



THE WILDS Cumberland, Ohio

The Wilds is a private, non-profit conservation center located on 10,000 acres of reclaimed mine land in rural southeastern Ohio. It was created as the conservation center of the future by a group of civic leaders, political leaders, and zoo professionals who believed that a serious scientific approach was required to find solutions to environmental concerns.

In an effort to expand the center's revenue stream and make it sustainable in ways that support its mission, The Wilds (through Ohio University's Voinovich School) retained RCLCO to study the feasibility of developing a conservation-based, destination resort and residential community on the property. In order to devise the optimal strategy, RCLCO:

- Identified the most likely target markets for a resort and residential destination at The Wilds;
- Created case studies of 'mission driven' resorts around the country, in order to identify best practices;
- Assessed the opportunity for a variety of amenities and experiences to enhance the resort offering and expose guests to The Wilds' scientific activities;
- Incorporated the latest thinking on green development practices, and assessed creative opportunities to make the resort truly sustainable, via techniques such as organic farming, on-site energy generation, and low-impact golf course design.



Our analysis concluded that there is a strong opportunity for a mid-scale lodge and conference center, catering to executive retreats and small corporate gatherings. In addition, the amenities and programs that could be provided at The Wilds should appeal to leisure travelers interested in eco-tourism, experiential vacations, or simply the chance to unwind among hundreds of ponds, rolling hills, and exotic wildlife. As the destination matures (and in a stronger economic environment), there should be a good opportunity to deliver residential lots and higher-density cottage products.

We delivered our findings to a group representing The Wilds leadership and board of directors, a potential development partner, and the Ohio Governor's Office of Appalachia. Our findings have been utilized by Ohio University to prepare an economic impact analysis, and at the present time The Wilds and its partners are formulating a strategy to proceed with development planning.