



What's It Worth?

Objective: Students will think about the intrinsic value of open space.

Summary: Students will draw their favorite place on a piece of paper. In groups they will draw a development to be built on an empty lot. Discussion will explore what makes these places attractive to them.

Time: 1½ hours

Student Grouping: First individuals, then groups of four to five, then whole class discussion.

Materials: Drawing materials

Background Information: We all have

favorite places but don't often think of what makes it our favorite place. In this activity students are encouraged to think about what kinds of places they like, how a place makes them feel good, and why. They can discuss their different preferences. As a group they will decide how to use a piece of open space to make it attractive to others, incorporating things they like with preferences of others.

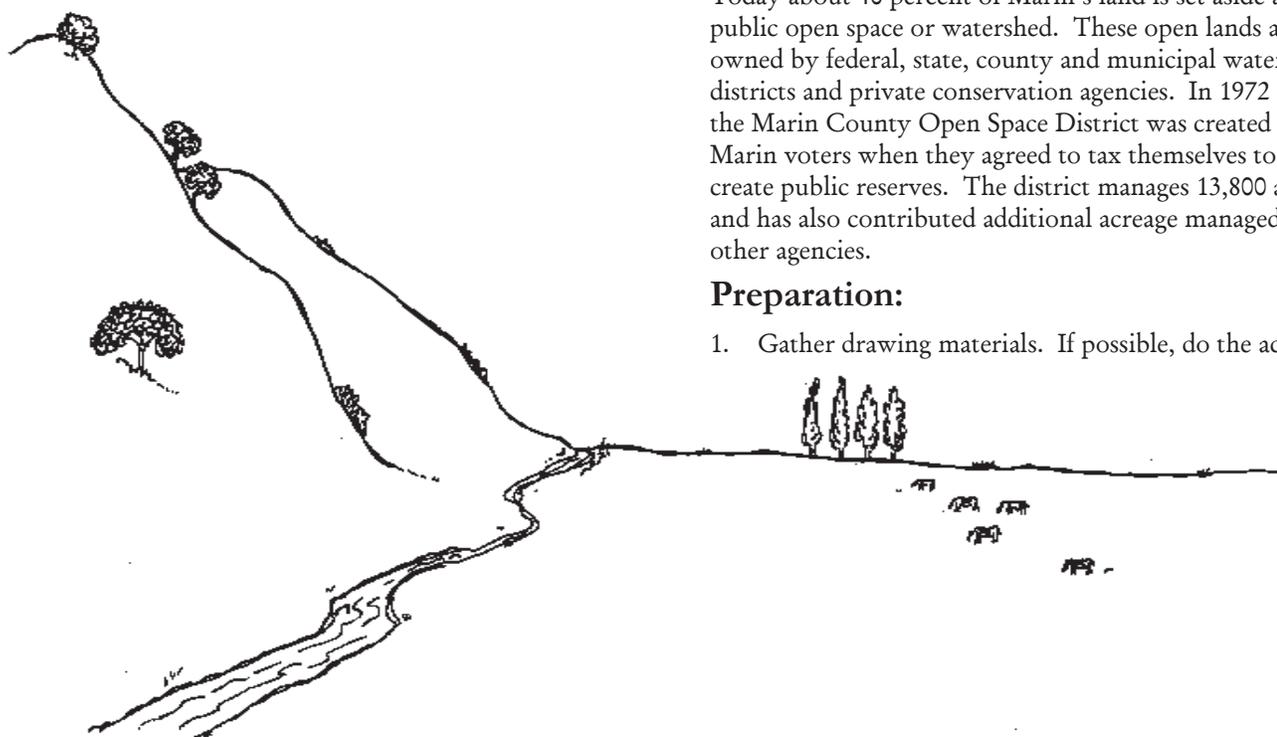
Marin Ag. Facts: Development pressure has been

present in Marin County for a long time. In the late 1800s two brothers and their law firm owned most of the Point Reyes area. It was divided into ranches and leased to dairymen. The owners tried to develop the land for gold, oil and lumbering. One proposal for 10,000 lots on Inverness ridge was advanced in 1905 only to collapse with the 1906 earthquake. Nothing much happened for 50 years. The 1950s saw the area logged, and massive development, housing for 1.2 million people, was again proposed. Subsequently, there were citizen efforts which resulted in the formation of the Point Reyes National Seashore by Congress in 1962. Dairy and cattle ranching remain in the park through government leases.

Today about 40 percent of Marin's land is set aside as public open space or watershed. These open lands are owned by federal, state, county and municipal water districts and private conservation agencies. In 1972 the Marin County Open Space District was created by Marin voters when they agreed to tax themselves to create public reserves. The district manages 13,800 acres and has also contributed additional acreage managed by other agencies.

Preparation:

1. Gather drawing materials. If possible, do the activ-





ity on a day when students can go outside and sit by themselves while they draw. Encourage them to make up their own minds about what their favorite place is.

Procedure:

1. Ask students what their favorite place at school is. Discuss what makes that place their favorite.
2. Send students off by themselves to draw their favorite place in the world. It can be imaginary or real. Give them a time limit and meet back together when the drawings have been completed.
3. Ask each student to write or briefly list what makes this their favorite place. Have them write down how this place feels to them.
4. Ask for volunteers to share their pictures and reasons for their favorite place.
5. Group students and tell them they are the city planning commission and must decide what to do with an empty lot close to town. Ask them to draw their plan for this open space.
6. Have groups share their plans with the rest of the class.

Questions for Discussion:

- Were there very different ideas for the empty lot? What were the ideas?

- Did anyone have similar ideas in their drawings?
- Did your group put buildings on their land or leave it open and unbuilt?
- Who benefits from open land? From built land?
- Do you think your group's plan would make the community happy? Why?
- What are the main features of your project? Why?

Extensions:

- Have a city planner talk to the class.
- Develop plans for an actual location and present your ideas to the city council.
- Interview someone who has been in the community for a long time and find out how the area has developed.
- Look for developments that don't seem to fit into the area and discuss why.

