

## *Waste Group*

You are an **Activist Concerned with the Great Pacific Garbage Patch**

### **Your Background and Biography**

You are a seasoned sailor, born into a family that spent its time cruising the bays and seas of the world. You've seen a lot of the earth from the bobbing deck of your little yacht. The ocean is so much a part of your blood and history that you might be called an "old salt," but you're not that old and no one really talks that way anymore. You are, however, a passionate activist for the health of the world's oceans.

You came to this cause reluctantly. Your extraordinarily wealthy father made it a stipulation of his will that you prove yourself worthy before accessing your inheritance. He was concerned that you would waste your life in idle leisure; so he insisted that you demonstrate a commitment to some worthy cause before inheriting his wealth. Your love of the sea led you to the cause that you've adopted as your own.

In conversations with other sailors you learned about something sinister in the ocean, something called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a floating island of plastic trash that has accumulated in the circulating currents of the North Pacific Ocean. One fellow sailor described what he saw out there, far from land: "I was confronted, as far as the eye could see, with the sight of plastic. It seemed unbelievable, but I never found a clear spot. In the week it took to cross the subtropical high, no matter what time of day I looked, plastic debris was floating everywhere: bottles, bottle caps, wrappers, fragments."

When you heard of this blight, it struck you: you had found your cause. For the past two years you have worked to raise awareness about the problem of plastic marine debris (and by doing so proving yourself worthy to the executors of your father's estate). You lead sailing expeditions through the Garbage Patch, create videos and lessons on plastic pollution, and advocate against plastic pollution. You look forward to advancing your cause at the Environmental Protection Agency's public hearings on its new regulation. You are comfortable engaging audiences and telling your story in public, and you hope that this forum might attract attention and break the American public's indifferent attitude toward plastic waste.

You see the pollution of the oceans as one of the most significant environmental problems facing the planet, and you want to see positive change within your lifetime. Your greatest asset in this debate is the powerful idea and imagery of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The media rarely engage environmental issues with the urgency they deserve, but the story of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch has been a remarkable exception to this usual indifference. The story has captured the imagination of the media and the public, an asset and a benefit you cannot squander. Tell the story and tell it the way you're best able to: with dramatic intensity and vivid, colorful urgency.

## Your Mission

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Waste 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 for your position that plastics are extremely harmful to the environment and that reducing production and consumption is the only effective solution to the problem;
- 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 Waste Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

## 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](http://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.