



Looking Beyond the Trees for Sustainable Revenue

Executive Summary:

Aqua America, a utility company focused on the sustainable use and supply of water, was looking for ways to generate additional revenue from their forested land. Conservation Economics (CE) was engaged to inventory and evaluate the variety of resources available on their 2,000 acres, make recommendations for the financially beneficial, ecologically sustainable and community-supported uses of the property, and implement the solution.

Conservation Economics

- Performed a thorough assessment of the natural resources, historical and existing infrastructure, and community perspectives on the project
- Made recommendations for sustainable uses that aligned with Aqua America's mission, vision and values
- Put a plan in place for monetizing this underutilized asset

Client Challenge:

Aqua America retained lands that were acquired as part of large parcels related to water management, land swaps and holdings for future projects. Over the past decades the forest had been logged to generate income but this was a limited resource. The company was looking for more diverse ways to generate revenue that would not interfere with the water quality or quantity. Their desire was to find a solution that would benefit the company, its shareholders, the community and the environment.

Conservation Economics Solution:

Aqua America engaged Conservation Economics to assess the 2,000-acre Roaring Creek Property located near Shamokin, PA, and recommend strategies for generating environmentally sustainable revenue.

In an extensive inventory, CE compiled:

- property maps (boundaries, zoning, topography, easements, etc.)
- information on ecosystem characteristics (geology, soils, hydrology vegetation, etc.)
- infrastructure (buildings, roads, bridges, etc.)
- property history, uses, and related property issues
- interviews with local community and business leaders about opportunities for sustainable economic development and innovation

Based on the initial property inventory CE evaluated the suitability of more than 50 sustainable uses for this site, gradually narrowing down the possibilities according to:

- feasibility
- projected financial success
- impact on the land and surrounding community

A deeper analysis of the property inventory identified the top four solutions that best aligned with Aqua America's mission. These included: eco-lodging, land donation, carbon sequestration and wind power.

Results:

The company evaluated the recommendations and pursued potential wind energy for the site.