

Lauren James  
Ethics Analysis  
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You have done an excellent job  
of considering the eight steps  
that we discussed in class!

#### Case 4: Caribou Migration Routes

##### Facts of the case:

- A natural gas company hires an environmental consulting firm to produce a map of a proposed pipeline that travels through a portion of northeast Alaska; the purpose of the map is to assess this preliminary pipeline route within context, considering the physical landscape, private land ownership and public lands data.
- The utility company desires the shortest, most direct route to minimize capital construction expenditures and to increase pipeline efficiency.
- The map will be used as a visual aid in a public hearing; potential project funders will be attending the hearing.
- A GIS analyst, working for the consulting firm, gathers pertinent data to analyze specific variables necessary in defining an optimum pipeline route.
- The variables include terrain slope, existing laws and regulations of right-of-way and proximity to population centers and wetlands; the number of interruptions in the route such as road, railroad and stream crossings will also be considered.
- The analyst gathers data pertinent to the variables. In completing this process the analyst has access to data, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, regarding caribou migration routes. Although the proposed pipeline route does not cross into neighboring wildlife refuges it does interrupt migration corridors that extend beyond refuge borders, including that of the caribou.
- The analyst brings the pipeline and migration route intersect issue to the attention of her supervisor; the analyst is instructed to remove caribou migration routes from any maps to be used in the public hearing.

##### Ethical Issues:

- Is it ethical for the analyst <sup>to</sup> omit information gathered in the data collection process ~~because~~ instructed to do so by her supervisor, even though the data - specifically the caribou migration routes - intersects the proposed pipeline route?
- Is it ethical for the environmental consulting firm and potentially the utility company to restrict the data presented to the community during the public hearing?

##### Affected Parties:

- The analyst: The analyst may have moral difficulties omitting the migration route data from the map. However, if she goes against the wishes of her boss she may be reprimanded or risk job loss. The analyst has a choice to obey her supervisor or

find out the issues relating to the route omission. If she is provided information regarding the omission from her supervisor, she still may have difficulty omitting the information. In producing a map, she may feel a responsibility to include all data discovered during research, especially when it is to be used for a public hearing. If concerned stakeholders find out the information was withheld, the analyst may risk her reputation. | good!

- The environmental consulting firm: The firm has a responsibility to its clients and to the environment. If the omission decision was made by the supervisor alone and is discovered, the firm risks misrepresentation of the situation in a public setting and reprimanding from the public and/or the client. If the omission decision was agreed upon between the firm and utility company, the firm risks its reputation in not being responsible to the public or the environment. Producing a map with the migration route data included risks losing the utility company as a client. | good!
- The natural gas utility: If the agreement between the utility company and consulting firm was to purposefully omit the caribou routes because they intersected with the pipeline, then the utility company may face public backlash depending on how the community feels about the omission. Depending on the timing of the discovery, the company risks impact to its image or economic loss if the pipeline project has started and is halted or redirected. If the omission decision was made in the consulting firm without the knowledge of the utility, the company risks planning a route without all the necessary impact information.
- The Community: As the map is being used as a visual aid in a community presentation of the proposed route, the community should be aware of all the factors the route will be intersecting with. The pipeline has the possibility of affecting the community ecosystem balance, if it is mapped without some of the variables in interrupts this may not be giving the full scope of the proposed project.
- The ecosystem: If the interruption is of great magnitude, it may alter the surrounding ecosystem and create other systemic problems.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: If the omission is considered a grievance by any party, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be called on to discuss why they did or did not call attention to the omission.

#### Obligations:

- The analyst is obligated to follow-up with her supervisor as to the reasons for the information omission. Ultimately the analyst is obligated to make a choice and follow the instructions of her supervisor, voice her opposition to the omission to human resources or refuse to produce the map. She must face any consequences with her decision to report or not report the omitted data.
- The environmental consulting firm has obligations to their client and to the environment.
- The utility company has obligations to create a pipeline route that is economically feasible and that considers all the variables the route impacts.

- Either the utility company and/or the environmental consulting firms are obligated to present all data in a public hearing.

#### Character and Integrity:

- The analyst: The analyst is in a difficult position. If she does not agree with the omission, then she may have personal obligations to release the information and face any consequences with this action.
- The environmental consulting firm: If the supervisor is acting in cohorts with the utility company, without the firm's knowledge, then the firm may face larger consequences to its reputation if the public discovers pertinent information was withheld. If the firm is acting in cohorts with the utility company, then the firm is lacking integrity in producing a map that has omitted relevant data, in hiding this data from the public and in not being responsible to the environment
- The utility company: If the utility is requesting relevant data be removed from the map because it has the potential to impact the expenditures and efficiency of the route then it is acting without integrity; acting in good character requires presenting all the data to the public.

#### Alternative Actions:

- The analyst could ask her supervisor for more information regarding the omission. If she received an adequate response she could continue to produce the map. If not, she could request a meeting with a higher supervisor to present the situation.
- The analyst could choose to not omit the caribou route on the map and face the consequences of the decision.
- The analyst could speak with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to more fully understand the consequences to the caribou of a pipeline and then request to present her findings in a meeting with the utility. The utility company could capitalize on the discovered caribou migration route data and use it as an opportunity to promote the 'green' image of the utility company in a marketing campaign that shows regard and care toward the caribou.

Neat!

#### Gut Feeling:

- While the analyst may choose to just ask her supervisor for more clarification regarding the omission and continue with the map, my gut feeling says that the omission would not be responsible to the community or the environment. In a public hearing the map should providing all the necessary environmental impact information discovered during data collection. The analyst would need to pursue other avenues to disseminate the information regarding the intersection of the pipeline and migration routes.

Specific Ethical Action:

Hopefully

- I believe that the best plan for the analyst is to approach her supervisor with her discomfort in creating a map that does not include all discovered data. She can explain that her values as an analyst are to produce a map with all pertinent information. In this conversation she can more accurately understand the parameters of the omission decision. If the omission action still seems negligent, then the analyst needs request an opportunity to voice her concerns during a meeting with the utility company or should seek an appointment with another supervisor at the consulting firm. <sup>If</sup> After all of these steps are taken, the analyst is still asked to omit the information then I believe she should ask to be assigned to a different project and not produce the map to protect her reputation and keep her integrity. She then could look for other employment as the firm is not acting in good faith to the community or the environment. The analyst may then decide if she would like to make this information available to the public through an anonymous tip to the local newspaper or ~~through~~ <sup>by</sup> requesting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inquire about the caribou routes at the public meeting. As either of these last two steps may very well risk her employment, she should first resign or be prepared to be fired.