

ESCU 101-Article Review Assignment Instructions

Critical evaluation of environmental arguments is an integral part of the study of environmental science. As we work through the topics covered in this course, you will gain a more thorough understanding of the actual science behind many controversial topics. This knowledge allows you to review articles in popular magazines and news programs with a new appreciation for the science at the center of these arguments.

You will have three opportunities this term to select an article from recent literature and news outlets and identify the facts and fictions within their claims and statements.

For each article review, you will find an article related to the general topic covered. The focus of the article can be directed at any level (local, national, global) and it should speak to some topic directly related to the content covered in the readings for the week. The four assignments are as follows:

Week 3

Biodiversity, Wildlife and Conservation

Week 4

Air Pollution and Global Atmospheric Changes

Week 5

Freshwater Resources and Oceanic Pollution

Sources for the articles you select should be current (published in the last twelve months) and can be pulled from any of these:

- popular magazines (Time, Newsweek, Discover, National Geographic)
- newspapers (NY Times, Washington Post, USA Today, NPR)
- scientific journals (Science, Nature, Scientific American)

A couple of good starting places are Google Scholar and Brandman's Leatherby Library
(<http://www1.chapman.edu/library/centers/students.html>).

The articles themselves should be longer than three or four paragraphs (long enough that there is some substance to them) so that you can write a meaningful summary and response to the article, following the directions below. You should start by flipping through the pages of your textbook for that specific topic; you may build from a case study or an image in your book as a "jumping off" point for your article selection.

Part One: Summary of Article

Write a summary of the article you have chosen that includes a brief description of the main claims made by the author(s). Focus on the scientific statements and identify the intended audience of the piece based on the type of publication and/or the tone of the piece. There should be no "opinion" in this first section of your Article Review; it should contain the "cold, hard facts". Please make sure to cite your sources as you present the facts.

Part Two: Critical Evaluation

Compare the claims made in the article with your understanding of the science behind the topic discussed as learned in this class. Refer your readers to passages in your textbook (or other outside references with proper citations) to support your analysis. You should also consider the bias of the stakeholders mentioned in (or implied by) the article, as well as the author(s) and/or the source of the article itself. You may be able to identify an alternate agenda in the presentation of the information. For example, someone being interviewed may be funded by a company that would

prefer that the results of a report be presented in a favorable light to their interests. (Please note: I do not expect you to run a background check on these individuals! However, you may be surprised with what you find if you give it a try!)

Finally, make sure you either include the original article or provide a complete, working web address so that I can look at the original material you are working with. The work you submit will be evaluated using the Article Review Rubric so make sure you have a copy of that on hand as you develop your assignment. Also, use the Sample Article Review as an example of a high-scoring report.

Article Review Assignment Rubric

Follow the guidelines offered in the Article Review Assignment document and use this rubric to make sure that your work receives the highest score possible. Each assignment is worth 30 points.

	5	3-4	1-2	0
Summary	Summary of article is focused on the scientific content and includes a discussion of the intended audience.	Summary of article is focused on the scientific content but is missing a discussion of the intended audience.	Summary of article is based on opinion of the content.	No summary of article provided.
Comparison	Assignment clearly offers comparison between content of article and content of textbook.	Assignment attempts to offer comparison between content of article and content of textbook without a clear purpose,	Assignment attempts to offer comparison between content of article and student's personal knowledge.	Assignment does not compare content of article with content of textbook.
Support	Assignment includes reference to outside resource content that supports the argument.	Assignment includes reference to outside resource content that is slightly supportive of the argument.	Assignment includes reference to outside resource content that is not supportive of the argument.	Assignment does not include reference to outside resource content.
Stakeholders	Assignment includes detailed consideration of potential bias of stakeholders supported by research.	Assignment includes detailed consideration of potential bias of stakeholders, unsupported by research.	Assignment includes brief consideration of potential bias of stakeholders.	Assignment does not address the potential bias of author or publication.
Grammar/Style	Assignment is formatted correctly meeting all outlined criteria. Contains few spelling/grammatical errors.	Assignment is formatted correctly but is too short. Contains few spelling/grammatical errors.	Assignment is not formatted correctly or is too short; contains few spelling/grammatical errors.	Assignment is not formatted correct and is too short. Contains many spelling/grammatical errors.
Timeliness	Work is submitted on or before the deadline.	Work is submitted less than 24 hours after the deadline.	Work is submitted more than 24 hours after the deadline.	No work submitted.

Sample Article Review

Part One: Summary of Article

Mountain caribou habitat in the U.S. will not be increased due to a decision handed down by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The original proposal requested that 375,000 acres be protected as “critical habitat” for these endangered species. However, the FWS has lowered that amount to 30,000 acres, a decrease of over 90%.

Although there are believed to be “only a few dozen” mountain caribou left in the U.S, they are considered—by opponents of this proposal—to not be endangered since their numbers are much higher when you include herds in Canada. The U.S. habitat has been “decimated” over the years by both human activities and “genetic problems” and the creatures subsist on a very limited diet of “arboreal lichens” that only exist for a few months out of the year.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is also considering removing the mountain caribou from the Endangered Species List due to the fact that their numbers are high in neighboring Canada. This action is supported by groups that include a county in Idaho and the Idaho State Snowmobile Association. In response to these decisions, environmental groups—including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Lands Council—are planning to sue the federal government.

