

# Personal Environmental Impact Statements

## INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this assignment is to have each student carefully assess her impact on the environment and determine if there are appropriate and desirable actions to ameliorate these impacts. The underlying principle of this assignment is that we all have lifestyles which often adversely impact on the environment and natural resources, but that many of these impacts can be lessened if we are aware of alternatives and are willing to make small, but substantive changes in our lives. One of the goals of this assignment is to provide a mechanism by which students can assess their impact on the environment. As this assignment is completed, it is hoped that some of the necessary lifestyle alterations will be implemented. Another important aspect of this assignment is to gain first-hand experience with "environmental decision" making tools such as cost/benefit analysis and the Environmental Impact Statement as required by the NEPA of 1970. This experience will include, but is not limited to: (1) an understanding of the NEPA process, (2) appreciation of the information found in the EIS, (3) the potential role the public and associated agencies may play in the NEPA process, and (4) an appreciation of the regulatory process with its costs and benefits.

## FORMAT:

The form of the Personal Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) is to follow as closely as possible the format of the EIS statements often prepared by industry and government under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970. Copies of this document will be distributed and discussed in class. The PEIS will contain the following sections with headings:

- **Title Page:** On a separate sheet you should provide: the title-- The Personal Environmental Impact Statement of [Your Name]. Submitted to: Dr. Carl R. Pratt in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Human Ecology Core 050. Date [Give Date]. Submitted by: [Your Name].
- **Description of the Proposed Action:** In this section you describe how you will complete your analysis. What aspects of your lifestyle are you going to examine? Will you examine the lifestyle limited to living in a CNR dormitory? Living off campus? Living at home? Are you going to include your activity on the job? Will you discuss the environmental impact during the summer when you live at home with your family? Will you include the actions of your family? How will you collect data? Will you keep track of the amount of paper products used during some time frame? Keep a log of the approximate amount of water used per week? Number of miles travelled by car, bus, train, etc? The amount of electricity used?
- **Existing Environmental Conditions and Anticipated Environmental Impacts:** In this part of the PEIS you should catalog the environmental impacts that result from your lifestyle. Include here any data you have gathered. The most efficient way to approach this section may be to list (with a brief explanation) each of the actions and their impacts you considered.
- **Mitigation of Adverse Impacts:** Here I want you to evaluate the impacts elucidated in the previous sections and determine which ones, if any you could eliminate or lessen. Be realistic, propose changes in lifestyle that are "do-able", things you could live with and actually do without major effort. For example: purchase products with less packaging material and thereby reduce your input to landfills, or take shorter showers to reduce water use and energy consumption. Such seemingly small behavior changes can result in large energy and resource savings. Be creative! Think about what you do, how you do it and what you might do differently!
- **Adverse Environmental Impacts Which Cannot be Avoided:** We all need to make choices, but no matter how environmentally conscious we are there are going to be negative impacts to our lifestyles which cannot or will not be changed. In this section you are to determine these unavoidable impacts. What are they? How severe do you think they are? In your estimation, are these unavoidable impacts common to others or unique to you? Why are they unavoidable? Economics? Laws? Government impediments? Peer pressures?
- **Positive or Growth Inducing Aspects of the Proposed Actions:** This section should contain an evaluation of savings that will occur if and when your proposed changes are implemented. How much gasoline will you save? How many trees will be spared? How much energy saved? What kinds of natural resources might be conserved or saved? How much less solid waste produced? What would happen if your changes were adopted by your classmates, family or friends? (Keep in mind the multiplicative impact of many people adopting conservation strategies and how one conservation effort or activity may influence another.)
- **Alternatives to the Proposed Action:** All environmental impact statements are required by law to contain a section which discusses alternatives to the proposed action and their likely consequences. The alternatives in this case might be only partial implementation of your proposal, wide spread implementation, trial implementation. One alternative that must, by law, be included in all EIS documents is that of no action, and the consequences of no action.

- **Bibliography and Sources:** As is the case with all writing, if you use other people's ideas or thoughts you must give them credit and provide a reference to the reader.

### BASIC MECHANICS:

The PEIS *must be typed* using standard one inch margins. The subject headings described above should be listed in the paper. The length will be determined by the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the analysis. Students are required to prepare a rough draft for review. The Draft PEIS papers will be reviewed by the instructor and the class as a simulation of the public review and comment to which EIS documents are subject. The final PEIS should reflect any comments or suggests provided during the comment period. Due date for the Draft and Final Versions of the PEIS will be announced in lecture. A copy of the draft and final versions must be submitted at the end of the semester.

This assignment is valued at 35% of the total grade for the course and should therefore demonstrate commensurate effort and time. I expect that you will work diligently on this assignment and that diligence will be apparent in the final product. The grade for the paper will be based upon the following criteria:

1. Content (55%). Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the subject material? Is the material presented in a comprehensible fashion? How much learning took place? Is the paper well written? Does it flow well? Is it evident that thoughtful execution of the assignment took place? If reaction or opinion is included, is it logically developed and supported with data?
2. Style and format (15%). Is the appropriate information present and in proper format? Does the paper demonstrate an integration of topics?
3. Grammar and spelling (20%). Did the student accurately proofread the paper? Are there numerous spelling errors? Is sentence structure appropriate?
4. Mechanics (10%). Did the student submit the project on time? Did the student participate in the public review of the documents? Were comments substantive?

### DATES/DEADLINES:

- Draft PEIS due on date as assigned in lecture, but target date is approximately ~~September 15~~.
- Final PEIS and the original draft versions are due ~~September 22~~. Please recall that the final PEIS must be typed.

Due to the unique aspect of this assignment, it is likely that you will have many questions. Be sure to ask if you are unsure how to proceed with any aspect of the project. If completed in a concerned and diligent manner this assignment can be very useful.



Worth Saving.

Created by: Carl Pratt  
College of New Rochelle  
GLRC/NSF 1994

