Purpose
The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has had a profound effect on urban and regional planning in California, in both intended and unintended ways. The purpose of this exercise is for you to go through an actual Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and experience first-hand the challenges of gleaning useful information from its pages.

Activities
1. See what CEQA processes are going on in your home county (or Yolo County, if you want) by searching the CEQAnet Database (http://www.ceqanet.ca.gov/QueryForm.asp). Select your county for Project Location, and hit “submit”. Take a look at the search results. If your list is over 25 or so, go back and set a more recent start date for the date range; if your list is under 12 or so, go back and set an earlier start date.
   a. Notice the Project Titles and Descriptions, but also look at the Lead Agency and the Document Type. How many projects do you have for each document type?
   b. Click on one of each type. Make sure you know what the three-letter code stands for. Scroll down to see what kind of information is provided. Think about why that project has that document type.

2. Find a Draft EIR (DEIR) to review. Don’t agonize about which one. Here are a few options:
   a. Pick one of the projects from your search that has an DEIR. Unfortunately, the database doesn’t give you a link to the document itself. But try copying the title of the document and using Google (or another search engine) to find it on the web (put the title and “DEIR” in the search field). You could also try going to the website of the Lead Agency to look for it.
   b. Go back to your city from Exercise 2 and see if you can find the DEIR for city’s General Plan. They are usually posted somewhere on the website near where the plan is posted. (You can find the DEIR for the Vacaville General Plan here: http://www.vacavillegeneralplan.org/documents/)
   c. Look around the website of your city’s planning department to see if they’ve posted EIRs for any current development projects. (Here’s one from Davis, for the Cannery mixed-use project: http://community-development.cityofdavis.org/projects/the-cannery/city-council-approval-documents).

   NOTE: Final EIRs (FEIR) usually consist of only a list of edits to the DRAFT EIR and the responses to the public comments. If you can’t find the DEIR for the project/plan you’ve picked, check to see if the FEIR actually includes the environmental analysis.

3. Make note of some basic information about the DEIR. What is it dated? What is its URL? Who is the lead agency? Who prepared it? Any other pertinent information?

4. Look through the DEIR to find the following items. Start with the Executive Summary, but move to the full document as necessary, using the Table of Contents as a guide. Stop when you hit the 2-hour mark for the exercise so far.
   a. Project description and statement of project’s objectives: what is proposed?
   b. Discussion of environmental impacts: what impacts are significant, which ones aren’t?
   c. Discussion of mitigation measures for significant impacts: what does the DEIR suggest?
   d. Discussion of alternatives: what alternatives does the EIR consider, other than “no project”, and how do they compare?

5. Write a memo of 1-2 single-spaced pages that includes a summary of your CEQAnet search, background information on the DEIR that you picked (type of EIR, date, URL, etc.), and key points from your look through the DEIR. End with a couple of sentences summing up your experience. What do you think of the DEIR as a tool for informing decision makers? Include a citation for the DEIR at the end of your memo, with a URL.

   Note: we are looking for professional memos that show that you have taken the exercise seriously and put some thought into your review of the EIR.