

## Conservation Case Study

In January, you consulted with a family about possible conservation projects on their property. While they had undertaken your recommendations and were pleased with the outcome, now they find themselves in a new situation — they have to sell a portion of their land to raise much-needed cash. Once again, they've turned to you as their trusted environmental consultants.

Their land can be divided into three parcels. The family will keep the homestead parcel and sell one of the two remaining parcels. The financial outcome of selling either of their two parcels is nearly identical. But the sale of either parcel will likely create different environmental impacts and consequences for the family. Which is the best option for the family? For the land? Is there a difference?

### Parcel 1 - Big Woods

A perennial stream and several tributary creeks flow along the length of the larger parcel, feeding into a local lake. The stream has low banks, allowing it to meander across a riparian buffer that is nearly in some places a mile wide, earning the family's nickname, "The Big Woods". It was once a pine plantation, but it's been over 50 years since the last harvest. This generation of the family thinks of The Big Woods as an area to hunt, fish, collect firewood and wildflowers, and harvest forest plants such as ramps and mushrooms.

A developer is proposing to build about a dozen homes on 1-3 acre lots. About half of the lots would be along the stream. A road would need to be built along the spine of the parcel to access the proposed lots. Running roughly parallel to the stream, the road would utilize bridges and culverts to cross the stream and feeder tributaries. The length and complexity of the road make it one of the most costly infrastructure elements of the project. The homes would be on well and septic systems, 5-8,000 square feet, designed for energy efficiency, and use eco-friendly materials. The developer wants to strive for LEED certification, native plant landscaping, and limit exterior lighting as they believe it would appeal to their target market — educated, high-net-worth families.

Selling this parcel, the family would lose access to The Big Woods, the stream, and a lifetime of happy memories. They are concerned that homeowners would clear vegetation along the stream, and want to include a restriction to prevent clearing, but are concerned about enforcing that over time. They are also concerned about a dozen homes on well and septic systems, but like lower density housing creating fewer new neighbors, living lighter on the land.

### Parcel 2 - The Meadow

The second parcel is an area the family farmed for generations, affectionately called "The Meadow". While a developer proposes building units that would be lower cost, the density would be much greater, making it as profitable, if not more so, than the proposed Big Woods project. The land is flat, and the builder is wants a combination of two and three-story buildings of apartments and condos with parking beneath the buildings. The buildings are clustered together, thereby needing to build a much shorter road into the project. The price point for the units is lower, so the materials and finishes are significantly below what would be used for the Big Woods project.

The builder would install a tree and shrub buffer separating the parcel from the rest of the family's land, over time screening the buildings completely. While the family isn't wild about having so many new neighbors, they like that the project would be on a smaller piece of land, an area they haven't used much in years. They also like the idea of a lower price point per unit, which would provide much-needed housing in their county. By placing the parking under the buildings, the developer can provide some green space around the buildings and accommodate a bus stop shelter near the entrance.

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