Application for the Departmental Honors Program

1. Name: Erin Linuky

2. Thesis Topic (one or two sentence summary):

I propose to undertake a comparative case study analysis on the influence of non-governmental organizations on public efforts to protect old growth forests in both the United States and Australia. I will focus my analysis on two main questions: What contributes to the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in influencing public policy, and which of these variables explain the relative success or failure of environmental NGOs campaigning to save old growth forests in the United States and Australia?

3. Why do you want to write an Honors Thesis in Political Science?

(Answer on attached sheet)

4. What aspects of your academic or personal background prepare you to pursue in-depth independent research on the above topic?

(Answer on attached sheet)

5. Attach a 3-5 page thesis proposal in which you address the following questions:

- What is the research question or hypothesis?
- What methodology would you employ to pursue your research?
- How would this research contribute to a better understanding of important issues in Political Science?

I hereby authorize the Registrar to release a copy of my transcript to the Political Science Department. Completed applications must be submitted by Monday, March 24. If you have any questions, please consult Prof. Donald Brand.

(Signature) 4-7-03

(Date)
3) Why do you want to write an Honors Thesis in Political Science?

I want to write an Honors Thesis in Political Science because it gives me the
opportunity to undertake an in-depth study and analysis of a subject that greatly interests
me. My thesis will also provide me the chance to dedicate a year to a subject I have
gained interest in from previous classes and experiences. I have always been very
interested in the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations and their role in
government and I am also engaged by environmental studies and the issue of
deforestation. For my senior year, I wish to use the skills I have developed from my
previous three years at Holy Cross to research and write a paper that demonstrates my
intellectual understanding and displays my own analysis and critique on these subjects.
Because my thesis allows me to delve much deeper into my question than previous class
dissertations, I believe it will improve my research and writing abilities and provide me with
experience for a future thesis I may undertake in graduate school or a research topic in a
future career. I realize that writing my honors thesis is a very challenging but rewarding
privilege, and I want to push myself to accept and succeed in its writing and presentation.

4) What aspects of your academic or personal background prepare you to pursue in-
depth independent research on the above topic?

I am a Political Science major and an Environmental Studies minor, and I believe
these particular areas of study provide me with a strong background to pursue my in-
depth independent research. Past classes in these areas, such as American Government,
Comparative Politics, Law Politics and Society, Environmental History, Australian
Environmental Law and Geographic Information Systems, will help me in my analysis of
the influence of non-governmental organizations on public efforts to protect old-growth
forests in both the United States and Australia. Last semester I had the opportunity to
study both law and environmental studies at the University of Melbourne in Australia. I
believe this experience gave me an understanding of the country and the issues of the
environment as it pertains to the government and the nation as a whole. In my semester
abroad, I worked for The Wilderness Society, a non-governmental environmental
organization dedicated to the conservation of old-growth forests in the Melbourne area.
This first-hand experience will be extremely helpful in gathering information on NGOs in
Australia as well as providing a contact for interviews. In the United States, I have
interned at the Regional Environmental Council of Worcester, which provided me with a
good background in American environmental NGOs. I am also applying for an
internship this summer with environmental organizations dedicated to the preservation of
the environment. This semester, I am developing a Geographic Information Systems
final project that analyzes old-growth forest conservation. In this final project I will
explore the amount of deforestation that has occurred in Washington, Oregon, and
California in the last half century in comparison to what land is now preserved as national
parks. I will further explore the actions of environmental organizations and map out the
lands that were specifically preserved by each group. My project will explore how
successful these groups have been in preserving the forested areas of the northwest in
comparison to the amount that has been cut down in the last half century. I believe all of
these past and current courses and experiences will prove to be beneficial in my senior
thesis topic.
GENERAL TOPIC

The destruction of old growth forests is a significant environmental concern spanning across the globe. Old growth forests, with lifetimes reaching over thousands of years, are being destroyed at an alarming rate in many countries. In Australia, only 4% of ancient forests remain in the entire continent, and in the United States, only 4% are left standing today, virtually all on public lands. Environmentalists are struggling to preserve these remaining forests before they too are lost. In particular, I am interested in the role of environmental non-governmental organizations in influencing forestry policies. I propose to undertake a comparative case study analysis of the influence of non-governmental organizations on public efforts to protect old growth forests in both the United States and Australia. For my Political Science senior thesis, I intend to focus my analysis on two questions: What contributes to the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in influencing public policy, and which of these variables explain the relative success or failure of environmental NGOs campaigning to save old growth forests in the United States and Australia?

