One River, Three Governments

Trace how governments respond to a sewer overflow

USG.C.3.5.A "Explain how local, state, and national governments are involved in cooperatively shaping public policy and responding to public policy issues."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action by each level of government, and write F, S, or L above it for federal, state, or local. Circle two places where one level's work connects to another's.

When Rain Overwhelms a Sewer

1. After a summer downpour, a city's aging combined sewer pipes fill with rainwater and household wastewater. To keep sewage from backing up into homes, the system releases some untreated water into a nearby river. Anglers notice floating trash, and a rowing club cancels practice. The city cannot solve this problem by simply posting warning signs. It must decide how to prevent future overflows while keeping water bills affordable. The river flows past other towns, so decisions made at one city hall can affect people far downstream.

2. Under the federal Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets nationwide requirements for discharges into waterways and oversees state permit programs. The state environmental agency issues the city a discharge permit with enforceable limits and a schedule for reducing overflows. State inspectors check reports and can require changes when the city misses a deadline. The city water utility measures overflow events, maintains pipes, and proposes a storage tank that would hold extra water during storms. Federal rules set the floor, but state officials and city engineers work out a plan that fits local conditions.

3. As residents debate the tank's cost, the city holds a public meeting and considers raising water rates in stages. The state reviews whether the proposed project will meet permit conditions and offers a low-interest loan through a state program supported by federal and state funds. The EPA can review how the state runs its permit program and may take action if federal requirements are not met. Meanwhile, the city posts river warnings after overflows and sends event reports to the state. A warning responds to today's risk; the permit, financing, and construction aim to reduce tomorrow's pollution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do federal and state roles connect when the city receives its discharge permit?

2. How can the city's overflow measurements lead to a change required by the state?

3. How could federal and state funding affect the city's decision about the storage tank?

4. Why does the plan include both city river warnings and a longer-term permit and construction plan? Explain how another level of government is involved.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A river floods neighborhood streets after repeated heavy rain. Write four or five sentences proposing distinct local, state, and national government roles, showing how two levels would coordinate, and separating an immediate response from a long-term solution.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.3.5.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action by each level of government, and write F, S, or L above it for federal, state, or local. Circle two places where one level's work connects to another's. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do federal and state roles connect when the city receives its discharge permit?	**The EPA sets nationwide discharge requirements and oversees state permit programs. The state issues the city a permit with enforceable limits and a schedule for reducing overflows.**
2	How can the city's overflow measurements lead to a change required by the state?	**The city measures overflow events and reports them to the state. State inspectors check reports and can require changes if the city misses a permit deadline.**
3	How could federal and state funding affect the city's decision about the storage tank?	**The state offers a low-interest loan through a program supported by federal and state funds. That financing could help the city build the tank while it considers the effect on water bills.**
4	Why does the plan include both city river warnings and a longer-term permit and construction plan? Explain how another level of government is involved.	**City warnings address the immediate risk after an overflow. The state permit sets requirements for reducing future overflows, and the city's construction plan aims to meet them under federal rules.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

National Weather Service flood forecasts can help the state emergency agency warn cities before a river rises. The city should close flooded streets and open a temporary shelter while the state coordinates extra rescue equipment. Afterward, city engineers could propose larger drainage pipes and seek a state-administered grant supported by federal funds, if available. State officials and city engineers should review the plan together so the upgrades address local flooding and meet the grant's rules.

Accept other accurate connections among federal requirements, state oversight or financing, and city action. For Your Turn, accept plausible proposals that give all three levels distinct roles, identify a point of coordination, and distinguish immediate action from a long-term policy response.