

Overnight for All Without Harming the Environment

The Envirothon Environmental Education Center is located on a beautiful piece of property outside of Anytown, Maryland. A number of single family homes and condominiums surround the property owned by the Local Public School System. During the school year, it is used by sixth grade students for their week long residential environmental education program. On good weather weekends and during the summer, the property is used by a number of other organizations and the general public for recreational and educational purposes. Some of the recreational activities that can occur on this property include fishing in the small pond and streams, hiking along the trails that go through wetlands, forested land and along and over streams, family gatherings in the outside pavilion and organizational meetings in the dining hall. Along with the public and the school system, the property is also used by the local Parks and Recreation Agency which has high and low ropes courses that are used with a number of different groups including the entire eighth grade of the Local Public School System.

Presently, the site has two dormitories which allow for overnight experiences for these groups. The Local Public School System is looking to expand the overnight capacity of their site to better service their student population. This year, the Envirothon EE Center was only able to service about half of the sixth grade student population, about 1,500 students, through their four day, three night residential program. The current buildings can hold 120 people on any given night. The School System is looking to build another pair of dormitories that will be able to house an equal number of students, thus accommodating the entire sixth grade population during the year in an overnight experience.

The staff realizes that as the number of students visiting the property increases there will also be a greater impact on the natural resources. As more people explore the pond and streams, there may be an increase in the amount of litter that surrounds those areas. This litter will have to be picked up by the school systems custodial staff. During the summer and on the weekends, the number of visitors hiking, fishing, canoeing and picnicking would theoretically increase because of the expanded facilities as well as the increased publicity due to the rising number of students receiving a residential experience throughout the school year. This could lead to additional off trail use which will potentially cause an increase in the erosion on the site. Currently, the Environmental Education Center turns away many organizations during the summer because of capacity issues but with a doubled facility that restriction could be eliminated.

There are a limited number of locations on the property where these two buildings could be placed. Two locations have been identified but the carrying capacity of the site and environmental impact additional people would cause would have to be considered.

You have been given the task of developing a proposal that will go to the Local Public School System, the County Government, Planning and Zoning, and the County Parks and Recreation Agency that will explain how you will adapt the facility to allow for a residential experience for all sixth grade students. In this proposal, you will include the environmental impacts that the increase of students and community members will have on the property. You

will also include how you will continue the Parks and Recreation partnership as it is a vital recreational community asset on this property. In this proposal you will include:

1. A plan as to how to double the number of residential experiences at the site – build two new buildings or are there other more viable options?
2. How would the increase of students, weekend and summer visitors affect the natural resources on the property?
3. How would your proposal affect the different stakeholders who use the property?
4. What would be the environmental, social, political and economic implications of your proposal?