Professional Documentation Log
*To be kept in the **Project Progress Notebook***
Documenting Evidence of your Work and Project Progress

Class: ENS 461, Senior Seminar: Environmental Impact Assessment and Project Development

Course Goals: Environmental professionals are broadly trained with backgrounds in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Professionals in this area commonly engage in group work and must have strong research, writing and verbal skills. They must be able to analyze data, conduct field research and critically analyze materials. They must also recognize the value of community and professional partnerships in their work. They must also be able to reflect deeply on the process of learning and engagement in real time, and learn from this reflection. The goal of this course is for students to improve and demonstrate these cross disciplinary skills through development of a semester long environmentally focused project.

Documentation: Environmental work must be documented to identify and record information and analysis, chain of custody of samples and/or information, project participants and their activities, and to record project progress. Government and other professional work often requires evidence and documentation, especially if there are questions or disputes at a later date. Information from a project or even a discussion with a client or the public can sometimes be needed long after the original project was completed and the team has dispersed.

Clear evidence and documentation can also help resolve legal issues and may be needed in a related chain of events. An example was provided by a member of the N.C. Soil and Water Division in Orange County, NC. Gail Hughes, the Soil & Water agent, shared a story based on her professional experiences.

Gail worked with a dairy farmer in Orange Co., NC, to construct ponds for containment of animal waste. She provided written recommendations and plans for construction and operation of the manure containment ponds, which were needed for the dairy operation. Written records of all communications were kept. Permits were issued from the local government for construction of the manure containment ponds, and a note was added to the deeds for the land.

After several years, the land was sold to a developer. Gail met with the developer, and discussed the prior usage of the land and restrictions that had been placed on the land for future use, again recording (by writing) all communications. The developer subdivided the land and sold the lots as part of an "Equestrian Estate Development". By that time, the manure containment ponds looked like any other farm pond, and were advertised as an attractive asset of the community. Based on the promotional materials from the sales office, one of the new landowners wanted to drain one of the ponds on the land they had purchased. They hired a contractor, and the pond was gone.

However, because of their original purpose when constructed, this was in violation of state law. Based on their original purpose, removal of the ponds was of concern because of the potential to pollute a nearby stream. The homeowner and the developer claimed

they didn't know, and could not be held responsible for any legal violations. Gail Hughes was called in to provide evidence of environmental violations.
What kind of evidence could be provided? Did written document play a role in this drama?
Another illustration of the importance of evidence documentation can be seen with the issues of climate change – where there is still public questioning (skepticism?) of analyses and conclusions despite scientific consensus. Verification of researcher's studies and professional activity has been extremely important in the evaluation of the "truth" and validity of climate change research.

Audience: self, project partners, future project participants, government officials

Assignment: Write a weekly ***Professional Documentation Log*** that **documents evidence** of your own work, evolution of the project goals and progress, project team activities, accomplishments and progress. There will be an assignment folder on Moodle for each student to post their weekly PDL entry. While the length of each PDL entry will vary from week to week depending on the range of activities, depth of meetings, and other materials that have been collected (ex, brochures, flyers, forms, maps, etc.) the typical PDL entry can run from an absolute minimum of 1 page to a typical range of 2 -5 pages, and in some busy weeks with extra materials accumulated, a PDL entry can run as long as 10 pages.

**Each weekly entry should include the 4 parts described below -**

a) Visual Depiction of project management plan and relevant progress for the week. This can be the Concept Map with appropriate annotations. This should be a living figure which is edited to reflect changing priorities and progress. b)   All meetings and activities should be recorded, including date, time, place, participants, purpose, discussion and outcomes. You should include activities done during class as well as work outside of class. Entries can be typed or hand written (but must be readable). These notes should also include documentation of meetings with the class Professors and project partners, documenting their comments, suggestions and requests.

c) Records of additional activities such as visits to the project site. Dates, times and participants should be documented as well as the goals, outcomes and descriptions of the activities.

d) Analysis of Project Progress.

Weekly entries should be uploaded to the class Moodle site.

Visual Depiction:
• Visual depiction of the project management plan clearly showing the project goal, information to be collected, and how information will be analyzed/used in the project. The goal (target condition) should be indicated by a unique symbol setting it apart from other parts of the diagram. Use the method for concept mapping described in the text "Measures of Success" that was used to guide case study discussions early in the course. Indicate changes made to the diagram as the project management plan is modified throughout the semester to meeting changing needs and priorities as they are identified. Each week, indicate

on the diagram if there were changes made. Also make a notation on the diagram indicating current state. May be hand drawn in. See the example below:
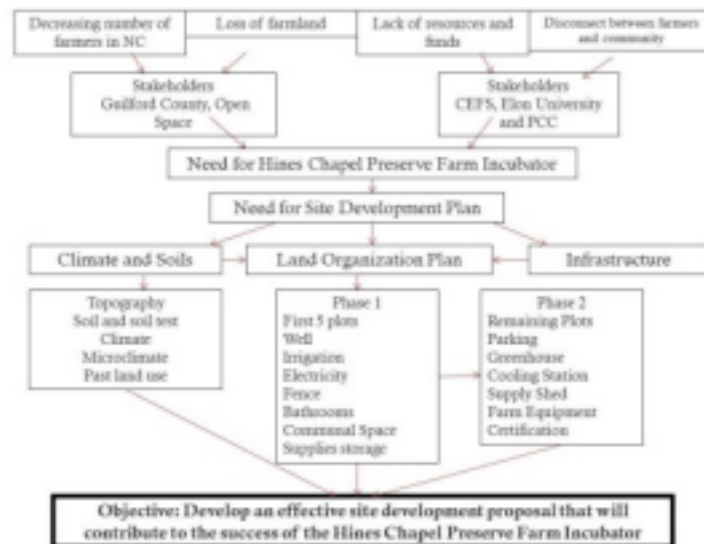
Records providing evidence of meetings:
• Record of all meetings during the past week, including in class meetings. Times, dates, place, participants, meeting goals and outcomes. • Records should include notes from meeting with faculty and project partners, including comments and suggestions.

Records providing evidence of activities:
• Record of all activities of the past week, including dates, times, places, participants, meeting goals and outcomes.
• Records of your individual work including collected information, notes on how/where information was recorded, if it will it be shared with others, notes on how your work contributes to the project progress
• This part of the log will provide **EVIDENCE** for the data you have collected and the project progress. The more complete your documentation, the stronger your records.
• Examples of items you can add to your PDL can include: pictures, sketches, notes from your phone taken in a quick meeting or interview, photos of pages of handwritten notes from a notebook taken in the field, scans, printouts, etc.

Analysis of project progress:
• Project progress analysis – are you and the project team meeting timeline expectations? Is adaptive management needed to change the project management plan? Is information being collected and analyzed as will be needed?
• Are there challenges which need to be addressed either by you or the project team?
• Were goals/plans that were identified for the week achieved? Plans for upcoming week?
• Reflection on your engagement and learning over the past week, as well as on your team's progress.

Additional information that should be part of the documented record: • List of all contact people including phone numbers, e-mails, addresses, etc. • This is the permanent log of your individual activities, accomplishments and progress. Keep it as complete as possible.

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