Regulator: Expert on Sustainability
You are the Director of the Resource Conservation and Sustainability Division at the Environmental Protection Agency

Your Background and Biography
You came to Washington, D.C., as a senior in college, very pleased with yourself for having secured a competitive internship with the Foundation for a Greener Future, a prominent environmental organization. You came to the capital city full of hope in the future, both for your own career in government, where you had big plans to advance fast and far, and for the health of the environment itself, which you hoped to contribute to in valuable ways. Your internship let you learn some of the ins and outs of the government’s role in environmental stewardship, and the experience led to an offer of employment with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after you graduated from college.

Working at the EPA was not, as it turned out, a dream come true. Your goals of saving the environment and making a name for yourself seemed to be advancing at an agonizingly slow pace. You often found yourself frustrated by the politics and bureaucratic red tape that are common to institutions like the EPA. Despite your frustrations you performed your assignments capably, and your superiors came to rely on your competence and the quality of your work. You soon found yourself promoted to a position of mid-level leadership, as Director of the Division of Resource Conservation and Sustainability. You were pleased with the advancement but were still hungry for more recognition and responsibility, and you were therefore delighted when you received the assignment to act as a regulator in the public hearings regarding a new regulation addressing the problems of plastic waste. This assignment came directly from the top; you were hand-picked by the director of the EPA herself, and you’re delighted that the director would place such trust in you. The assignment has rekindled your hopes for a rapid pace of career advancement. If you’re already being trusted with such important assignments, maybe you really do have what it takes to go far. You’re determined to see to it that the regulation that emerges from this exercise is the best one possible. You have a big task ahead, and you have all the motivation you need to rise to the occasion.

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 Sustainability 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 Sustainability 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 Sustainability Group during the hearing.
• Write a one-page analysis of the Sustainability Group’s main arguments and positions. What are its main concerns? Which of its arguments do you find convincing? Unconvincing? Why?

Sources
Sustainability Group Sources

• Case Study: The Future of Plastics
• “Interview with Paul Anastas,” video, vimeo.com/channels/465871

Your Individual Sources

• Select one article from the bibliography on The Case of Plastics website recommended for the Sustainability Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.