



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 2014

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YOUTH APPEAL WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY'S DECISION TO DENY THEIR CLIMATE CHANGE PETITION FOR RULEMAKING

Seattle, Washington – Today, eight young citizens of Washington State filed a [case](#) in King County Superior Court challenging the Washington Department of Ecology's [denial](#) of their request that the Department of Ecology ("Ecology") promulgate a rule that would limit carbon dioxide emissions in Washington according to what scientists say is needed to protect oceans and our climate system.

"The Department of Ecology is the state agency charged with managing and protecting the air and water upon which we all depend, but the agency claims they have no responsibility to protect the state's essential natural resources which are being degraded by climate change," said youth petitioners' attorney Andrea Rodgers Harris. "Ecology's position is particularly reckless because it is the youth petitioners' generation whose lives will be altered by the present generations' failure to take action to address climate change. Fortunately, laws exist to protect these youth petitioners' right to a healthy future and that is why they decided to challenge Ecology's decision in court."

Ecology was required to make a recommendation on greenhouse gas emission limits to the Washington Legislature by July 15, 2014, pursuant to [Governor Inslee's April 29 Executive Order 14-04](#) and the 2008 Statute Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The youth filed their initial petition in June hoping that Ecology would include the rule in its recommendation and involve the public in its decision. But Ecology failed to meet the July 15 deadline and contends that it is "currently reviewing the state's greenhouse gas emission reductions in consultation with the Climate Impacts Group to formulate recommendations on whether those reductions should be updated."

The youth petitioners say there is no time for delay and demand that they not be shut out of the process because it is, after all, their future at stake.

“Climate change is the most important issue to my future that we will ever face,” said 12-year old petitioner Zoe Foster. “My government is not doing enough to solve it and the world doesn’t have time to wait. That’s why I’m petitioning my government. And I won’t stop until some real change is made.”

Governor Inslee’s 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 youth’s petition to Ecology cited 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. The youth petitioners are asking that Washington play its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, since the state has declared its desire to serve as a leader in efforts to address climate change.

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 aren’t planning to give up their fight.

The youth petitioners filed the petition 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.

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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