**Lesson 7: Great Basin National Park**

**Objective:** Students understand what a national park is, why they are formed, and why they are important. Students are familiar with Great Basin National Park and what makes it special.

**Time Consideration:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** One copy of [the handout](https://docs.google.com/document/d/16QfW8lQkrAR1GhxBIs2XTn9lcAhRh6WWBZzV2zHEJGw/edit) for each student, a means to conduct research about national parks (can be books or the internet), paper and a writing utensil

**Introduction:** In this lesson, students learn about the history of national parks. Then, they work in groups to research and present one park to the class. Finally, students learn about the nearest park to them - Great Basin National Park.

**Content:**

**Background:**

Founded in 1872, Yellowstone was America’s first national park. Created to protect special lands so that all Americans can enjoy them, national parks have been described as the best idea in American history. In 1916, the National Park Service was created to protect Yellowstone and the other national parks that had been established since 1872. Today, there are 63 national parks across the country, and the National Park Service manages 421 units, including parks, monuments, and historic sites.

Each national park is established for a special reason. National Parks are established when a congressman or senator from a region introduces a bill requesting the establishment of a national park in their region. The bill then goes through revisions, is put up for a vote, and eventually makes its way to president. National monuments go through a slightly different process, because they can be established through a presidential proclamation or by Congress.

In 1885, Absalom Lehman discovered what is now known as Lehman Caves. He commercialized the caves and began leading tours through them. In 1922, President Warren G Harding declared Lehman Caves as a National Monument, which was managed by the United States Forest Service. In 1924, Senator Key Pittman introduced a bill that would establish Lehman Caves as a National Park. For 53 years, Nevadans discussed and fought for the establishment of a National Park that would include Lehman Caves and portions of the surrounding Humboldt National Forest. Finally, in 1986, Congress established Great Basin National Park.

Today, Great Basin National Park includes 77,000 acres of unique geology, caves, a small glacier, and Bristelcone pines - the world’s oldest living tree. The park is home to over 230 species of birds, 60 species of mammals, and many reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Each year, it welcomes over 150,000 visitors. The park is also home to cultural artifacts and important clues about the history of the region.

**Introduction:**

1. Lead students through an introductory discussion about national parks.
   1. What is a national park?
   2. Who has been to a national park?
   3. Can anyone name a national park?
2. Then, show students [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0y1JT7NCP0) about national parks. As students watch the video, have them complete the handout.
3. Walk through the handout with students.

**Activity:**

1. Tell students that there are [63 national parks](https://ontheworldmap.com/usa/us-national-parks-map.jpg) (you can display this map to students). Today, they are going to explore a few of them. Break students into small groups (2-4 students per group is recommended). Have each group choose one national park to research. No groups should choose Great Basin National Park - they will learn about that park as a class.
2. Tell students that they are rangers for the park that they chose! They should research the following facts about their park so that they are ready to welcome their classmates as “visitors.”
   1. When was this park founded?
   2. What state(s) is the park located in?
   3. What makes this park special? (landforms, animals, etc.)
   4. What would a visitor enjoy doing in this park?
   5. If technology allows, have each group select a photo of their park to show to the class, or create a short slideshow with photos.
3. Once students have had time to finish this research, allow time for each group to present their park to the class.

**Conclusion:**

1. Tell students that there is only one National Park that lies entirely in Nevada - Great Basin National Park.
2. Has anyone visited Great Basin National Park?
3. Use [this slideshow](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15UTtqpmbhC9qjcdcOt82394mzyAKRanVIczOlS_RTQE/edit#slide=id.p) to do your own presentation about Great Basin National Park, in the same format as the students’ presentations.
4. Ask students what they would like to do at Great Basin National Park?

**Nevada Academic Standards**

**SS.4.24.** Examine how and why Nevada’s landscape has been impacted by humans.

**SS.4.33.** Examine jobs related to a career of interest.