



**2022-2023**

**DISCUSSION OUTLINE**

***Global Environmental  
Issues: What Is the  
Condition of Our Planet?***

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# Overview of Discussion

***“Problem-solving Discussion is an effort on the part of a small group to reach a solution to a problem through informal interchange of facts, inferences, and judgments. This method of discussion seeks consensus rather than majority rule. The focus of this event should be the encouragement of cooperation and critical thinking to arrive at the collective goal of better understanding and problem solving.”***

This statement from the *Minnesota State High School League Speech Rules and Policies Manual* reflects the true spirit of this event. As discussion participants prepare and research, the goal should be to collect information and develop collaborative skills that will maximize their ability to make valuable contributions as members of a variety of contest groups. In rounds, all discussants should cooperate to achieve group consensus through both substantive—adding valuable information, perspectives, and analysis—and procedural—enhancing the group process, full participation, and positive exchange of ideas—contributions to the process. The category is not intended to be adversarial.

## Overview of This Year’s Topic

*The Congress, the Administration and the public all share a profound commitment to the rescue of our natural environment, and the preservation of the Earth as a place both habitable by and hospitable to man.*

--President Richard Nixon, July 1970

*The ultimate test of man’s conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.*

--Governor Gaylord Nelson, Founder of Earth Day

As we move into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is inescapable that our planet is struggling. This year’s topic intends to take a critical gaze at what are those major issues facing our globe, how we as major tenants of the world can approach them, and if realistic and feasible solutions can be crafted to solve those issues. While it may be easy, and tempting, to view this topic through the lens of partisanship and ideological rigidity, finding ways to heal that whails the Earth – and we all need to remember it’s the only one we have – should be achievable.

# TASK INFORMATION

## Tasks at Invitational Tournaments

While the Minnesota State High School League does not limit the use of topic areas used for Discussion at invitational speech tournaments, the Discussion Committee recommends the following schedule to give students experience with all parts of the outline:

- **Start of Regular Invitational Season – February 18: Areas I & II, Subsection Topics**
- **February 19 – Last Regular Season Invitational: Areas III & IV, Section Topics**
- **State Tournament Tasks – Students should be prepared for tasks from all areas of the outline.**

**Tournament Managers Please Note:** Whether or not you choose to follow the above schedule, it is vital that you communicate to your participating schools which part(s) of the outline you will use and how you will be organizing your Discussion rounds.

## Tasks at Subsection and Section Tournaments

Tasks for subsection and section tournaments will follow the procedure instituted in the 2016 season – Tournaments will no longer receive a full slate of tasks from which to choose. Instead, they will receive a set of four or five tasks for those tournaments. Those tasks will be date specific (unique to one or two sets of tournaments) and will not be repeated at other tournaments.

The tasks themselves **shall not** be shared beforehand with teams competing at subsection or section tournaments.

Rather, the specific outline sub-points used will be sent with the sets and – following procedure established in 2018 – **must** be communicated to all coaches in your sub and/or section within a time frame that affords adequate preparation for participating teams. For example: “Our [subsection/section] tournament will use Area 1, Sub-points A, C, D, J.”

## Tasks at State Tournament

State tournament tasks will follow the same procedure as previous seasons. Separate sets will be written for each day and chosen at random for each round of competition. Participants should be prepared for tasks from all four areas of the outline and be mindful that some subpoints may be combined for more expansive tasks.

# ***Global Environmental Issues: What Is The Condition of Our Planet?***

## **2021 - 2022 MSHSL Discussion Topic Outline**

*The challenge to this year's topic will be how coaches, students, and judges approach tasks in an effort to avoid overt bias towards the issues surrounding environmental debates. The subpoints listed below are intended to ensure that participants can view multiple sides to the various facets of the overall topic.*

### **I. Land (Subsection Topic)**

- A. Deforestation (Amazon rainforest, afforestation, reforestation, impact on animal species)
- B. Sustainable Land Use (grazing, sprawl vs density, appropriate lawns)
- C. Loss of Biodiversity (extinctions, soil degradation, habitat loss, invasive species, GMOs)
- D. Resource Extraction (mining impacts, habitat impacts, energy production)
- E. Pollution (industrial waste, agricultural impacts, landfills)