METHODOLOGY

In evaluating the role of non-governmental organizations in both Australia and the United States, I wish to analyze their comparative influences in preventing the deforestation of old growth forests. The United States and Australia provide good comparative case studies because they are both industrial states with significant experience in environmental policy. Both also suffer from significant deforestation problems, and have environmental organizations working on the preservation of old growth forests. I wish to compare the strategies of relative influence of NGOs in the two countries to discern what contributes to the effectiveness of Environmental NGOs in the influence of public policy. In my thesis, I will evaluate political theories of environmental NGO influence and then apply the relevant hypotheses to case studies regarding deforestation in both the United States and Australia. I will consider particular case studies in each country and critique past and present NGO campaigns to preserve old growth forests.
POLITICAL SCIENCE THEORY RELATED TO NGO INFLUENCE

Grassroots Versus National NGOs

Political theorists identify four major variables effecting the influences of environmental organizations. One variable addresses the comparison between grassroots oriented organizations and nationally oriented organizations, and their individual strengths and weaknesses in influencing environmental policy. From the grassroots perspective, strong, local chapters have more stable and devoted memberships than organizations with centralized structures. Members also tend to demand that attention be paid more to local concerns than national issues. Yet environmental organizations who put resources into influencing national policy can effect policy on a greater level and contend with competing corporations on a national scale. Nationally centered organizations tend to have longer life spans; yet smaller groups are more connected with the community. I wish to analyze the effectiveness of grassroots chapters striving to protect old growth forests in comparison to larger, nationally oriented groups. I plan to analyze the relative effectiveness of grassroots organizations in both countries, such as The Northwest Old-Growth Campaign in the United States; organizations with small, local chapters of larger, national NGOs, such as The Wilderness Society in Australia and The Audubon Society in America; and finally, national organizations like The Nature Conservancy in the United States and The Australian Conservation Foundation in Australia.

NGO Strategies

Throughout my analysis, I will consider whether the environmental organizations are engaging in direct action or lobbying in order to gain support. Direct action is often seen as effective in rallying support from the local community and calling attention to the organization’s issues within the general public. Methods of direct action to preserve old growth forests include inhabiting trees to impede logging, as well as more violent

1 Boss, Christopher L., Environmental Groups and the New Political Landscape. Pp.63
strategies such as tree spiking. Lobbying is aimed at the branches of government, intended to draw attention from politicians, judges, and other influential government officials on particular environmental issues. Lobbying includes protests, marches, petition signing, and many other influence building strategies. I wish to study both direct action and lobbying strategies of environmental NGOs and compare their effectiveness in my case studies.

Governmental Structure

Secondly, theorists contend that variations in electoral systems can affect the success of environmental organizations in different countries. NGOs can influence policy by encouraging people to use environmental issues to put pressure on candidates. However, environmental NGOs do not have the same campaign donations as big corporations and therefore lack the same level of influence. NGOs must therefore pursue other alternative strategies to effect election outcomes and influence environmental policy through differing access points to policy makers and candidates. The effectiveness of NGOs in elections also pertains to the type of governmental structure of the country. Those countries with two party systems, such as the United States, can thwart environmental parties from succeeding in races. Parliamentary systems, like in Australia, may provide a greater success rate for Green Party candidates, which are much more likely to consider policy proposals from environmental organizations. Despite its parliamentary system, Australia has a single member district method of electing its members of parliament, and it has two dominant parties. The two systems are quite similar and will make for an appropriate comparison between Australia and America.

