

Stakeholder Profiles

Consider yourself a staffer in your Senator's office. She has asked you to profile an environmental stakeholder. The Senator hasn't give you any particular instruction regarding the format, other than that each profile be no more than 1 1/2 pages in length (1 1/2 spaced). **Write your report up as a properly formatted memo addressed to your senator.**

Information you may want to consider presenting includes:

- * brief history of the organization
- * its most important environmental issues, political orientation, and strategies
- * organization's financial position, funding sources, and the size of its operation (budget, staff)
- * your assessment of the organization's clout and effectiveness

You'll want to pay particular attention to the websites maintained by the organizations you are investigating — look for their annual statement, in particular. Other websites that should be helpful in developing insight into these organizations and moving past a simple summary of their web pages include:

- * GuideStar provides extensive profiles and financial information on non-profits <http://www.guidestar.org/> (log in with jturner@wellesley.edu and 57231c70 as password)
- * Give.org provides profiles and financial information on non-profits <http://www.give.org/>
- * Disinfopedia offers opinionated assessments of some public interest groups (it is generally left-leaning in its viewpoints) <http://www.disinfopedia.org/>
- * Sourcwatch is similar to Disinfopedia. <http://www.sourcewatch.org>

It is up to you to be the detective, and ferret out as much useful information as you can about these organizations — that is what your senator is asking you to do. There is no set formula for this memo; follow your leads! If you think you have a lead, but you aren't sure how to follow it, be sure to ask me or send me an email. I'll help.

So, some **general** steps to follow in completing this assignment:

1. Gather as much background information about these organizations as you can: their general philosophy, what actions they take, the specific issues they address, and funding sources.
2. Sort through your research material, and determine what information is most important to report to your Senator.
3. Synthesize this material into a 1-1/2 page, 1-1/2 spaced, concise profile for each organization. **Do not just report what you found; present the most relevant information in a clear, cogent, and efficient manner. What connections do you see in your research that aren't apparent at first?** Three-fourths of your issue brief should provide evidence and background information. The final few lines of your issue statement should offer your assessment of the organization.
4. Be prepared to provide a 3 minute (no more!) **well-organized overview** of your organization during class — we'll select presentations later this week.

A sample memo is attached to this assignment. It meets the basic expectations of the assignment, but the research is limited as are the insights it offers.

Potential GroupsFoundations & Think Tanks

Heritage Foundation
Brookings Institution
Cato Institute
Pew Charitable Trusts
American Enterprise Institute
Competitive Enterprise Institute
George Marshall Institute

Opposing Groups

Mountain States Legal Defense Fund
Blue Ribbon Coalition
Political Economy Research Center
Cascade Policy Institute
Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise
Society for American Foresters
American Coal Council
National Mining Association
Heartland Institute

Environmental Groups

Wilderness Society
Pesticide Action Network
Sierra Club
Environmental Defense
EarthJustice
World Wildlife Fund
Defenders of Wildlife
National Wildlife Federation
1Sky
Earth Island Institute

Date: 1/25/06

To: Senator John Kerry

From: Student

Re: Stakeholder Profile of the NRDC

The National Resource Defense Council is currently one of the most active nonprofit environmental organizations in the United States. Created in 1976 as a project of the Tides Foundation, an organization that funds nonprofit groups which works towards what it calls “positive social change”. The NRDC currently boasts between 500 thousand and 1 million members with a yearly revenue approaching 50 million dollars. They work primarily in a legislative role but also deal with public awareness, political pressure, promotion of activism and grassroots activity to achieve their goals.

The mission of the NRDC is to protect the planet’s natural systems and the life that depends on it; to “restore the integrity of the elements that sustain life- land, air, water- and to defend endangered natural places.” They seek to establish long term environmental sustainability without jeopardizing the welfare of the current generation. Given these broad objectives the NRDC deals with a wide variety of issues. Some of these include global warming, wildlife and habitat, land use issues, nuclear weapons and waste, public health and toxic chemicals, environmental legislation, clean air and water, the EPA and other governmental organizations and an assortment of development concerns. The only environmental issues it seems the NRDC has stayed away from completely has been the very unpopular or controversial issues, such as limiting world population growth and immigrant reduction into the United States.

Under the able leadership of many notable people such as John Adams (former assistant U.S. attorney), Robert Redford (film actor and director), and Frances Beinecke (co-founder of the league of conservation voters), the NRDC has reinvented itself to better fit the changing times. They have utilized the internet to spread awareness and rally support quickly to issues and have gained grants and contributions (their primary forms of funding) though it. The NRDC has moved away from its grassroots activities and has concentrated more on science and law. This has proved to be very effective when it comes to causing change on a national level but risks alienating some of its support who view it as becoming something akin to a corporate institution. For this reason the NRDC has attempted to portray themselves as a still reasonably grassroots organization.

The NRDC most recent work includes opposition to oil drilling in Utah, the Rockies, and various areas of Alaska, the banning of a sonar system used by the navy that injures sea life, the classification and reclassification of species under the Endangered Species Act, and the weakening of the Clean Air Act, the EPA, and various forest protections. The NRDC’s agenda is an idealist one. Even with their relatively extensive resources, being involved on so many fronts is very financial taxing but they have succeeded against a significant amount of legislation and policies. The NRDC is still a powerful entity and should be taken account of in the decision making process for environmental issues.