Short Assignment for

Senior Seminar: Environmental Impact Assessment and Policy Development
Environmental Studies 461

Janet MacFall
Environmental Studies Department

Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

Course Goals
Environmental professionals are broadly trained with backgrounds in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Professionals in this area commonly engage in group work and must have strong research, writing and verbal skills. They must be able to analyze data, conduct field research and critically analyze materials. They must also recognize the value of community and professional partnerships in their work. The goal of this course is for students to improve and demonstrate these cross-disciplinary skills through development of a semester long environmentally focused project.

The Assignment I Distribute to Students

ENS 461 – Senior Seminar: Environmental Impact Assessment and Policy Development
Log/Journal Documentation and Project Progress

Student Learning Outcome
A Student Learning Outcome from this assignment is that students will learn to document activities/actions related to project development using professional standards.

Documentation
Environmental work must be documented to identify and record information and analysis, chain of custody of samples and/or information, project participants and their activities, and to record project progress.

Government and other professional work often requires evidence and documentation, especially if there are questions or disputes at a later date. Information from a project or even a discussion with a client or the public
can sometimes be needed long after the original project was completed and the team has dispersed.

Clear evidence and documentation can also help resolve legal issues and may be needed in a related chain of events. An example was provided by a member of the N.C. Soil and Water Division in Orange County, NC. Gail Hughes, the Soil & Water agent, shared a story based on her professional experiences.

Gail worked with a dairy farmer in Orange Co., NC, to construct ponds for containment of animal waste. She provided written recommendations and plans for construction and operation of the manure containment ponds, which were needed for the dairy operation. Written records of all communications were kept. Permits were issued from the local government for construction of the manure containment ponds, and a note was added to the deeds for the land.

After several years, the land was sold to a developer. Gail met with the developer, and discussed the prior usage of the land and restrictions that had been placed on the land for future use, again recording (by writing) all communications. The developer subdivided the land and sold the lots as part of an “Equestrian Estate Development”. By that time, the manure containment ponds looked like any other farm pond, and were advertised as an attractive asset of the community. Based on the promotional materials from the sales office, one of the new landowners wanted to drain one of the ponds on the land they had purchased. They hired a contractor, and the pond was gone.

However, because of their original purpose when constructed, this was in violation of state law. Based on their original purpose, removal of the ponds was of concern because of potentially polluting a nearby stream. The homeowner and the developer claimed they didn’t know, and could not be held responsible for any legal violations. Gail Hughes was called in to provide evidence of environmental violations.

What kind of evidence could be provided? Did written document play a role in this drama?

Another illustration of the importance of evidence documentation can be seen with the issues of climate change – where there is still public questioning (skepticism?) of analyses and conclusions despite scientific consensus. Verification of researcher’s studies and professional activity has been extremely important in the evaluation of the “truth” and validity of climate change research.
**Audience**
Self, project partners, future project participants

**Assignment**
Write a weekly log/journal that documents evidence of your own work, evolution of the project goals and progress, and project team activities, accomplishments and progress. The log/journal should be kept in a 1 in. three ring binder, so additional materials can be easily added.

Each weekly entry should include the 3 parts described below:

1. **Visual Depiction** of project management plan and relevant progress for the week,
2. **Records** providing evidence of Specific Activities,
3. **Analysis** of Project Progress.

Weekly entries should be placed sequentially, with the most recent entry at the front of the weekly log/journal section. Each weekly section should be dated with the date the journal is turned in (the Wednesday date). Other sections of the binder will hold copies of your work, such as your annotated bibliographies and literature reviews.

**Visual Depiction**
- Visual depiction of the project management plan clearly showing the project goal, information to be collected, and how information will be analyzed/used in the project. The goal (target condition) should be indicated by a unique symbol setting it apart from other parts of the diagram. Use the method for concept mapping described in the text “Measures of Success” that was used to guide case study discussions early in the course. Indicate changes made to the diagram as the project management plan is modified throughout the semester to meeting changing needs and priorities as they are identified. Each week, indicate on the diagram if there were changes made. Also make a notation on the diagram indicating current state. May be hand drawn in.
See the example below:

Records Providing Evidence of Specific Activities

- Record of all activities of the past week, including dates, times, places, participants, meeting goals and outcomes.

- Records of your individual work including collected information, notes on how/where information was recorded, if it will it be shared with others, notes on how your work contributes to the project progress.

- This part of the log will provide **EVIDENCE** for the data you have collected and the project progress.

Analysis of Project Development

- Project progress analysis – are you and the project team meeting timeline expectations? Is adaptive management needed to change the project management plan? Is information being collected and analyzed as will be needed?

- Are there challenges which need to be addressed either by you or the project team?

- Were goals/plans that were identified for the week achieved?

- What are the plans for the upcoming week?
Additional Sections in the Log Notebook which should be Separated with Dividers can Include

- List of all contact people including phone numbers, e-mails, addresses, etc.

- Inclusion of assignment copies including the Exploratory Literature Review and the Contributory Literature Review, as well as the annotated bibliographies created for these assignments

- Copies of other assignments completed during the semester

Assessment of the Log/Journal
The log/journal will be collected each week at the beginning of class. They can be picked up at Dr. MacFall’s office by 5:00 pm on the day following class (Thursday). Each entry will have comments from Dr. MacFall which may include comments on project progress, suggestions for other directions you and the project team should consider, comments on data collection and analysis, other comments as appropriate. You are expected to read and consider the comments. Grading will reflect the degree of activity during the previous week and completeness of documentation.

Each entry will be graded on a scale of 0 (no entry) – 10. The grade will be the number of points you receive each week for this assignment.

1 - Little evidence of project progress during the week, superficial entries

5 – Evidence that you and the project team have communicated during the week, that there was activity regarding data collection, analysis, thoughtful reflection, discussion, etc. Entries, however, are very short and do not contain complete information about what was done or does not provide evidence of project progress.

10 – Evidence of much productive activity during the week which is well documented (full information about meetings, etc.), thoughtful assessment of project progress and possible re-directions. Evidence of data/literature collection, analysis and utilization in project development. Diagram of project management plan has annotations indicating progress and/or adaptive management.