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## VANISHING RAINFORESTS

**Grades:** 6 through 8

**Time:** 50-60 minutes, if measurements are given, 120 minutes if students do the measuring

**Materials:** Tape measures; rainforest segment from the video *Spaceship Earth: Our Global Environment*

**Relevant Subjects:** Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies

**Math Standards:** Numbers and Operations, Geometry and Measurement

1. Share the Norman Meyers quote: “[Rainforests are] the finest celebration of nature ever known on the planet.” -- Norman Meyers, biologist
2. Ask students to share a bit of what they know and like about rainforests.
3. Share brief information with students about the importance of rainforests and what’s happening to them. (One source of information might be the Rainforest Action Network – [www.ran.org](http://www.ran.org).) Be sure to include an accurate statistic about how many acres of rainforest are being cut down in a certain amount of time (such as each day, each year, etc.).
4. Divide students into groups of three or four.
5. Have each group measure the school’s soccer or football field and then calculate the area of the field in square feet or square yards. Have students convert their answers to acres (1 acre = 43,560 ft<sup>2</sup> or 4,840 yd<sup>2</sup>).
6. Have students calculate the equivalent of how many of their fields are destroyed in rainforests each **year**. (Depending on the students’ levels, they may need to be reminded how many days in a year, hours in a day, minutes in an hour and hours in a second).
7. After each group has an answer, have them compare and discuss and decide which answer is correct.

8. Discuss how much land this amount is and brainstorm other comparisons (for example, it's more than your town, or state, etc. Students may want to research how big your town and state are).

**Alternative:** You may want to have different groups of students calculate how much rainforest is destroyed per different time periods (per second, minute, hour, day, week, month, year, etc.) and then locate/calculate an equivalent geographic area (such as: each second an area of rainforest the size of two of our towns is destroyed).

9. Have students brainstorm and discuss ways they can help prevent rainforest destruction. Examples might include:
  - Raise money to buy rainforest land.
  - Buy products that support the rainforest but not ones that destroy it.
  - Learn more about the connection between rainforest destruction and crops and cattle.
  - Use less paper.
  - Write letters to companies that participate in rainforest destruction.
  - Educate others.

### **Extensions:**

1. Team with another class and have students research rainforests and write reports (or share what they've learned in another way). Suggested topics might include endangered species from the forests, indigenous people who live there, ecosystems of the forests, diversity, species numbers and rates of extinction, etc.
2. Show a clip of the rainforest segment from the film *Spaceship Earth: Our Global Environment*.

**Activity by Pamela Krausz (Math Teacher, Humane Educator)**