This article was published in the Seattle Times via the Associated Press so the target audience is readers in the metropolitan Seattle area and beyond throughout Washington state.

Part Two: Critical Evaluation

Mountain caribou are considered to be “one of the most critically endangered animals in North America” (Mountain Caribou Project). Their territory is limited to Idaho and Washington (FWS.gov) and they were listed as Endangered in January of 1983 (FWS.gov). Animals that are listed on the Endangered Species list are “in imminent danger of extinction” (page 376) and, in the U.S., that is true. However, even those who oppose the decision agree that the number of caribou are much higher when you look at North America as the area.

There are a few human causes at the root of the declining population of mountain caribou. The article mentions that poaching—also known as “illegal commercial hunting” (page 383)—has affected the mountain caribou population. Habitat loss could have been alleviated by the proposed conservation measures.

There are five different stakeholders mentioned in this article:

Bonner County, Idaho (<http://co.bonner.id.us/about.html>) is located in the northern tip of Idaho, near the Canadian border. The county offers many outdoor recreational activities which could be affected if the original proposal to set aside 375,000 acres were approved.

Idaho State Snowmobile Association is “dedicated to preserving, protecting, and promoting snowmobiling” throughout Idaho (<http://www.idahosnow.org/>). According to their newsletters, they are active politically in keeping areas accessible to their members.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency that is tasked with the mission to “conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people” (http://www.fws.gov/help/about_us.html)

Center for Biological Diversity—a non-profit agency that “works through science, law and creative media to secure a future for all species, great or small, hovering on the brink of extinction”. Their website explains that their mission involves a belief that “diversity has intrinsic value”, a deep ecology worldview.

Lands Council is a “local grassroots, non-profit” organization that acts to “preserve the forests, water, and wildlife” of the Inland Northwest of the United States. They have dedicated a page of their website to describing their opinion on this case (http://www.landscouncil.org/critical_habitat_comment_information/) and they believe that the “special interests of a few individuals” are dictating the decision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Although this decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service is “final”, there will continue to reviews, and lawsuits.

The mountain caribou is one of only 70 mammals on the Endangered Species List (page 388). Our textbook states that the Endangered Species Act “provides legal protection to listed species to reduce their danger of extinction” (page 388) and explains that “economic considerations cannot influence the designations of endangered or threatened species” (page 389). It seems that this may not always be the case.

Original Article: Environmental groups to sue over caribou habitat

Weblink:

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2020256078_apwacaribouhabitat1stldwritethru.html?syndication=rss

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Environmental groups will sue the federal government over its decision to cut more than 90 percent of the land originally proposed as critical habitat for the last mountain caribou herd in the Lower 48 states.

By Nicholas K. Geranios

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. —

Environmental groups will sue the federal government over its decision to cut more than 90 percent of the land originally proposed as critical habitat for the last mountain caribou herd in the Lower 48 states.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last November announced that it was slashing the habitat proposed in Idaho and Washington from 375,000 acres to about 30,000 acres.

That decision came after an outcry from some politicians and snowmobile advocates, who complained that too much land was being set aside to help a small number of caribou.

While there are large herds in Canada, the mountain caribou in the U.S. is limited to a small corner of northern Idaho and northeastern Washington. The animals face conflicts with humans over road construction and snowmobile recreation.

"This reduction in protected habitat is a death sentence for mountain caribou in the United States," said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the environmental groups that filed an intent to sue notice on Thursday.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service's decision ignored the science and caved to political pressure," he contended.

The Fish and Wildlife Service had not yet seen the intent to sue and does not comment on pending litigation, spokeswoman Joan Jewett said Thursday.

The agency last winter proposed setting aside 375,000 acres in the two states as caribou habitat, an amount that produced an outcry from recreation groups, loggers and local government officials. After some contentious public hearings, the agency reduced that total to 30,100 acres in Idaho's Boundary County and Washington's Pend Oreille County.

In December, the agency also announced that it plans a new study to determine if the caribou found in Idaho and Washington should continue to be protected as an endangered species. The Fish and Wildlife Service said removing them from protection "may be warranted" in response to a petition from the Pacific Legal Foundation and its clients, Bonner County in Idaho and the Idaho State Snowmobile Association.

Opponents of protection have long contended that the handful of caribou in Washington and Idaho are just a subset of the massive herds in British Columbia, and that the animals travel freely across the border and do not warrant protection. But supporters of the caribou say they should not be allowed to go extinct in the U.S. because large numbers exist in Canada.

No one disputes that woodland caribou are struggling to survive in the U.S. Only four were tallied in northern Idaho and eastern Washington during an aerial census last winter. The U.S. population is estimated to total only a few dozen animals.

Caribou once ranged across many of the northern states, from the Rocky Mountains to the Northeast, but their numbers were decimated by habitat loss, poaching, motor vehicle accidents and genetic problems.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service's cut in critical habitat will greatly increase the caribou's risk of extinction in the Lower 48 states," said Jeff Juel, policy director at the Lands Council, another of the environmental groups.

Mountain caribou have adapted to harsh winters in deep snow by developing dinner-plate-sized hooves that work like snowshoes. They can subsist on nothing but arboreal lichens found on old-growth trees for three to four months.