INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: Neighbours Against Irresponsible Logging

Tags; mapping, environmental impact

Overview:

Neighbours Against Irresponsible Logging (NAIL) is a Californian community group formed in response to a proposal to log a large region of the Santa Cruz Mountains. When residents originally received the notice from the logging company, the map provided was difficult to understand and did not clearly demonstrate the scale of the proposed logging area. One resident (Rebecca Moore) created a Google Earth map instead, showing the proposed logging plan over a high definition 3d satellite image of the area. She used a range of fairly simple mapping techniques, available through Google Earth for free (or for a very minimal fee), to very clearly and powerfully demonstrate the scale and location of the proposed logging.

As Rebecca reports on the website: "At the packed-to-overflowing community meeting in September, 2005, I first presented this <map> to about 300 residents. When I flew in from outer space to the Santa Cruz Mountains, and then turned on the long, red swath representing the logging zone, there was a gasp from the audience. Then we virtually flew:
Up the Los Gatos Creek canyon
Past our homes and our childrens' schools
Along our steep and narrow mountain roads that would be burdened with a dozen per day 90,000-pound logging trucks navigating more than 30 blind curves where children walk to school
Past active landslide areas on the slopes alongside the creek that SJWC proposed to log (along the San Andreas Fault)
Over the proposed helicopter landing pads near homes and the daycare center
Along the currently pristine and beautiful creek to its headwaters.

We flew to the actual locations and photographs of old-growth redwoods which could be cut. Then I used the Ruler tool in Google Earth to measure the distance from the logging zone to the preschool and daycare center. It was less than 300 yards.

The flyover electrified the room. Suddenly everyone began to call out issues, questions and concerns that had become apparent in the plan. We used Google Earth interactively to zoom to and study various areas. I was asked to repeat the flyover twice that day, and subsequently have been asked to present it at more than a dozen additional community meetings and to many individuals and organizations."

Why is it relevant to PTS?

INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

As is apparent from this, the mapping tool was a very powerful way of linking people to their environment and the potential impacts on the environment from human activity (in this case the proposed logging, but it could be anything)

This was primarily used as an educational tool for a community in response to the logging proposal but served to galvanise the community around their shared assets

As a successful case study, it has been used as a model for groups around the world to learn from in the protection of local ecosystems and an easy and effective way to make a case for preservation or restoration with little budget

Hints and tips for PTS:

As with the Appalachian mountain case study, the use of mapping tools like Google Earth provide a range of opportunities to directly connect the community to their environment, and the real/potential impacts of human activity

It could be used to create a virtual, 3d map of the catchment and you could fly through the area seeing all the streams and how they connect, and the places in which the natural environment is being eroded or destroyed

Contact and further information:

See the write up of this case study on the Google Earth website
Neighbours Against Irresponsible Logging (NAIL)