

## *Health Group*

You are an **Antitoxicity Activist**

### **Your Background and Biography**

You have always loved the ocean. One of your fondest childhood memories involves going to the beach with your family on summer vacations. You spent days collecting shells and looking for interesting creatures that lived in the water, and you fished for hours with your parents on your family's boat. You were inspired by television programs that featured famous underwater explorers like Jacques Cousteau and the incredible variety of organisms that lived in the ocean. You couldn't wait to become certified as a scuba diver and go out on boats to explore the deep waters yourself.

You knew you wanted to become a marine biologist, and you earned your bachelor's degree in biology with a specialization in marine biology, and then continued your education and received a master's degree in marine policy. However, as you began your career as a marine biologist, you made a difficult discovery. Instead of exploring pristine waters teeming with vibrant life, like you used to see on your favorite documentaries, you found an alarming amount of pollution in the waters you studied.

You were horrified to realize that the oceans are a dumping ground for all sorts of waste. The oceans are our lifeline. The health of our waters affects the health of the planet. After all, Earth's surface is approximately 70% water. The water in our atmosphere sets us apart from all other planets in our solar system. Without water life could not exist on Earth. Our rivers, lakes, and oceans must be protected.

As an avid fisherman, you know that the bounty of the sea depends on the purity of the water. You worked for the Atlantic State Fisheries Commission, and now you have just been hired by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to direct the Marine Debris Program. At this level you have influence on policies that affect the health and safety of our greatest resource, our water.

You are excited to be part of this discussion about plastic-waste disposal. You are concerned about the impact of marine debris on ocean life, and you worry about the toxicity of plastics. The health consequences of toxic plastic debris in the ocean are not well-studied and are not yet fully understood, but they could be severe. You are concerned for the health of aquatic life for its own sake, but you're also aware that this problem could have profound consequences for humans, too. We are, after all, at the top of the food chain. If the oceans are being poisoned, we are being poisoned as well.

As a scientist you rely on data to make your arguments. You not only want to expand cleanup efforts, but, more important, you want to stem the marine-debris problem at its source. As a newly appointed

policy maker, you are anxious to get into this discussion because you feel you can persuade the Regulators to enact legislation that would help protect your main focus, the welfare of Earth's oceans.

### **Your Mission**

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Health Group's recommendations in their final regulation. To make this argument effectively, you must

- 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 Regulators' questions;
- Make use of as much specific information as possible to develop strong arguments that plastics need to be proven safe rather than assumed safe and that the only way to protect against the effects of toxins is to prevent the production of potentially toxic plastics;
- Read as much as you can about your position and the positions of the other groups; and
- Complete written reflections on your character, interest group, and readings as assigned.

### **Your Victory Objectives**

- **You will receive 10 points** if the Regulators select your group's proposal as the final regulation.
- The Regulators will rank the interest groups by how well their goals are represented in the final regulation. **You will receive between 1 and 5 points** based on how the Health Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

### **Sources**

#### **Health Group Sources**

- Case Study: Plastics and the Human Body
- "Report on Bisphenol A," video, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wXGrzDlcr8&feature=endscreen](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wXGrzDlcr8&feature=endscreen)

#### **Your Individual Sources**

- "Plastic Breaks Down in Ocean, After All—and Fast," by Carolyn Barry, *National Geographic News*, August 20, 2009
- Select **one article** from the bibliography on *The Case of Plastics* website recommended for the Health Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.