



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 4, 2014

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Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission Denies Young People the Right to a Healthy Future

Denver, Colorado – Last week, the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission issued a written decision denying the anti-fracking petition young people hand-delivered to the Commission last November. The petition was signed by eight youth activists, who are members of the Boulder-based organization, Earth Guardians. The Petitioners sought the promulgation of a rule by the Commission to suspend the issuance of permits that allow oil and gas drilling until the oil and gas development can be conducted without adversely impacting human health and safety and without impairing Colorado's atmospheric resources and climate system, water, soil, wildlife, and other biological resources.

At a public hearing on April 28th, one of the Petitioners, 14-year-old Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, gave a [20 minute presentation](#) to the Commission using scientific data from the Commission's website. Xiuhtezcatl presented hard facts and compelling arguments to the Commissioners as to why granting the youth's petition was necessary to protect Colorado's natural resources. For Xiuhtezcatl and the other Petitioners, it's about the basic human right to clean water, clean air, and a healthy future for all young people and generations to come.

Despite Xiuhtezcatl's powerful presentation, the Commission unanimously denied the petition, concluding in their [order](#) that "other Commission priorities . . . must take precedence" over the youth Petitioners' proposal. Commissioner King, the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, stated his belief that the Commission is "taking 'evolutionary steps' in addressing many of the Petitioners' concerns, although it may not be the 'revolutionary' change the Petitioners were seeking." However, the Youth argue that it is the Commission's job to make sure oil and gas drilling is safe *before* allowing it to occur, as opposed to allowing harmful drilling and then responding with an "evolutionary" process to limit the adverse impacts.

Xiuhtezcatl is disappointed with the Commission's decision and their excuses for inaction. "The COGCC has a legal responsibility to protect the people of Colorado from the harmful toxins and contaminants that have been found in the air, the water, and our environment," he argues. "They stated at our hearing that the legislature has control over what happens with fracking in Colorado, not the Commission. My question is why then, is there a Commission? The fact that young people have to stand up and tell the Commissioners how to do their job obviously shows that

they aren't doing an adequate job in keeping us safe. How can having only 14 field inspectors to inspect over 130,000 wells every year ensure that all the wells are safe? That is physically impossible. Fracking is also using up our most precious resource, water. Millions of gallons of water are used every time a new well is drilled. The list of failures that have been committed by the COGCC is endless and we will not be silenced. We will continue to grow this movement and push against the system until we can ensure the safety of every person in the State of Colorado.”

The youth Petitioners will continue to fight to protect their future and their right to inherit a healthy, sustainable, habitable planet, and are determined to find a way to open the eyes of their leaders to the kind of world they are leaving for the next generation. The Petitioners and their legal team are discussing next steps and the various ways to move forward in taking action in Colorado.

The young people's petition was filed with the help of Our Children's Trust, an Oregon-based nonprofit orchestrating a global game-changing, youth-driven legal campaign. 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.

Short documentary films of Xiuhtezcatl and other young people taking legal action on climate change can be seen at <http://ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-films>.

Earth Guardians is a Colorado-based nonprofit organization with youth chapters on five continents, and multiple groups in the United States with more than 1,000 members working together to protect the Earth, the water, the air, and the atmosphere, creating healthy sustainable communities globally. We inspire and empower young leaders, families, schools, organizations, cities, and government officials to make positive change locally, nationally, and globally to address the critical state of the Earth.
www.earthguardians.org

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. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/

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