

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Social Justice, Human rights And Conservation Organizations and Individuals Support Youth Appellants' Federal Climate Change Case

Washington, D.C. – Yesterday, social justice, human rights, and conservation organizations and individuals came together to file an *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit to support young people suing the federal government for not acting to reverse climate change. Late last month, attorneys for five youth and two non-profit organization appellants filed their opening brief in the D.C. Circuit court arguing that they have a constitutional right to the benefits of a protected atmosphere and a safe climate system.

As relief, the youth appellants seek a comprehensive federal Climate Recovery Plan, which would reduce U.S. emissions based on the prescription that Dr. James Hansen and other leading international climate scientists say will restore our atmosphere to 350 parts per million (ppm) by the end of the century.

The youths' lawsuit was filed with the help of [Our Children's Trust](#), an Oregon-based nonprofit orchestrating an international game-changing, youth driven legal campaign. The case relies upon the long-established legal principle of the Public Trust Doctrine, which requires our government to protect and maintain essential natural resources.

The *amici curiae* supporting the youth include: WITNESS, Michael MacCracken, Ph.D, Protect Our Winters, Global Kids, Inc., Earth Guardians, 350.org, Kids Against Fracking, Granny Peace Brigade, Kent Environmental and Community Network, HelpAge International, HelpAge USA, Labor Network for Sustainability, and the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.

“We are in full support of these courageous youth,” said grandmother Mona Polacca, Secretariat of the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. “Youth bring this case as beneficiaries of the Public Trust Doctrine, under which our federal government has an unalienable duty to protect essential natural resources as a public trust. An atmospheric emergency caused by greenhouse gas (“GHG”) emissions, especially CO₂, threatens our Nation's atmosphere and other public natural resources. The Government has not protected Public Trust resources essential to youths' life, liberty, property interests. The necessary balance of our Nation's atmosphere is now precariously close to “tipping points,” which science concludes, if reached, would likely make the warming, and the resulting harms and losses, irreparable and irreversible.”

In urging the court to rule in favor of the youth appellants, amici write to the court:

“Billions of people will bear the impacts of human-caused climate change. Populations will experience localized extreme weather such as drought, heat waves, or coastal flooding. The impacts of such events will continue to ripple across the globe through the spread of disease, migration pressures, food and water insecurity, and damages to local economies.”

Amici also note that “the United States is the single largest historic contributor to climate change, the second largest gross emitter today, and the largest per capita emitter.”

“As a global human rights organization we literally witness how climate change impacts the everyday lives of people all over the world in our work to protect basic human rights,” said Kelly Matheson, Senior Program Manager at [WITNESS](#). “Many people do not immediately see the link. Many do not understand that a destabilized society is a direct result of a destabilized atmosphere. Climate change causes water shortages, food shortages, disease, loss of livelihoods and forces relocation, and in turn, economic instability and conflict. Perhaps most profoundly, climate change threatens our right to life itself. Last year Hurricane Sandy took lives in my hometown. One year later Typhoon Haiyan is leaving thousands in the Philippines dead. Next year's headline will likely be the same, "More die in extreme weather events." There is a solution if we are willing to listen with the willingness to change.”

This *amicus curiae* brief was one of seven briefs filed yesterday, on behalf of youth. The social justice, human rights, and conservation organizations and individuals were joined by leading climate scientists, law scholars, national security experts, government leaders, faith groups, and native communities.

Short documentary films of the young plaintiffs can be seen at www.OurChildrensTrust.org and the filed briefs can be found at <http://ourchildrenstrust.org/US/Federal-Lawsuit>.

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