

Virginia Tech Stadium Forest Assessment

Blacksburg, Virginia



In order to improve football recruiting efforts and replace an outdated field house, Virginia Tech sought to construct a new, indoor football practice facility. The ideal location, immediately adjacent to the existing locker room and outdoor practice facility, was not an option as the surrounding land was already occupied by a basketball facility, tennis courts, and a forested area known as ‘Stadium Woods.’

By assessing and ascertaining the value of a wooded area on the campus of Virginia Tech that was slated for development, the university was able to preserve a 400-year-old old growth forest.

The initial siting of the facility, which placed it partially within Stadium Woods, was not well received by members of the community, as the forest consisted of numerous mature oak trees.

Biohabitats helped Virginia Tech ascertain the ecological value of Stadium Woods by conducting a three-step forest assessment. First, we utilized the U.S. Forest Service’s I-Tree Eco model, which assigns a monetary value to existing forest cover that is based on the value of the ecological services the forest and trees provide. Second, using the Land Suitability Index, we evaluated several site options to determine the ability of each for development, as well as the ecological impacts of development on each site.

Third, using a suite of metrics that we developed in-house for deciduous forests, we determined the overall condition of the forest and compared it to other forests in the region.

The results of the study indicated that the forest associated with Stadium Woods was of significant quality and monetary value, and that from a development perspective, was not the ideal location for the new practice facility. This information was presented to a committee that was convened to determine the final location of the new facility. As a result, the committee recommended that an alternative site location be chosen.

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