### **II. Air (Subsection Topic)**

- A. Human emissions and natural emissions (smog, CFCs, forest fires)
- B. Light pollution (street lights, structure lights, tower lights, ambient lighting)
- C. Noise pollution (transportation of all types, ambient noise, artificial noise)
- D. Challenges of "clean energy" technology (emissions, aesthetics, locations)
- E. Impact on human health (heat waves, respiratory issues, mental health, increases in chronic disease)

### **III. Water (Section Topic)**

- A. Agricultural impacts (buffer zones, downriver impacts on people and wildlife, pathogens)
- B. Use and/or abuse (agricultural vs. human needs, wasteful use, pollution)
- C. Wetland depletion/pollution (no-net loss, flood control)
- D. Loss of biodiversity (overfishing, dead zones, coral reef loss)
- E. Rising sea levels (impact on coastal communities, weather pattern impacts)

### **IV. People (Section Topic)**

- A. Waste disposal (nuclear, plastics, electronics, landfills, recycling)
- B. Population growth/overpopulation (impact of growth patterns, environmental equity, urban vs rural issues)
- C. Impacts of Urban Heat Islands (buildings, asphalt/concrete, green spaces, green building technology)
- D. Energy use/conservation
- E. Response of governments to environmental issues (agreements, internal laws, climate diplomacy/climate agreements)
- F. Response of corporations to environmental issues (ESGs, voluntary measures, economics vs environmental stewardship)

# Bibliography

The bibliography is a starting point for those desiring direction in researching this topic. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and presents only a small number of the resources that could be used to prepare for Discussion tasks.

## Area I – Land – Subsection Topic

### A. Deforestation

1. Large parts of Amazon may never recover, major study says. *The Guardian*, 5 September 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/05/large-parts-of-amazon-may-never-recover-major-study-says>
2. Deforestation: Facts and Information, *National Geographic*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/deforestation>
3. The Effects of Deforestation, *World Wildlife Fund*, <https://www.wwf.org.uk/learn/effects-of/deforestation>
4. Cloud cooling effects of afforestation and reforestation at midlatitudes, *National Academy of Sciences*, 9 August 2021. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2026241118>

### B. Sustainable Land Use

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2. Estimating the environmental impacts of 57,000 food products. Clark, Michael, et al, *Arizona State University*, 22 June 2022. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2120584119>
3. 'Using all of what we have': Minnesota's 'upcycled' food industry takes off. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 20 August 2022. <https://www.startribune.com/using-all-of-what-we-have-minnesotas-upcycled-food-industry-takes-off/600199874/>
4. Your local park has a hidden talent: helping fight climate change. *NPR*, 31 August 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/31/1118786411/city-parks-global-warming-heat-wave>

### C. Loss of Biodiversity

1. Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating'. *United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, 6 May 2019. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>
2. Biodiversity loss: what is causing it and why is it a concern? *European Parliament*, 6 September 2021. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200109STO69929/biodiversity-loss-what-is-causing-it-and-why-is-it-a-concern>
3. Challenging Evolution: How GMOs can influence biodiversity. Landry, Heather. *Harvard University*. 10 August 2015. <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2015/challenging-evolution-how-gmos-can-influence-genetic-diversity/>

#### D. Resource Extraction

1. Resource Extraction. *University of California Museum of Paleontology*. <https://ugc.berkeley.edu/background-content/resource-extraction/>
2. Resource extraction responsible for half world's carbon emissions. *The Guardian*, 12 March 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/12/resource-extraction-carbon-emissions-biodiversity-loss>
3. U.S. corn-based ethanol worse for the climate than gasoline, study finds. *Reuters*, 14 February 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/us-corn-based-ethanol-worse-climate-than-gasoline-study-finds-2022-02-14/>