The Judicial Branch

Environmental organizations also call on the judicial branch of government to impede and create policy. Environmentalists have standing in both the United States and Australia, to sue

\[\text{Ibid. 71.}\]
federal agencies for failures to give environmental values sufficient attention in land use
planning. The judicial system may also be used to strike down unfriendly environmental policy,
as well as shape policy by narrowing or expanding on individual environmental laws. The courts
have power in defining vague environmental legislation passed by the legislative body because by
interpreting law, the courts may actually create new policy. I wish to assess the role of the courts
in effecting the strategies of environmental NGOs in the United States and Australia. Further, I
want to discuss to what extent environmentalists can gain influence in this branch of government
in either country.

Logging Industry Influence

Finally, the strength of logging industries plays a large influence on both the Australian
and the American Government. The economic influence held by the logging companies greatly
affects the nature of environmental policy passed on deforestation and how those policies are
enforced. Logging industries have manipulated policy to find loopholes in environmental law to
allow for deforestation in protected areas. For example, these organizations claim that areas of
certain forests are unhealthy from the build-up of organic matter on the forest floor, which could
potentially lead to forest fires. In Australia, logging companies are currently pressing for
legislation to allow for logging in these 'susceptible' areas. The level of influence the logging
industry holds in each country influences the effectiveness of pressure from environmental NGOs
and the endurance of environmental policy.

CASE STUDIES

I intend to explore the influences of environmental NGOs through specific case studies in
the United States and Australia in the past two decades. For each campaign, I will address
whether the land in question is under state or local control, and assess the impact of this factor.
For Australia, I plan to analyze the old growth forest campaign of 2002 by the local Melbourne

1 Environmental Politics and Policy, "Our 100 Million Acres: The Battle for Public Lands," Pp. 324
chapter of the Wilderness Society, a national organization with a local chapter in which I helped campaign. The campaign strove to increase memberships before the upcoming local election to put pressure on candidates to add the issue of old growth forest preservation to their platforms. I will also research past campaigns of The Australian Conservation Foundation, a national organization, and critique the effectiveness of its strategies. I am still looking for an appropriate grassroots organization dedicated to the preservation of old-growth forests.

In the United States, I am interested in studying the campaign to stop deforestation in the Siuslaw Forests of western Oregon. I will concentrate on the actions of the local Seattle chapter of the Audubon Society, which is a national organization. I will focus my case studies on their most recent positions, but I will address the beginnings of the movements and concentrate on the last two decades. Also, I want to analyze past campaigns of the Northwest Old-Growth Campaign, a more grassroots organization, and those of the Nature Conservancy, a national NGO, to reflect on their strategies as well. I will further determine these environmental organizations’ contributions to the conservation of old growth forests in terms of the hypotheses outlined above.

RESOURCES

I plan to undertake a review of the literature on NGO influence to identify a set of hypotheses to explore in the case studies. My case study research will involve primary research related to Australian and American environmental organizations dedicated to the conservation of old growth forests. In my semester abroad in Australia last fall, I worked for the Wilderness Society campaign to stop logging in old-growth forests around the Melbourne region. I plan to use my contacts there for interviews and to obtain relevant documents on the Australian case. In the American case, I plan to conduct telephone interviews with members of the Audubon Society, the Northwest Old-Growth Campaign, and the Nature Conservancy who are working on issues in the Pacific Northwest in order to gather information and contacts. Also, I am currently developing a Geographic Information Systems final project for this semester that analyzes old-
growth forest conservation as well. In this final project I will explore the amount of deforestation that has occurred in Washington, Oregon, and California in the last half century in comparison to what land is now preserved as national parks. I will further explore the actions of environmental organizations and map out the lands that were specifically preserved by each group. My project will explore how successful these groups have been in preserving the forested areas of the northwest in comparison to the amount that has been cut down in the last half century. I plan to use of these resources as part of my honors thesis research next year and expand it to Australia as well if this proves to be feasible.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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