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Youth Take Legal Action To Force Oregon To Preserve The Future And Halt Climate Change

Youth in Oregon join Kids around the Country in asking State and Federal Governments to Reduce Carbon Emissions and Prevent Climate Catastrophe

Absent decisive actions ... the warming already underway is expected to lead to changes in the earth's physical and biological systems that would be extremely adverse to human beings . . . Our failure to return atmospheric accumulations of greenhouse gases (GHG) back to levels that will sustain historic climate patterns may lead to an Earth that is dramatically altered and far less habitable within only a few generations.

- Governor's Advisory Group On Global Warming 2004

Eugene, Oregon — Today youth launched legal action against Governor John Kitzhaber and the State of Oregon to force action on our climate crisis before it is too late. Current climate science calls for a return to 350 parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by the middle of the century. The reason for this reduction is to ensure that the climate does not reach tipping points – like the melting of ice sheets – beyond which there is no return. Joining youth in other States around the country and the world, kids in Oregon, alongside their parents, are taking legal action out of fear of reaching such a tipping point.

“I want to hike in ancient forests and raft in Oregon rivers in the summer,” says Kelsey Juliana a resident of Eugene and one of the youths pursuing legal action in Oregon. “If we don’t do something about climate change now, our rainforests will face droughts and our rivers won’t have enough water to raft. I hope that by working with scientists and lawyers we can get Oregon to 350 in time for me to continue to enjoy our forests and rivers throughout my life.”

The goal of the legal action is to force Governor Kitzhaber and the State of Oregon to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and increase reforestation to counter the negative impacts of climate change.

“I want to play in the ocean during the summer,” says Olivia Chernaik of Eugene, Oregon. “But the government isn’t stopping global warming from ruining our coasts.” Olivia’s mom, Lisa Chernaik is joining her daughter in the lawsuit because of her concern for every living being on the planet from the carbon overload our world is facing.

The legal actions rely on the long established legal principle of the Public Trust Doctrine that requires the government to protect and maintain certain shared resources fundamental for human health and survival.

“An investment in sustainability right now will turn Oregon into an economic leader in the future,” said Tanya Sanerib an attorney with the Crag Law Center one of the law firms representing Oregon youth and their families in the lawsuit. “We buy insurance to protect our

families and our homes, and we don't wait until our house is on fire before we act. The State needs to do the same thing and reduce carbon dioxide now, before Oregonians lose their homes and livelihoods.”

The announcement of the lawsuits and administrative actions comes just days before young people take to the streets in dozens of planned marches around the globe to demand government action to halt climate disruption. Fed-up with inaction, youth around the world led by sixteen-year-old Alec Looz have announced plans for the iMatter March, the largest-ever mobilization of youth against global warming. Many of the same youth who are marching are also taking legal action as plaintiffs and petitioners in the actions filed today.

In Oregon, there will be an iMatter March in Eugene from 11:30-1:30 on May 8 from Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza, 125 East Eight Avenue, to the federal building and an iMatter March in Portland on May 14th.

The Plaintiffs are represented by the Crag Law Center a non-profit law firm that supports community efforts to protect and sustain the Pacific Northwest's natural legacy and by the law firm of Hutchinson, Cox, Coons, DuPriest, Orr & Sherlock, P.C.

Our Children's Trust is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth's natural systems for current and future generations.

iMatter was created to reach across regional, ideological, and ethnic borders, to empower youth to organize, and be heard on the issue of global climate change.

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