

2009 Canon Envirothon Oral Presentation Problem

The City of Asheville has a civic center, which the city is interested in replacing because of its age and small size. Asheville has talked for years about building a new green civic center, which would be a showcase for saving energy while serving Asheville and the surrounding small towns. They have formed a partnership between Buncombe County, Progress Energy and the City of Asheville to explore options to build the building both within and outside the city. Local citizens feel that the city needs to be green and to be responsible for protecting the environment.

The current seating capacity is 7,200 and they want to have 10,000 seats in the new facility. Cost of the new building would be between 80-100 million dollars. Planned events, which could draw crowds of 10,000, would be scheduled for plays, musicals, art shows, and sporting events.

Just southwest of Asheville stands a small mountain called Beaucatcher. There is a large forested river floodplain at the base, where Interstate 26 lies. This is the number one choice of locations for the center. There is a natural flat area close to the top, which can be used for the new civic center. There are two small streams that flow into Lake Powotan, one that flows through the property and one at the edge. The plans are to harvest the timber from the area and then bulldoze the area off in order to build the civic center on the twenty-acre site. These 20-acres would include space for parking, a flower garden, nature trails and the center.

They have done population studies, which show that there are over 1.5 million people living within a two-hour drive of this proposed facility not counting the number of tourist who would be present during the year.

Local environmental organizations have concerns because of the proposed destruction of the area. It is a very popular area because of the excellent trout fishing in the local streams and deer hunting, which takes place there now. The small town of Skyland has used the area as a forested watershed where they get their drinking water from Lake Powotan. A constant wind, blows across the top of the adjoining mountains where local people fly kites. Some people have voiced concerns about the loss of plant and animals from the affected site and about the huge influx of people on the environment for short periods of time. All of these activities would be affected by the proposed development.

This project would have to be approved by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners. There are many people against it for the damage it may cause to the environment. Many people support the proposal because of the increased revenue it could bring in and the possibility of a showcase green facility using alternative energy.

Since there is a lot of opposition to this project, the Commissioners have decided to do an environmental impact study to look at the project and to explore all options. They have hired an independent firm called Ecoterra to do this impact study. This study is to look at alternative energy uses, soils/land use, forest resources, watershed, wildlife, solid waste, and biodiversity and aquatic issues. Your assignment is to be this company's team of specialists and to bring back a report:

1. How will the project impact the environment and what can be done to mitigate the impacts?
2. Are there other options that can be implemented that will reduce the damage to the environment?
3. Are there other options that can produce the same benefits without using the top of the mountain?