

Policy Case Study Term Paper Assignment Natural Resources 4300, Spring 2012

1. Topic

The term paper is the key focus of your work in this course and will constitute the greatest proportion of your final grade; therefore it is important for you to choose a public policy issue or problem that has clear national (U.S.) environmental or natural resource implications. Ideally, the topic should be one in which you have a serious enough interest to become thoroughly and enthusiastically engaged. Please feel free to consult with the instructors about your proposed term paper topic; they may be able to help you get started and/or avoid unusually difficult topics.

Topics that can provide an effective focus are those that: (1) have received attention by Congress during its current session, (2) are currently receiving active attention by staff from at least one federal agency, and (3) have been receiving ongoing attention from at least one type of interest group. In past years students have typically focused on topics receiving attention in Congress. But as we will discuss during this course, most recent active developments in environmental policy are taking place within executive branch agencies and in the courts, i.e. outside of the legislative branch of government. Therefore, you might find it fruitful to pursue an environmental policy topic that currently is subject to pending or recent action by a federal agency as an administrative ruling, or one for which stakeholders with substantial interests are implementing a long-term strategy, including judicial review of existing statutes.

Topics that do not work well are those focused mostly on local or state-level problems, or solely international topics for which no discrete U.S. role has developed. International topics may be selected, but only if the U.S. has had clear and meaningful involvement. We will talk about appropriate topics during our fall meetings, but again, meet with the instructors to discuss any questions you have regarding possible term paper topics.

2. Key dates for topic selection

- a) November 10, 2011 (second fall planning meeting):
 - Come prepared to discuss your potential term paper topic idea(s); no written document is required.
- b) December 2, 2011:
 - Submit a one to two page written description of your proposed term paper topic to Drs. Kraft (cek7@cornell.edu) and Bedford (blb4@cornell.edu) no later than 4:00 p.m. This description should include full citations for four references that demonstrate you have located relevant information about your proposed topic. You may include a mass media source as one of your citations. This requirement for citations ensures that you have selected a topic for which information is available.
- c) December 5 - 16, 2011:
 - Each student is expected to meet with Dr. Kraft (cek7@cornell.edu) and Dr. Bedford (blb4@cornell.edu) to discuss their proposed paper topic. Arrange these meetings by e-mail through Meghan Baumer (msb336@cornell.edu).

3. Sources of Information

You will use a combination of information sources for your term paper, such as on-line and print library resources, web sites of various governmental and non-governmental organizations, the mass media and alternative media, etc. One of the richest sources of information available to understand your topic will be obtained during interviews you conduct while in Washington. Careful planning and preparation for these interviews is essential. You are required to conduct at least three interviews, including: (1) a staff member from the legislative branch; (2) an interest group/lobbyist staff from a non-governmental organization; and (3) a scientist or manager/regulator from a federal agency. Most students complete many more than this minimal requirement for interviews. We strongly recommend that you set up one or two of these meetings before you arrive in Washington, D.C.

4. Content of the Final Term Paper.

a) Describe the issue you have chosen, its history, present status, stakeholder groups involved and affected, reasons for various pressures and interests, and the associated ecological and socio-political environment.

b) Describe this issue by framing it with regard to key elements of the policy process (see assigned readings and class notes). Consider questions such as the following: What stage(s) has your issue moved through? How does the process surrounding your issue mimic or differ from the idealized model discussed in class? How and why did your issue make it onto the public agenda? What individuals and groups provided input into the formulation of policy options? What types of policy instruments were considered (or are being considered) to address your case study topic, and how were they (or are they being) assessed? How were (or are) implementation programs and other elements of the policy process being evaluated in this situation, and what implications does this have for future policy cycles?

c) Describe the likely future of this issue, including proposals by key stakeholders regarding how the issue should be addressed or resolved. Present a balanced perspective, discussing various "sides" or viewpoints and the potential advantages and disadvantages of various possible or proposed solutions.

d) Take a position regarding what you believe should be done regarding this policy topic. Your position should be unambiguous and you should defend it as necessary, referring to arguments and data as in (2a) and (2c) above.

e) Include citations of your source materials throughout the text using the author, year format (Kraft & Bedford, 2000). List all cited works in a "Literature Cited" section at the end. Use of any on-line sources should include the date of the site's last update and the date visited, as well as the full URL or DOI. References may include peer-reviewed journal articles; the web sites of federal agencies, federal institutions, and non-governmental organizations involved in environmental policy issues; and print media such as national newspapers and magazines. Be especially careful with use of the print media; check any statements of fact against the peer-reviewed literature or documents published by federal agencies or institutions. The sources identified for you by University Librarian, Fred Muratori, at our third fall meeting will provide you with additional sources for your final paper. If in doubt about use of a source, ask Barbara or Cliff.

f) Include a separate list of all personal contacts you made in Washington for this project (name, title,

organization, date and time of meeting).

g) In general, your term paper should provide a substantive treatment of policy questions surrounding an important national environmental policy issue. Do not overemphasize historical or technical aspects of a particular subject or get too deeply involved in reporting detailed data, yet make sure to provide sufficient information to support your position and convince the reader of the credibility of your argument. Balance is important, and we will try to guide you in achieving an effective balance between detail and clarity.

h) Both course instructors place a premium on clarity in writing. Organization, coherence, and clarity of your writing will influence your grade, as will use of proper grammar, punctuation, and syntax.

5. Length

Your term paper should consist of about 18-20 pages of text (double-spaced, 12-point font), plus any additional pages for figures and tables, literature citations, a title page, list of contacts, and any appendices or other secondary material you consider important. Be both complete and concise.

6. Due Date

April 9, 2012 (5 p.m.). Please send term papers electronically to both Barbara Bedford (blb4@cornell.edu) and Cliff Kraft, cek7@cornell.edu. If you find that this completion date is not convenient for you, arrange an alternative due date with either Cliff or Barbara – prior to March 30, 2012.

7. Abstract and Oral Presentations

A separate one-page abstract is required one week prior to your oral presentation in late February or early March 2012, which you will be expected to distribute via email to all students and faculty in the course by 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding your presentation. The abstract should provide a synopsis of your oral report. Oral presentations should be 15 minutes in length with 5 minutes for discussion and questions, i.e., 20 minutes total. Your presentation will be scheduled by class agreement and will be evaluated by other students and by faculty. Tentative dates for oral presentations are February 23, March 1, 8, 15 (7:00 - 9:30 p.m.), Room 133 Emerson. These presentations should be supported by PowerPoint visuals, though you should use text slides judiciously and sparingly.

8. Penalties for Lateness

Unexcused late papers will be penalized as follows:

- a) Up to 20% per day of the potential paper grade, depending on lateness and any possible mitigating circumstances.
- b) The instructors reserve the right to give only minimal time to an evaluation and response to late papers.