Activists Group: You are an Environmental Activist Based in Eastern California

Your Background and Biography

You grew up near Sequoia National Park in California’s Sierra Nevada range, where you spent most of your time wandering the forest and playing outdoors. An avid hiker and camper, you logged 600 volunteer hours with the Sierra Club in college, helping maintain hiking trails in national parks. Your love of nature inspired you to earn a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in chemistry.

A job teaching chemistry at a community college brought you to the edge of the Mojave Desert. You bought a motorcycle and cruised through the high desert of eastern California, Nevada, and northern Arizona, experiencing the awe-inspiring natural beauty of this austere landscape. But these lands have long been treated as expendable by the American government. Some pieces of land here were given to Native American peoples driven from their more valuable ancestral lands elsewhere, and other parts of the land were used for testing nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Where metallic ore deposits were found, mining companies left behind huge pits and piles of tailings and released toxic mercury into the atmosphere.

Then you met the community of people working to protect these lands and the people who live there. Soon you joined with Native American activists, ecologists, and others to create a coalition that would advocate for less destructive mining practices. Now you help coordinate protests, advocate for environmental legislation, and watch over mining corporations and the government to make sure they meet their legal obligations. National news reporters often interview you when they write about mining and pollution in your region.

You’re keeping a close eye on efforts to restart rare earth metal production at the nearby Mountain Pass Mine. While Mountain Pass was the most important site of rare earth mining from the 1960s into the 1990s, the mine was repeatedly fined by the state of California for failing to control the polluted water it produced. You and your coalition support mining when it’s done responsibly and hope that a Sustainability Seal for rare earths might offer a model for improving other kinds of mining as well.

In negotiations you have two priorities. First, you want to reduce water pollution and emissions that could make people sick. Second, you want the mining companies to
become responsible partners who will respond to the concerns of people who live around mines.

**Your Mission**

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Stewardship Council to include the Activists Group’s recommendations in its final Sustainability Seal guiding values. To make this argument effectively, you must do the following:

- Complete the assigned readings listed at the bottom of this page.
- Work closely with the other members of your group to develop clear answers to the Stewardship Council’s questions.
- Use as much specific information as possible to develop strong arguments for your position that protecting the environment and promoting human well-being (physical and economical) are critical to establishing a sustainable, ethical rare earth elements industry.
- Read as much as you can about your position and the positions of the other groups.
- Complete written reflections on your character, interest group, and readings as assigned.

**Your Victory Objectives**

- **You will receive 10 points** if the Stewards select your group’s proposal as the final Sustainability Seal guiding values.
- The Stewards will rank the interest groups by how well their goals are represented in the final Sustainability Seal guiding values. **You will receive between 1 and 4 points** based on how the Activists Group is ranked and how well the Sustainability Seal guiding values reflect your goals.

**SOURCES**

**Group Sources**

- Activists Case Study: “Protecting Health and the Environment in an Age of Global Trade”

**Individual Sources**