlaid upon an existing map and “locked-down” by geo-referencing the data to a specific latitude and longitude. Some examples of data geo-referenced to area maps are: Vegetation patterns (distribution and types), Land use patterns (agricultural vs. urban vs. wetlands, etc.), Temperature gradients, Soil characteristics, Various urban characteristics (e.g. streets, power grids, voting districts, economic distribution, etc.)

“Land use” also refers to the particular strategy an individual or group of individuals applies to the utilization of natural resources. One might consider the land use practices of a nomadic people to be low-impact and self-sustaining, as is usually the case. On the other hand, a highly industrialized society often uses natural resources with an avariciousness sometimes bordering upon the absurd... as if natural resources will never be completely consumed, or that the problem can be dealt with by later generations.