

## Guide for Current Events Briefings

### Our Goal:

Each day we encounter news in the media that relates to environmental issues. How do we distinguish the facts (based on observations) from the subjective interpretation of the journalists and their sources? The goal of these current events briefings are to foster critical thinking about claims made in the media, to help you base your own value judgments on the best knowledge available. This activity also provides one of many opportunities you will have in this course to further develop your oral communications skills.

### How it will work:

Members of each team will decide how best to go about gathering, collating, and presenting the information. It is up to each person to communicate with team members so that you do not overlap on topics and allocate the (usually) three time slots during the week (M, W, F). Please use the following guidelines for your presentations.

I. Collectively, your team should cover issues pertaining to at least two scales, **one of them must be below the national level:**

#### Examples:

International	Logging devastates forest “preserves” in Indonesia
National	Setting federal standards for arsenic levels in drinking water
Regional	Great Lakes see increase in exotic species
State	Price of pollution permits goes up in Michigan
Local	Kalamazoo County brownfield undergoes clean-up

II. Your team should cover issues relating to **at least two** of the four major divisions of the earth’s systems.

#### Examples:

Land	Hazardous waste disposal site is planned
Atmosphere	New developments regarding the Kyoto treaty
Water	Farmers angry over water shortages out west
Life	Listing of endangered toad species in Mississippi

III. In class, briefly present each topic and the source of information. Identify and outline the main scientific issue for each story, the evidence presented, the sources cited, and the implications. In particular, ask what kinds of data are being discussed (remember that observations are not always numbers). What are the questions raised by this story, and which of those are answerable in a scientific framework? Your presentation should not exceed 10 minutes, including time for discussion and questions.

**Possible sources for environmental news.** Your team must report from at least one non-internet resource.

**Radio:**

National Public Radio  
WVGR 104.1 Great Lakes Radio Consortium Environmental News every morning at 8:50; also on the Web at <http://www.glr.org/> (not as comprehensive as the radio spots)

**Television:**

Networks (For regional and national issues, try news magazine shows like 20/20; for local issues, watch local evening news shows)  
CNN

**Print media:**

News weeklies (Time, Newsweek)  
Newspapers: *New York Times* (especially Tuesdays' *Science Times*), *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Kalamazoo Gazette* (other major dailies)

**Internet:**

(Note: The above entities often have complementary Web sites, e.g., CNN)  
Environmental News Network <http://www.enn.com/>  
Lycos Environmental News <http://ens.lycos.com/>  
Capitol Reports Environmental News Link [http://www.caprep.com/new\\_dig3.htm](http://www.caprep.com/new_dig3.htm)  
National Council for Science & the Environment  
(this has links to many other sites) <http://www.cnie.org/News/>  
Global Network of Environment & Technology  
<http://www.gnet.org/news/newsfeed.cfm>

**Grading**

**Each person** should turn in a typed list of candidate stories with sources that she or he has accumulated throughout the week **as well as** a synopsis of the single issue to be presented (no more than a single page total). There will be a small team "participation" element to this grade, reflecting your collective adherence to the scale/'sphere guidelines.

These briefings are meant to be very informal. You may use visual aids (photos, graphics) if they are absolutely critical to understanding the nature of the problem. Use the blackboard if possible; I will have a computer and an overhead projector in the lecture hall for your use, but you must **let me know your needs by 10 am on the day of your presentation!**

**Dates for your team presentations:**

Week 2: Team 1	Week 6: Team 4	Week 10 (if necessary) : Team 7
Week 3: Team 2	Week 8: Team 5	
Week 5: Team 3	Week 9: Team 6	

**REMINDERS TO SELF:**

- My team gives our current events briefings during the week of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- We should start compiling news one week prior, on Monday, \_\_\_\_\_ .