

RESEARCH SCAVENGER HUNT: OFFICE OF PHOSPHORUS

Student Handout

Congratulations! You have been appointed as the Regional Director for Region IV of the newly created Office of Phosphorus. Region IV includes Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, with a local headquarters in Raleigh.

The incoming Director of Phosphorus, Dr. Philomena Tucker, needs your help in preparing their first report to the President. The Director has asked you to conduct an inventory of (a) how the U.S. federal government currently oversees and/or manages phosphorus, and (b) how the state government in North Carolina oversees and/or manages phosphorus.

The Director of Phosphorus is also seeking input on how best to organize the new agency and how it will coordinate with other federal agencies as well as state and local governments.

To prepare your report, please complete the following steps:

Ground Rules:

To prepare your report, please complete the following steps:

- Carefully read the provided handout with information for resources to conduct the research.
- You should work together in small groups and compare answers with your team members, but avoid the impulse to “divide and conquer.” Everyone must gain some experience with every task.
- Record the information on a collaborative document (i.e. google docs) and include hyperlinks and/or citations for all information referenced. Screenshots can also be helpful for capturing information quickly.
- Focus on breadth, not depth – think of this as an initial information-gathering exercise rather than a final product. It is more important to address all the tasks in the allotted time for the activity, rather than aim for something comprehensive and/or polished.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help or clarification on any task.

Day 1

Review the websites and **create a list of all the Federal agencies (within reason) that oversee or manage some aspect of phosphorus.**

To identify possible agencies, we suggest the following sources:

- [U.S. Code](#): Text of the general and permanent laws of the United States.
- [Code of Federal Regulations](#): Official source of all Federal agency regulations (i.e. final rules that have become law).
- [Federal Register](#): The “daily journal of the U.S. Government,” the Federal Register includes official published information about rulemaking, including notices, proposed rules, and final rules, as well as Executive actions.
- [Regulations.gov](#): Online portal for commenting on rulemaking that has been active since 2003. Some older rules are also in the portal with incomplete information. Regs.gov

includes published information about rules, notices, and proposed rules, which are also available on the Federal Register, as well as public comments to agencies.

- [Government Accountability Office](#): Independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress to produce investigative reports on government spending.
- [Congressional Research Service](#): Independent research service that provides timely, objective, and authoritative research and analysis to Congress.
- [Index of all U.S. government departments and agencies](#)

Create a list of all the N.C. state-level agencies, boards, bureaus, commissions, etc. (within reason) that oversee or manage some aspect of phosphorus.

To identify possible agencies, we suggest beginning with the following sources:

- [NC DEQ's website](#) (identify specific parts of DEQ that relate to phosphorus)
- [NC Agriculture & Consumer Services' website](#) (identify specific areas in Ag that relate to phosphorus)
- [NC General Statutes](#)
- [List of governor-appointed Boards and Commissions](#)

For each item in your list, include information on:

- What aspect of phosphorus management the agency oversees
- Why / how the agency has that responsibility
- What powers the agency has been granted (e.g. monitoring, enforcement)

END OF DAY 1

Day 2

Spend more time reviewing the websites of the organizations you identified in #1 and #2 (if they have a website - state agencies/boards/commissions may not), as well as any other publicly available information you encounter. Through these documents, try to learn more about how staff at these agencies communicate their understanding of the challenges associated with regulating phosphorus.

- Do the agencies' websites include specific information about phosphorus? If so, include links and describe that information here.
- In what ways does regulating phosphorus seem to fit into the agencies' overall mission? If it does not clearly fit into the agencies' mission, why not?
- What, if any, relationship does the federal agency have to state agencies (e.g. is there a state agency counterpart? Do you have a sense of coordination or communication between the states and the federal government?)

Identify any examples of coordination and/or collaboration across agencies that came up in your searches from #1, #2, and/or #3.

- Did your search reveal any coordination activities between agencies, such as task forces, advisory committees, etc.? Provide links and short descriptions of those here.
- If you identified coordination and/or communication between the states and the federal government, describe the nature of that coordination in more depth here.
- Especially if you did not identify coordination activities, do you notice any potential missed opportunities for coordination you'd like to follow up on?

END OF DAY 2

Day 3

Discuss findings and what organizations should be included in the organizational chart. Design the organizational chart with summaries rationalizing your choices for each component in the chart. The charts could be on poster paper or digital.

Based on what you have learned about existing federal and state oversight of phosphorus, how would you recommend that the incoming Director organize the new Office of Phosphorus?

- Work with your group members to create an organizational chart that shows how your version of the agency will define and understand the challenges of sustainable phosphorus management.
- Include a short paragraph or blurb explaining your chart and why you made the selections you did. (You may use “I” or “we” in your explanation)
- You can choose to also describe how you plan to organize your regional office, or just focus on the federal level.