

Before the Columbia Gorge Commission  
05/12/20

My name is Cathryn Chudy and I am a long time resident of Vancouver, Washington. I work with suicidal children in a hospital in Oregon, and I see young people who do not trust adults to make wise decisions to protect their well being, in the present and in the future.

Your work with the Forest Service to set policy for non-federal lands in our Columbia Gorge is essential in ensuring that fish, wildlife, sensitive plants, and human health have the protections they need going forward.

Our children have been in court in states across this country for more than a decade, including in Washington and Oregon, to make their case that states have the obligation under the Public Trust Doctrine to protect vital resources from the impacts of catastrophic climate change. Our children point out that our states are currently failing to preserve and protect those resources for their future. Lawyers representing our states argue against our children, pointing to legislative and executive branches (rather than the court) as the protectors charged with that obligation.

Our children have turned to the courts because they see our state agencies and representatives repeatedly failing to act in their best interest, putting their present and future welfare at risk.

I appreciate that you are taking a step forward in proposing the future development of a climate action plan for the Gorge.

There are actions that should be taken now, not at some future undetermined date, to use the best available science to update fish and wildlife habitat protection, to halt urban expansion and the promotion of growth as required by the National Scenic Area Act, and to prohibit conversions of forest land to agricultural land. In addition, limiting new dwellings within forest zones, reviewing and revising residential zoning in flood risk areas, and adopting energy efficiency standards in new dwellings are all necessary actions that your Commission can and should set into place now. Your Gorge Management Plan should reflect these priorities.

Our young people have the right to expect you as a Commission to take action on setting climate policy. Their urgency must be your incentive to adopt a meaningful Climate Action Plan with mandatory measures for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Any further Commission delay in moving forward with meaningful climate action comes at the expense of our children, who inherit the earth, and deserve so much more.