Following our Tongass stakeholder discussion in class on May 26, each stakeholder (pair of students) will create a proposed solution to the Tongass conflict. These proposed solutions must be designed with two components in mind:

1. The solution should primarily serve to **meet the needs and goals of the stakeholder** that you have been assigned to represent.

2. The solution should ideally be **politically viable** – that is, it should be a solution that the other stakeholders **might** be willing to accept. However, this requirement is **secondary** to the first.

You will present your proposal in two forms – in a 30-60 second **radio spot** and in a 1-2 page **press release**. This document describes the press release assignment.

A **press release** (also called a news release, press statement, or media release) is a document designed for members of the news media. The purpose of a press release is to announce and notify the news media of something that an organization or individual claims is newsworthy. Such releases are sent via email or fax to editors and journalists at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and/or television stations.

A press release provides reporters with the basic information they need to create a news story. Businesses, government entities, non-governmental organizations, and individuals create press releases with the primary goal of **attracting favorable media coverage**. The goal of a press release is therefore twofold:

1. To generate **coverage** of a particular topic in the **news media**. The press release must convince reporters that its topic is something that is worthy of a news story.

2. To generate more **positive news** than negative for the organization behind it. A press release has failed its intended task if the majority of the news coverage that results portrays the entity behind it in a negative light.

In creating the press release for your proposed Tongass solution, you will have several tasks to accomplish in two pages or less. These include:

- **Choose your audience** – It’s up to you to decide what kind of news outlets your press release is designed for, and you’ll share this information with the class when you present your release on June 8th. Will your release be shared broadly with all national news organizations? Or have you designed it for a narrower market, such as left-leaning publications like *The Nation* or *Mother Jones*? Or perhaps it is intended to reach business owners and business interests, so you’re releasing it to a magazine like *Business Week* or trade publications like *Oil & Gas Journal*?

- **Provide context** – imagine an editor or reporter scanning a bunch of press releases looking for something intriguing that would make a good story and
would sell newspapers or magazines or whatever the reporter works on. How can you pique the reporter’s interest? How will the reporter know right away what the background story for your announcement is?

- **Present your solution** – the Tongass is a complex issue, and you’ll have to describe the key details of your proposal without scaring the editor or reporter off with a story that would be too complex for him or her to write about.

- **Sell your solution** – in addition to telling reporters what you want to do to solve the Tongass issue, you want to convince reporters to write an article or produce a radio or TV news story that depicts your organization in a *favorable* light.

In addition to meeting the goals detailed above, press releases have a specific **format**. For examples, check out Alaska Governor Sarah Palin’s press release page. The important formatting elements are:

- The **header**, which is almost always the words “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” in capital letters. These three words at the top of a document are what indicate that it is a press release.

- A **headline** that will catch an editor or reporter’s eye. Such headlines are often the exact words that you hope will become the headline of a news article that a reporter creates.

- A **date and location.** Just like an article in a newspaper, the first words of the press release, after the headline, should by the date of the release and the location (city and state) that the organization is releasing the news. So, if your organization is Seattle-based, it would say “June 8, 2009. Seattle, Washington” and go from there. Go ahead and use June 8 as the date since this is the day we’ll be presenting them in class.

- The **text** of the press release. These are usually short paragraphs written in the style of a newspaper article. This is where the real action of a press release is.

- **Contact information** for the organization that created the press release. Usually in the form of “for more information, contact. . .” This can appear at the top of the press release, just below the header but before the headline, or at the very end of the release.

- A **boilerplate**, which is a general background or “about us” paragraph pertaining to the entity presenting the news. The purpose of the boilerplate is to give reporters a clear idea of who is releasing this news. This appears at the end.

- The **closing**, which lets reporters know when they’ve reached the end and there isn’t another page. The typical form of this is three pound signs, “###”.

As always, let me know if you have questions, problems, frustrations, or concerns. Have fun writing your press release!