

AP Environmental Science
Summer Assignment 2026-2027
Google Classroom Code: nvt2hn44

Welcome to AP Environmental Science, affectionately referred to as APES! This year, we will explore the complicated balance between nature and humanity. The objective of the summer assignment is to get you thinking environmentally and examining your own sense of place and impact on Earth. I look forward to meeting you in August, and if you have any questions between now and then, don't hesitate to contact me at zach.young@beechwood.kyschools.us

Part I. Environmental Surveys/Ecological Awareness

Complete the footprint calculators below and create a Google doc to compile your results. For each footprint, take a **screenshot of your results** and create a **short summary paragraph** describing what you have learned about yourself.

A. Water calculator: <https://www.watercalculator.org/>

B. Ecological Footprint Calculator: <http://www.footprintcalculator.org/>

Part II. The Complexity of Environmental Issues

Read *American Wolf* by Nate Blakeslee. You can find this used online for as low as \$3.00, and there are copies at the local libraries. This is a good read that explores the relationships between the wolves of Yellowstone National Park and the various human stakeholder groups involved in the issue of the wolves' reintroduction.

After you have read the book, answer these questions in complete sentences. Each answer should be at least one paragraph in length and should include evidence from the text.

1. What have you learned about wolves after reading Blakeslee's book? What do they feed on, how do they survive the harsh landscape and winters, what are the social hierarchies within their packs or between packs? Did anything surprise you about them, their behavior, or their food sources?

2. In what way does the wolf reflect this country's cultural/political divide? Talk about the various stakeholders and lay out their respective points of view regarding the rights of wolves to populate and propagate in the West.

3. What side of the argument do you place yourself on? Does Blakeslee do a good job of giving all sides a say — is he fair? Can you understand the points on the opposing sides, even if you might disagree with them?

4. *Follow-up to Question 3:* If there's a hero in the book, who would it be?

5. Is there a foreseeable solution to the wolf problem?

6. Ed Bangs, the Fish and Wildlife biologist who had directed the wolf recovery project since 1988, once observed that "What we normally mean by "education" is, I want someone else to know as much as I know so they'll have my values" (131 p.). Is that how you see the idea of educating the public — more as a means of rhetorical persuasion than providing information? Or do you believe Bangs's view is a bit cynical? If so, then what does educating the public mean? Or what should it mean?

7. There is some debate over conservationists' decision to name the wolves, and chronicle their lives on social media. Do you think this is important to do, and if so, why?

8. On page 128, Blakeslee says, "The government instead adopted a pattern of selling access to the West's rich resources -- grazing rights, timber, precious metals, oil and gas --without actually selling the land itself." In cases like this, when something doesn't belong to you and you are just using it, what obligation do you have to protect it or use it wisely?

9. On page 130, Blakeslee alludes to the idea that nature has a way of keeping population sizes in check, but also says, "People wanted to shoot wolves, and that was reason enough for a wolf hunt." How do these two ideas illustrate the notion of "nature vs. humans" that is at the heart of many environmental issues?

10. Page 179 outlines the complicated and sometimes "behind closed doors" political process in our country, including the role of policy riders in delisting wolves near Yellowstone. Were you aware that policy riders existed, and what is your opinion of the use of policy riders in the United States' legislative process?

11. Native Americans were the first to inhabit our country, and they are well known for the way they lived in harmony with the land and all of its species. They killed only what they needed for survival and wasted no part of the animal. How do you think society has gone from that way of life

to the one that includes the trophy hunting mentioned in the book?

Part III. How You Affect Your Environment

Read one of the following books that deals with various ways in which you consciously or unconsciously affect the environment around you and the ways in which your environment affects you more than you may realize.

The Hidden Half of Nature; The Microbial Roots of Life and Health by David R. Montgomery and Anne Bilke

What Your Food Ate; How to Heal Our Land and Reclaim our Health by David R. Montgomery and Anne Bilke

Net Positive by Polman and Winston

After reading one of the above books, describe what your net take-away is. This response should be a minimum of 2 pages in length (Times New Roman, font size 12, single spaced) and include in text references that support your thought processes in regards to the insights you have gained about how you consciously or unconsciously affect the environment around you and the ways in which your environment affects you more than you may realize.

This assignment is due on **Friday, August 14, 2026.**