

Field Trip Assignment ES 61B

For the field trip portion of this class, you may either: (1) attend two **public governmental or NGO** meetings, events, or other authorized proceedings, or (2) you may write emails/letters to administrative agencies or your representatives that pertain to environmental laws and/or regulations. This requirement replaces 12 hours of class, so plan accordingly.

Meetings

The following proceedings are suggested and authorized:

- a. Every Tuesday starting at 1:30 pm (usually, but check to be sure because some meetings start later). San Jose City Council meeting, 200 East Santa Clara Street, San Jose.
- b. April 26th, May 10th and 24th, June 6th and 21st. Santa Clara Board of Supervisors meeting at 9:00 am. 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose.
- c. April 21st, 4:00 to 7:30. IMPORTANT Habitat Conservation Plan Liaison Group Meeting, Santa Clara Valley Water District, 5700 Almaden Expressway, San Jose.
- d. April 26th. Habitat Conservation Plan Stakeholder Group Meeting, Location TBD.

In addition to these meetings, there are regular city council meetings and/or board of supervisor meetings in the city/county where you live in addition to several other board and commission meetings. Other opportunities for meetings include city/county planning commission meetings, environmental commission meetings, transportation authority meetings, environmental NGO meetings, etc. These are too numerous to list, but each city and county has a website indicating the times and locations of these meetings.

FIELD TRIP NOTES. For every meeting or event that you attend, you are required to complete a one page Field Trip Summary that; (1) summarize the meeting, and (2) describe your impressions regarding the meeting. The easiest format is to write these Field Trip Notes during the meeting and submit them to us on the next time that we have class. Be ready to present this information to the class. See the next page for the format that you should use for providing us with the meeting notes.

Written Communications

With respect to any written communications to agencies or representatives, provide us with a copy of the letter, and include the amount of time you spent preparing the letter. Many environmental groups have letter-writing campaigns on their websites that will provide you with background materials for these letters. For example, go to sierraclub.org and click on “take action.” As of 4/5/11, they list nineteen opportunities. Likewise, the NRDC has over ten possibilities. Do not simply copy the letter that they suggest. As with any college-level assignment, you need to write these letters in your own words. **Do not spend more than 2 hours writing any one letter.** We will grade you on your ability to communicate the issues.

Field Trip Notes

Meeting/Event: Final Coyote Valley Task Force meeting

Date: April 14, 2008

Time: 5:30 to 8:30

Location: San Jose City Hall

Purpose: To recognize the work of the task force and to forward the plan, now known as “Coyote Valley Plan - A Vision for Sustainable Development,” to the City Council

Items Discussed

The task force allowed each member to convey their impressions of the task force. There was no limit to the discussion, so every member was allowed to provide their recollections, frustrations, accomplishments and hopes for the future. Most of the members expressed a desire for the task force ideas to move forward and to be someday adopted by the City Council. Several of the task force members expressed frustration that the task force was not successful in implementing the CVSP. A few were relieved that the plan was halted and would not be progressing to the approval phase anytime soon.

Pat Dando made a motion to adopt a resolution regarding her ideas about the triggers, entitlements, and the ultimate success of the CVSP to incorporate the council’s mandate. Several members had a problem with this since the ideas were not well defined or articulated, there was some discrepancy as to what the resolution meant, and/or they were not in agreement with the components of the resolution.

Several members of the public commented about the CVSP in general, and to the resolution in particular. Many of the commenters were De Anza College students and faculty speaking out against the plan, and by extension, the resolution. Some of the commenters were supportive of the development as defined in the CVSP, and a couple would have liked to see less intensive development.

Some commenters discussed the legal problems with requesting the council’s adoption of the plan in total. One problem articulated was the lack of environmental review which was evident in the fact that none of the DEIR comments were included in the new Coyote Valley Plan. Further the CVP was not based on a fiscal plan that would provide an economic evaluation of the CVSP.

In the end, the task force agreed that they would not approve a resolution, but that they would include their final comments with the Coyote Valley Plan when it was forwarded to the City Council for approval.

My Impressions:

Several task force members and some of the commenters were abusive toward anybody who did not share their views. This included one city employee, who stated that environmental ideals were fine, but it is more pragmatic to work with the developers in creating an environmentally sustainable program for Coyote Valley. It is my opinion that the plan for Coyote Valley was not sustainable and that development interests dominated the task force. Therefore, it is no surprise that they were hostile toward those who disagreed with their views.