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PROFESSIONAL WRITING FOR A NATURAL RESOURCE POLICY COURSE

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ABSTRACT: Writing, there's no doubt, is important to anyone's career. Natural resource professionals, whether in agencies, nonprofits, academe, or in private practice have a need to express themselves in a cogent and succinct manner. In a "Natural Resource Policy" course students learn the skills of critical reasoning, conciseness, and editing with a variety of assignments that compel creativity and problem solving. Over the semester students write several letters to the editor, letters to a client, memoranda, opinion pieces worthy of the *Wall Street Journal*, and briefing papers of less than five pages. For each assignment, students identify a co-editor, someone who reads and actively comments on the assignment prior to its being turned in to the instructor. Co-editors are also required to initial all assignments to demonstrate their acceptance of revisions. Students learn that what they say has import and that peers are often the best critics. Writing assignments stimulate critical-thinking skills and improve written communication. Students are evaluated on spelling, how well they follow instructions, editing, and explanation of subject matter. A variety of written tasks that reflect real-world problems strengthen student communication skills.