#### E. Pollution

1. Twin Cities faces 'pinch point' over landfilling. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 25 January 2021. <https://www.startribune.com/twin-cities-faces-pinch-point-over-landfilling/600014857/>.
2. The Economic Impact of Brownfields and Superfund Cleanup Sites. *Investopedia*, 24 May 2022. <https://www.investopedia.com/the-economic-impact-of-brownfield-and-superfund-cleanup-sites-5220462>
3. Godswill, Awuchi Chinaza. Industrial waste management: brief survey and advice to cottage, small and medium scale industries in Uganda. *Kampala International University*. January 2017. <https://ir.kiu.ac.ug/bitstream/20.500.12306/1601/1/INDUSTRIAL%20WASTE%20MANAGEMENT%20BRIEF%20SURVEY%20AND%20ADVICE%20TO.pdf>
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## Area II – Air – Subsection Topic

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3. Air pollution sources. *European Environment Agency*. 24 November 2021. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/air-pollution-sources-1>

#### B. Light pollution

1. Global light pollution is affecting ecosystems—what can we do? *United Nations Environment Programme*, 13 March 2020. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/global-light-pollution-affecting-ecosystems-what-can-we-do>
2. Missing the Dark: Health Effects of Light Pollution. *National Institute of Health*, January 2009. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2627884/>

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  2. Renewable Energy Poses Challenge For Wildlife Conservation. *College of Natural Resources, North Carolina State University*, 13 November 2019. <https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2019/11/renewable-energy-poses-challenge-for-wildlife-conservation>
  3. Impacts of Renewable Energy Facilities. *Columbia University Climate School*. <https://climate.law.columbia.edu/content/impacts-renewable-energy-facilities>
- E. Impact on human health
1. How Extreme Heat Kills, Sickens, Strains and Ages Us. *New York Times*, 13 June 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/climate/extreme-heat-wave-health.html>
  2. Air quality and you: health effects of air pollution. *Minnesota Pollution Control Agency*. (\*see other tabs for additional state resources.) <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air/air-quality-and-you-health-effects-air-pollution>
  3. Smog in our brains. Weir, Kirsten. *American Psychological Association*. July/August 2012. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/smog>

### **Area III – Water – Section Topic**

- A. Agricultural impacts
1. Agricultural Contaminants. *United States Geological Survey*, 1 March 2019. <https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/agricultural-contaminants>
  2. Agricultural effects on streams and rivers: A western US focus. Hughes, R.M and Vadas, Jr, R.L. *MDPI Journals*. 9 July 2021. <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4441/13/14/1901/htm>
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- C. Wetland depletion/pollution
1. What are the trends in the extent and condition of wetlands and their effects on human health and the environment? *US Environmental Protection Agency*. <https://www.epa.gov/report-environment/wetlands>
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  3. Sea-level rise will cause more than flooding — these 5 other impacts of rising oceans are just as bad. *Business Insider*, 17 February 2015. <https://www.businessinsider.com/5-terrifying-impacts-of-rising-sea-levels-2015-2>

## Area IV – People – Section Topic

- A. Waste disposal
1. Is recycling a waste? *CNBC*, 22 May 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/22/is-recycling-a-waste-heres-the-answer-from-a-plastics-expert.html>
  2. Are We Drowning in a World of E-waste?. *Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management*, <https://www.ciwem.org/news/winners-of-environmental-photographer-of-the-year-announced-%E2%80%93-how-our-planet-looks-in-2018>

3. Trillions of pounds of trash: New technology tries to solve an old garbage problem. *CNBC*, 29 May 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/29/can-new-technology-solve-a-trillion-pound-garbage-problem.html>
- B. Population growth/overpopulation
1. Is high density worse for the environment, traffic, and crime? Most Americans think so. *YouGov America*, 13 April 2022. <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2022/04/13/high-density-worse-environment-traffic-and-crime>
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### **Websites**

- [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org) Union of Concerned Scientists
- [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org) United Nations Environmental Programme
- [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) United States Environmental Protection Agency
- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/> European Environment Agency
- <https://www.noaa.gov/news-features> National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration
- <https://www.sciencedaily.com/> Science Daily
- <https://theconversation.com/us> The Conversation (use search terms such as Ecology, Environment, Pollution, etc.)

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