Stewards Group: You are the President of a Market-Oriented Environmental Nongovernmental Organization

Your Background and Biography

You are the president of a long-established, well-known environmental advocacy organization. The idea for creating a Sustainability Seal for rare earths began with your organization. Creating a viable market in sustainably produced rare earth metals is a natural fit for your organization’s skills. Then you reached out to the leader of the wildlife-focused nongovernmental organization that has experience running sustainability certifications for other products. That nonprofit helped you recruit the experts who make up the rest of the Stewards Group.

When your organization was first established five decades ago, it focused on using lawsuits to force environmental change. But during the 1980s, as corporations and some politicians fought against government-led environmental regulation, you laid out a new strategy for your group. You would work with polluters and industry to find voluntary, profitable ways to protect the environment and people’s health. That way, even when anti-environmental politicians won an election, there would still be a path toward making things better.

Today your group has a three-stage strategy. First, you use science to identify serious environmental problems. Second, you identify what potential partners are best positioned to make a big difference in helping to reduce those problems. Sometimes those partners are the world’s largest corporations. (This doesn’t always make your group popular with other environmentalists since you’re often working closely with companies that are causing big problems.) Third, you find ways to harness the pursuit of profits to solve the problem. Your group’s specialty is making environmental protection good for the bottom line of companies.

You want this negotiation to succeed because limiting climate change is one of your organization’s most important priorities. You worry that without a stable supply of rare earth elements, the world won’t be able to produce the technologies needed for a low-carbon future, such as wind turbines, electric vehicles, and solar panels. You do not think those crucial technologies can succeed in the marketplace without sustainable rare earth production. Your goal is to get people to agree to create a Sustainability Seal that
brings on board as many of the stakeholders (people affected by rare earth metal production) as possible.

**Your Role**

Your goal is to write a statement of guiding values that will set the standards for sustainable practices within the rare earth elements industry. Learn as much as possible from the experts to ensure you make the right decision. During this hearing you should do the following:

- Keep an open mind. Allow yourself to be persuaded by well-reasoned arguments and convincing evidence.
- Find out as much as possible about the issues so you can carefully evaluate the arguments presented. Consider what is in the best interest of the environment and our future.
- Facilitate discussion and cooperation within and among the groups. Your goal is to implement the best, most effective set of Sustainability Seal guiding values possible, which will require compromise between groups.

**Your Assignment**

You will become the expert on the Manufacturers Group and report back to your fellow Stewards with an evaluation of the group’s position and arguments. Engage in the following activities as you conduct your research:

- Attend the meetings of the Manufacturers Group to learn more about its arguments and to plan for the hearing. Remember that you are an observer, so you should not participate in discussion.
- Write two questions you would like to ask the Manufacturers Group during the hearing.
- Write a one-page analysis of the Manufacturers Group’s main arguments and positions. What are its main concerns? Which of its arguments do you find convincing? Which are unconvincing? Why?

**SOURCES**

**Group Sources**

- [Stewards Case Study: “Working Outside of Government Regulation to Protect Human Health and the Environment”](#)

**Individual Sources**