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For inquiries or interview requests, please contact:

Andrea Rodgers Harris	206-296-2851	akrodersharris@yahoo.com
Julia Olson	415-786-4825	julia@ourchildrenstrust.org

YOUTH PRESENT CLIMATE CHANGE PETITION TO THE WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Seattle, Washington – Today, eight young citizens of Washington State submitted a [petition](#) for rulemaking to the Department of Ecology. The young people are petitioning Ecology to promulgate a rule that would adopt a science-based carbon dioxide emission reduction trajectory for Washington. Ecology is required to make a greenhouse gas emissions limits recommendation to the Legislature, pursuant to [Governor Inslee's April 29 Executive Order 14-04](#) and the 2008 Statute Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The rule, if adopted, would put Washington on the emission reduction trajectory needed for global climate stabilization.

Governor Inslee's recent Executive Order on climate change aims to reduce carbon pollution and support clean energy in Washington. The Governor acknowledged the severity of the impacts of climate change on the state of Washington, highlighting that "[t]hree key areas of risk, specifically changes in the natural timing of water availability, sea level rise and ocean acidity, and increased forest mortality, will likely bring significant consequences for the economy, infrastructure, natural systems, and human health of the region."

"The current greenhouse gas emission limits required by the legislature in 2008 are insufficient to protect our climate system or our oceans," said Andrea Rodgers, attorney for the youth petitioners. "Our legislature had the foresight to require Ecology to recommend new emission limits based on the best science of protecting the global climate system, and now Governor Inslee has directed Ecology to make those recommendations next month. Our children want to make sure their government is paying attention to the best available science and setting limits that protect their future, and that's what this petition asks of Ecology."

Though the Washington petitioners are young, they already have a strong record of taking action to protect their environment. Zoe Foster, a 12-year-old from Seattle, has spoken to Seattle's City Council Energy and Environment Committee, at the Governor's Climate Legislative and Executive Workgroup (CLEW) hearings in Seattle and Olympia, and has met with Legislative staff to discuss climate issues.

Zoe also works to educate her peers by presenting climate change slideshows at school. Two brothers on the petition, Aji (14) and Adonis (9) attend Pathfinder, a school in West Seattle focused on the environment. The boys have presented songs on climate change and oil trains to the Seattle City Council and regularly help educate fellow students about climate change.

“I’m not a lawyer because I’m under 18, but if I don’t have any legal rights that are being violated by the government’s refusal to accept and deal with global warming, then I don’t have enough legal rights!” said 12-year old petitioner Zoe Foster.

The youth’s petition cites the alarming [research](#) of one of our nation’s top climate scientists. According to Dr. James Hansen, “the science is crystal clear—we must rapidly reduce fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions if we are to have a chance of protecting Earth’s natural systems for these young people.” Best available climate science finds that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels must be reduced from the current global annual mean concentration of 397 ppm to 350 ppm by 2100 in order to achieve climate stabilization and protect our oceans from catastrophic acidification.

If no action is taken, increased health costs, storm damage, coastal destruction, wildfires, droughts, and rising energy costs are projected to cost Washington \$10 billion per year by 2020. Governor Inslee is taking a strong stance that “Washington needs to take additional actions now” to address climate change. Youth petitioners agree, and are urging Ecology to recommend a more aggressive emission reduction framework to the Governor, the Governor’s Carbon Emission Reduction Taskforce, and the legislature when they deliver their July 15th report (as required by Executive Order 14-04).

The youth’s petition says that by putting Washington on a carbon dioxide emission reduction trajectory back to 350 ppm, Ecology would fulfill its constitutional and statutory obligations to protect the state’s natural resources and citizens from the harmful effects of climate change and ocean acidification. Indeed, the youth suggest that Ecology must take these steps to protect their rights. The added benefit, they say, is that in addition to preventing further climate change and ocean acidification, the proposed rule would help achieve the Governor’s mandate “to capture the job growth opportunities of a clean energy economy, and to meet our obligation to our children and future generations.”

The young people’s petition for rulemaking was filed with the help of Our Children’s Trust, an Oregon-based nonprofit orchestrating a global game-changing, youth driven legal campaign to establish the right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate. The legal effort advances the fundamental duty of government today: to address the climate crisis based on scientific baselines and benchmarks, and to do so within timeframes determined by scientific analysis, to protect our children.

Our Children's Trust is a nonprofit organization advocating for urgent emissions reductions on behalf of youth and future generations, who have the most to lose if emissions are not reduced. OCT is spearheading the international human rights and environmental TRUST Campaign to compel governments to safeguard the atmosphere as a "public trust" resource. We use law, film, and media to elevate their compelling voices. Our ultimate goal is for governments to adopt and implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans with annual emissions reductions to return to an atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration of 350 ppm.
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