

TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD: THAT IS YOUR QUESTION

Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House is planning to build a new restaurant in your town. After the Coconut Cove disaster, they've said they'll be more environmentally responsible—and honest. To do so, they need your help. They've asked you to examine the building site and to write a partial environmental impact statement (EIS). An EIS explains the effects that a project like a restaurant might have on the environment. An EIS also describes what can be done to reduce or avoid negative environmental impact from that project. So, examine the site carefully and, based on what you see, write about whether Mother Paula's should build there.

STEP 1: RESEARCH

Research your town and its ecosystem. What are your town's topographical features: wetlands, desert, prairie, mountains, forests, rivers, etc.? What types of animals live in your area? What types of habitat do these animals need to thrive? Are any of the plants or animals in your area threatened or endangered? Use your research to personalize the map below for your town.

Research the potential environmental effects of a new restaurant, examining both construction and daily operations once construction is completed. Consider air quality, water quality, waste, traffic, and the wildlife habitat.

STEP 2: EXAMINE RISKS AND BENEFITS

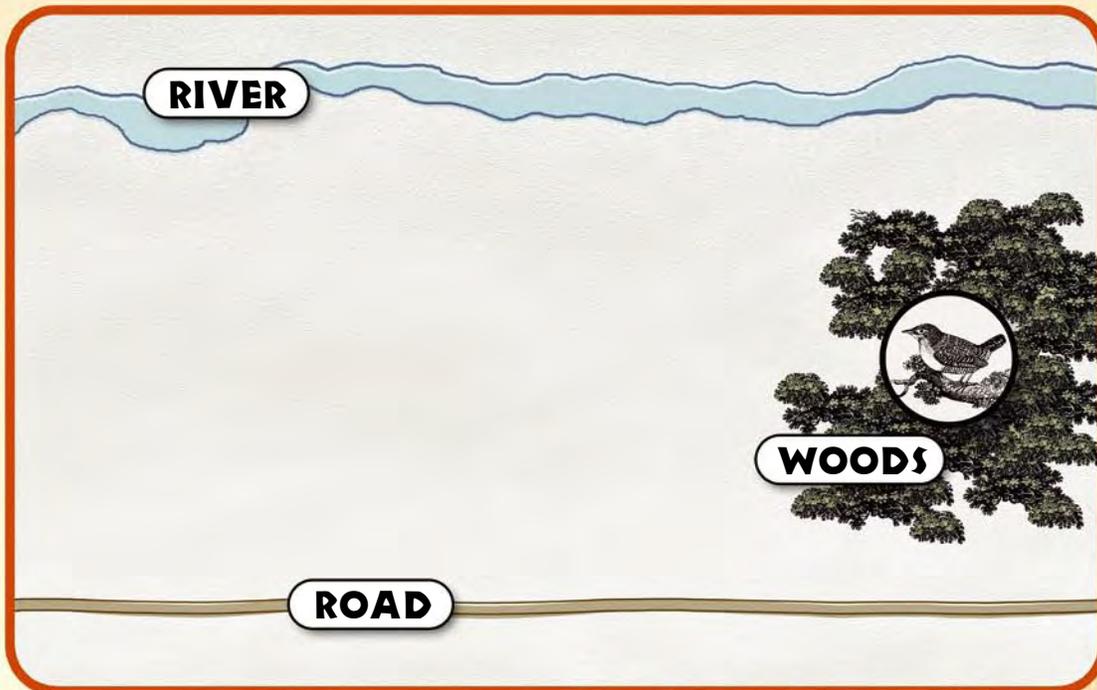
Using your research and your personalized map of

the construction zone, try to evaluate the risks of this project to the ecosystem. When possible, provide alternatives that eliminate or reduce possible risks. Also examine the social and economic benefits and/or risks of adding a new Mother Paula's Pancake House to your town. Who will benefit? Who will not benefit? Why?

STEP 3: SUMMARIZE YOUR RESULTS

Write a letter to the president of Mother Paula's Pancake House summarizing your results. In your final paragraph, provide your analysis based on the evidence you collected—evidence that helps you to conclude whether a new Mother Paula's Pancake House should be built on this site. Make sure you have considered the risks and benefits of the venture.

Personalize the map below to your area.



BASED ON THE BESTSELLING NOVEL

HOOT

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SUBJECTS: Science, Language Arts, Social Studies

NATIONAL STANDARDS: NSES Grades 5-8: Standard A: Science as Inquiry; Standard C: Life Science; Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives; Language Arts: NCTE/IRA: Standard 5: Communication Strategies; Standard 7: Evaluating Data; Social Studies: NCSS Standard 3: People, Places, and Environments

DURATION: 3-5 45-minute class periods and homework

MATERIALS: Research resources (e.g. libraries, the Internet, adults working in relevant fields), drawing supplies, paper and pencils or computers with word-processing capabilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the potential environmental impact that construction and business can have on an ecosystem;
- To analyze and compare a project's environmental impact and socio-economic value;
- To create alternatives that can lessen or avoid negative environmental impact;
- To evaluate evidence and write a clear, organized assessment of that evidence.

PROCEDURES:

1. Hand out the "To Build or Not to Build" activity sheets. As a class, read the scenario presented. You may want to get students thinking by beginning with a short class discussion about the pros and cons of opening a new restaurant in your town and where such a restaurant could be located. You may also want to provide students with more background information on Envi-

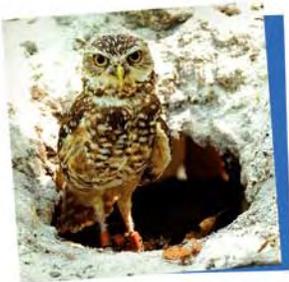
ronmental Impact Statements. (A basic explanation of an EIS is available at www.walden.com/web/teach/dev/hoot/eis. Please note that students do not write a full EIS in this activity.)

2. Review the instructions as a class and then proceed through the activity as described on the activity sheet, adjusting your timeline to your students' levels and the depth of research you would like them to do. Depending on your class' familiarity with independent research, you may want to have your class brainstorm ideas before each step in the process, i.e. elements of your area's ecosystem, research questions, environmental hazards, and socio-economic benefits.

ADAPTATIONS: With ELL or younger students, consider doing the activity as a class. You can divide the research and assign specific research questions to students. Students can then compile their research to create a class decision on whether to build the restaurant.

ASSESSMENT: Create a rubric for the entire project that covers both the research period and the final written letter to give students a clear understanding of the project's intended scope. It may be helpful to list expectations for each of the research, science, social studies, and written elements of the assignment.

EXTENSIONS: Once students have completed their projects, hold a class debate on whether the restaurant should be built. To do this, it may be helpful to begin with a uniform map of the building site. Students may now also be interested in researching and evaluating past, current, and future building projects in your area.



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