**Backyard Ecology**

 **An Ecological Assessment of Your Neck of the Woods**

**The first step in protecting our fragile environment is education. You must learn about the ecology of your immediate area, and take steps to protect, conserve and improve your local environment. How aware are you of the environment in which you live? Using the questions below as your guide, you will assess your local environment. Your final product will be an “Ecological Assessment” of your area. This means it is a typed-up report. When ecologists assess an area, they may present their findings via a report. This report has all the information about the local area one would need to know in order to be educated about it. It includes headings, pictures, page numbers, appropriate font, etc. It is also bound in some way (like in a report cover). There is also a title page that says what the report is all about and who completed the report. You are going to be the ecologist in this project and turn in a completed assessment of your area.**

1. How would you describe the area in which you live? Use terms such as desert, prairie, or coastal. Even if you live in a city, in which type of environment was the city built?

2. Describe the climate of your area.

3. Name 5 plants that seem to be native to your area. For each plant, list one reason why it is important to humans. For example, can these plants be used as a source of food? Are they used in landscaping?

4. What type of wildlife can be found in your area? Make a list of the different animals that you have seen.

5. Referring to your list in question 4, are you aware of any laws or ordinances that protect any of these animals? If so, which animals, and why are they protected?

6. Make a list of any migratory mammals or birds that pass through your area. At what time of the year would you expect to see them?

7. What agricultural products are grown in your area? Is there a problem in obtaining the water necessary for growing these crops?

8. What pests are found in your area that might interfere with the growing of crops or livestock?

9. How do you dispose of garbage? Where does the garbage go when it is collected?

10. Do you recycle in your home? If so, list the types of items that you recycle.

11. How can you and your family improve in your efforts to recycle?

12. List three organizations or agencies in your area that are involved in the conservation and protection of the environment. Describe the purpose of each agency/organization.

13. What volunteer work have you done in your area to support the protection or conservation of the environment?

14. Are there any places in your area where you can go to fish? Would YOU eat the fish caught there?

15. When you consider the area in which you live, are there any obvious sources of pollution? If so, describe the source and the type of pollution.

16. How would you describe the air quality where you live?

17. How would you describe the water quality where you live?

18. Do you live in an area where logging or mining occurs? Are efforts made to restore the environment?

19. Other than recycling, what is done in your home that could be considered “conservation”?

20. What can you do at school to help conserve the resources of the environment?

21. Is there a recycling program at your school? What items at school could be recycled?

22. If your school does not participate in recycling, write a short paragraph in the space below to convince your principal to start a recycling program.

23. Your final conclusion about your local area. Conclude with your overall thoughts about what you

 discovered assessing your area. Are there places that need improvement? What are the good things

 occurring, the bad things, etc. Do you have any suggestions for improvement, etc?

**What all should be in my report?**

* **Your report should be typed, 12 point font (Arial, TNR, or Cambria are acceptable) or hand written (not double spaced, VERY neat, black or blue ink).**
* **Your report should be double-spaced.**
* **Your pages should be numbered (not the title page).**
* **You should have a title page with the title of your report and your name.**
	+ **You may also add a picture.**
* **Your report should have headings for each section.**
* **Your report should have a running header with the title of the report.**
* **Your report should include all the information from the questions BUT DOES NOT INCLUDE THE ACTUAL QUESTIONS. Remember, this is a report of findings.**
* **Your report should include actual pictures of the things you are talking about. For example, if you report squirrels in your report, having a picture of the squirrel may be helpful. There isn’t a minimum or maximum # of pictures, but pictures should be present throughout your report.**
* **Your writing should be free of errors - it’s clear and easy to understand.**
* **Your writing should be YOURS - NO PLAGIARISM.**