



## “Location for learning”

The high school is running out of room for all its students and activities. The school board wants to construct a new building. There are three proposals that are being seriously considered. First, is a site not far from the existing building on a wetland. To build the new school, the wetland would have to be filled in and made suitable for construction. It is a great location. The second proposal includes building the school on the edge of town in an area that is being rapidly developed with new homes. The land used to belong to a farmer who has sold it to developers. The third site is a large plot of land that used to belong to a manufacturing company. The old buildings would have to be removed. There would be a lot of space for sports fields and the location is good.

- What makes a wetland different from any other ecosystem?  
*A wetland is a transitional area where land and water overlap. It is typically covered in about 18 inches of water. Because of the unique characteristics of wetlands, they are habitat for many species of wildlife.*
- What options do a farmer have other than selling his land to a developer?  
*A farmer can apply to put his land in a conservation easement so that the land cannot be developed.*
- What needs to be considered before the decision about constructing a new school can be made?  
*The needs of the school district (i.e. playing fields, size of building, parking, access to community, etc.)*  
*The possible locations*  
*The impact of the new building on the ecosystem where it is built.*
- What law(s) govern the types of things that must be reviewed before a site can be approved for building?  
*The National Environmental Policy Act*
- What are the pros and cons of each proposed site?  
*The wetland location is close to the existing building and may be more convenient. However, it is important habitat for wildlife and would require a more complicated engineering plan. The area surrounding the farmland site is already being rapidly developed. The school would be in a residential community and the impact on the environment seems would include a reduction of undeveloped open space or habitat for species and an increase in impervious surface where water cannot infiltrate the soil. The Brownfield location has a lot of room for playing fields. By building the school on a previously developed area, there would be no virgin land being disturbed.*

*Prior to building the school, the area would have to be checked for contaminants.*

- Given the information above, which site sounds most reasonable from an environmental perspective?

*Brownfield's are areas that have already been developed and would be reused in a different way, in this case for a new school. This site would have the least impact on the environment because it would not disturb untouched land. Farmland is the next best option and building on a wetland is the least desirable option from an environmental perspective.*

- What agency could you use as a resource for information about the effect of building on each site?

*The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*

*The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)*

*The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)*