

Regulator: Expert on *Waste*

You are the **Assistant Administrator of the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response**

Your Background and Biography

You're about to play a prominent role in what will perhaps be a landmark event in the history of environmental legislation. As an assistant administrator in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), you will be the highest-ranking public official present at this hearing. You're proud of your high status in an important organization; to attain this position you had to be appointed by the president himself and confirmed by the Senate. No one else at this hearing can claim that, and you expect some measure of deference from your underlings. But the goal of this hearing is to hear all perspectives – from the testifying experts to the members of the EPA panel. You invite feedback from your teammates, and you genuinely value their input.

You're glad that you have a good team to support you because you know that the outcome of this hearing will be significant for your future. You are determined to keep your path on the upward trajectory your parents expect of you. Your family immigrated to the United States when you were very young, coming here to seek freedom and opportunity. You are grateful for the education and opportunities you have been afforded by the sacrifices your family made, and you believe that your life is proof that the American Dream is alive and well. You didn't get to this point without hard work and diligent networking with individuals who could help advance your career. You're aware that you've had a dose of good fortune to help you as well, and you're grateful for your good luck.

You are determined that the hearings will run well and that the outcome will be well accepted by your superior, the EPA administrator. As a chemical engineer, you fully understand the importance of plastics and the issues surrounding recycling and waste disposal. You're also an attorney, and as a lawyer and government official, you are well aware of the political environment in which regulations exist. Although you maintain an open mind about what the final regulation will say, you know that the final provisions will have to satisfy the various constituencies that influence Washington. Your goal is to ensure that the hearings run according to schedule and that the final regulation is sensible, reasonable, and effective, and addresses the problem at hand.

Your Role

Your goal is to select a final regulation that will address the problems of plastic waste in an effective yet practical way. Learn as much as possible from the experts to ensure that you make the right decision.

During this hearing you should

- 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. It's in the best interest of the country and the environment that you are able to carefully evaluate the arguments presented.
- Facilitate discussion and cooperation within and among the groups. Your goal is to implement the best, most effective final regulation possible, not to make everyone happy. The best regulation will involve compromise between groups, so push the experts in that direction.

Your Assignment

You will become the expert on the Waste Group and report back to your fellow regulators with an evaluation of its position and arguments. Engage in the following activities as you conduct your research:

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

Sources

Waste Group Sources

- Case Study: Trash and Treasure
- "The Sea of Plastics," video,
www.ted.com/talks/capt_charles_moore_on_the_seas_of_plastic.html

Your Individual Sources

- "The World's Largest Dump: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch," by Thomas M. Kostigen, *Discover Magazine*, July 10, 2008.
- Select **one article** from the bibliography on *The Case of Plastics* website recommended for the Waste Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.