(Topeka, Kansas) – In the current ‘political climate’ of disinformation regarding human-caused climate change, and the pervasive political (Congressional) inertia to do anything substantive about it, it is quite heartening to know that some of the most serious, legal pushes to take action are coming from young people. This should not be as surprising at it may seem at first — young folks (and their future off-spring) will be the direct inheritors of the impacts of anthropogenic climate change — and our generation’s failure to act now.

On Thursday (Oct. 18), 14 year old Samantha Farb of Lecompton, Kansas, became the latest U.S. youngster to file suit (District Court of Shawnee County) against her State under what’s known as the Public Trust Doctrine. The doctrine rests upon a long-standing legal principle that requires all branches of government to protect and maintain certain shared resources fundamental for human health and survival.

Samantha’s lawsuit concerns the question of whether or not the State of Kansas has an obligation to protect the atmosphere under the Public Trust Doctrine.

Her stated goal in this litigation is to prevent further increases in her state’s CO2 emissions, and, to compel the State of Kansas to reduce CO2 emissions to levels consistent with what current scientific analysis deems necessary to protect the lives and property of its citizens — including future generations.

Kansas has already recognized that state waterways must be protected for the benefit of its citizens. Ms Farb’s lawsuit argues that her State’s
atmospheric quality is directly related to the health of its waters and the health of other “trust resources.”

“I live in an agricultural area,” said Samantha, “I’ve noticed how climate change is affecting crops, and I can see how it’s affecting the garden in my backyard. I’m filing this lawsuit to demand that my state take the necessary steps to combat climate [change] to protect our way of life and preserve the state’s resources for future generations.”

The teenager’s lawsuit is more than timely: Agricultural production in Kansas has seen record lows this year. The western half of Kansas is in its second year of severe drought, and corn growers in the state have planted the fewest acres in three years. According to recent environmental assessments, corn-growing regions in the State are being pushed north due to climate change impacts, forcing many farmers to replace corn with less water hungry crops like wheat.

According to a recent press release (see links and info, below):

‘To combat the negative effects climate change has on the state’s economy and agricultural production, Kansas must reduce CO₂ emissions or risk continued crop failures and the resulting economic downturns. Each year Kansas delays making the necessary reductions and transition to renewable energy sources makes it harder to protect the climate system and the Kansas way of life.’

Samantha’s lawsuit is the newest Atmospheric Trust Litigation (ATL) case to be filed in the U.S. Such ATL cases — supported by the TRUST Campaign — are the basis of what seems to be a growing, politico-enviro youth movement.

Beginning in May, 2011, young litigants initiated legal suits across the nation to compel their states to take action to reduce CO₂ emissions in order to restore critical natural resources and ecosystems currently threatened by human-induced climate change.

Speaking on behalf of Samantha, ATL attorney Bob Eye, issued this statement:

“This lawsuit argues that the State of Kansas is obligated under the public trust doctrine to take steps to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to a level that will eventually mitigate the effects of global warming. Applying the public trust doctrine to protect atmospheric resources is no different than using it to protect water resources. This is a forward-looking case and it is appropriate that the plaintiff is a high school student. Samantha Farb’s generation, as well as those that follow, will be faced with the catastrophic impacts of global warming if we do not act soon to deal with the pollutants that cause the problem. We think the public trust doctrine is a recognized means to compel government officials to do their duty to protect atmospheric resources and the public’s interests.”

Author Comment:

While one can imagine critics claiming that adults with a political agenda are “behind” such youth litigation, my experiences with young people inform me that many have very real worries about the future in regards
to global warming and climate change impacts. Ms. Farb seems in many ways typical of the intelligent, concerned youth I have encountered in my past experience as an educator. The likelihood that organizations such as those listed below make themselves known and available to such informed youth seems no different to me than any other conservation or environmental org offering its advocacy/support to concerned adults.

Top photo: from the [ourchildrenstrust.org website](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org)

For more information on the TRUST Campaign and related causes, check out these groups/organizations:

**Our Children’s Trust** is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth’s natural systems for current and future generations. We are supporting youth in the coordinated Atmospheric Trust Litigation effort. We are here to empower youth as they stand up for their lawful inheritance: a healthy planet. We are mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers. We are adults, part of the ruling generation, and we care about the future of our children—and their children’s children. [www.ourchildrenstrust.org](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org)

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**iMatter** is a youth-led campaign of the nonprofit group, Kids vs Global Warming, that is focused on mobilizing and empowering youth to lead the way to a sustainable and just world. Using multiple platforms at the local, state, and national level, we are committed to raising the voices of the youngest generation to issue a wake-up call to live, lead and govern as if our future matters. [www.imattermarch.org](http://www.imattermarch.org)

**WITNESS** is the global pioneer in the use of video to promote human rights. We empower people to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools for justice, promoting public engagement and policy change. In partnership with the TRUST Campaign we seek to bring visibility to the challenges our youth already face because of the changing climate and call for a massive assault on fossil fuel emissions. Without an all-out assault, effects will range from drought to disease; from food shortages to tainted water supplies; from the loss of homes due to floods, erosion and fire to massive relocations. The human rights challenge is most succinctly summarized by Mary Robinson, “Climate change will, in short, have immense human consequences.” WITNESS partnered on this campaign in hopes that predictions will not become realities. To view the stories from our youth included in the TRUST Series go to [www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/imatter](http://www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/imatter) or [www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-films](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-films).

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**About Michael Ricciardi**

Michael Ricciardi is a well-published writer of science/nature/technology articles and essays, poetry and short fiction. Michael has interviewed dozens of scientists from many scientific fields, including Brain Greene, Paul Steinhardt, and Nobel Laureate Ilya Progogine (deceased).

Michael was trained as a naturalist and taught ecology and natural science on Cape Cod, Mass. from 1986-1991. His first arts grant was for production of the environmental (video) documentary 'The Jones River - A Natural History', 1987-88 (Kingston, Mass.).
Michael is also an award winning, internationally screened video artist. Two of his more recent short videos: 'A Time of Water Bountiful' and 'My Name is HAM' (an "imagined memoir" about the first chimp in space), and several other short videos, can be viewed on his website (http://www.chaosmosis.net).
Michael currently lives in Seattle, Washington.