

Cascade Climate Declaration

Building a Sustainable, Just, and Prosperous Future for All

As youth of the Pacific Northwest, we recognize that the climate crisis we currently face presents the defining challenge of our generation. Solving it is our greatest opportunity.

We fully acknowledge the truth that human activity is rapidly driving the climate crisis, and we accept and embrace the moral responsibility inherent in that truth: we must act boldly, decisively, and quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a sustainable, just, and prosperous future for all.

The window of opportunity in which we can enact real solutions to the climate crisis is quickly closing, and failure to act will condemn our generation, and countless generations to come to a future of climate disruption, economic decline, growing inequality and insecurity, and the mass extinction of species.

The climate crisis clearly presents a tremendous and pressing challenge. Yet we also stand at a key turning point in human history, one that must be faced with an urgent sense of hope and opportunity. We are motivated to rise to this challenge by our love and deep reverence for all life, including that which might be lost forever.

Tackling the climate crisis will require us to break our current reliance on dirty, unsustainable, and often-imported energy sources and implement a rapid and equitable transition to clean, renewable, and locally-generated resources. The technology to begin this transition exists today; all we lack is the political will.

This socially just transition to a sustainable energy future will not only greatly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but will also recharge our economy with investments in energy efficient-technology and clean, renewable energy, creating millions of new jobs. It will break our addiction to foreign oil, end our reliance on dirty fossil fuels, and blaze a new path into a safer, healthier, and more prosperous future for all. This transition also presents an opportunity to reduce our ecological impact and develop an innovative, sustainable, and socially just way of life.

This is our urgent opportunity, one that our generation has the ingenuity, hope, and determination to seize.

We recognize that this transition will require change at both the individual and societal levels, and are committed to working towards both. In these efforts, we find solidarity with all who have a stake in making a sustainable, just, and prosperous future a reality and find common cause with youth and impacted communities across the globe – and with generations yet unborn.

We, the youth of today, make this pledge to future generations: we will end this climate crisis within our lifetimes, because failing to do so is unconscionable; and we pledge to make our vision of a sustainable, just, and prosperous tomorrow a reality.

We recognize these impending responsibilities; however, we cannot do it alone.

While older generations have left us facing this climate crisis, they have so far failed us in taking the necessary steps towards a sustainable, just, and prosperous future. However, it is not too late for this to change. We call on all generations to join with us in launching the institutional reforms that we are already beginning to make as individuals, campuses, and communities.

We refuse to let the climate crisis continue, and we pledge to hold ourselves and our elected representatives accountable. **We therefore present the following principles, which we, the youth of the Pacific Northwest, believe should guide our rapid transition to a sustainable, just, and prosperous future for all:**

1) Real solutions are sustainable and just.

- We acknowledge that our current energy production and consumption patterns are not sustainable and that even some of our best alternative technologies are not long-term solutions. We recognize that a massive overhaul of the current energy infrastructure is necessary, but understand that this will not be a short-term process.
- First and foremost, we must look to conservation of natural resources and increased efficiency in energy consumption as the primary options to meet our needs.
- Secondly, we must prioritize the development of clean, renewable, and local energy resources.
- We believe that real sustainable solutions to the climate crisis require systemic change that foster social well-being for future generations.

2) False solutions prevent us from building a sustainable, just, and prosperous future.

- Simply replacing one fuel or energy source with another will not solve the problems associated with climate change or energy injustice. Industry-proposed solutions such as liquefied natural gas, “clean” coal, nuclear power, large-scale hydro, and biofuel often simply re-distribute existing problems or create entirely new ones.
- Exporting our emissions is not an adequate, appropriate, or acceptable tool in reducing our region’s greenhouse gas emissions.
- Solutions cannot be just, nor ultimately sustainable if they do not consider the needs of impacted communities. Therefore, decision makers, including citizens and institutions, have a responsibility to investigate possible solutions and determine their legitimacy through a community-based accountability process that empowers the impacted community.
- The burdens of energy production should neither fall on the poor and disadvantaged, both locally and globally, nor on future generations.

3) We value community-based solutions.

- We acknowledge that local communities have valuable knowledge and should be integral to decision-making processes and implementation.
- We seek to engage and develop connections with individuals and communities in which our schools are located. Working in collaboration and acting as allies towards their movements will empower us all to build a sustainable, just, and prosperous Pacific Northwest.
- We support community based planning that prevents sprawl, considers transportation infrastructure, conserves natural spaces, and includes sustainably designed and constructed buildings.
- We value small, locally owned businesses and energy production.
- Here in the Northwest we have the capability to locally produce a diversity of foods. We call for a transition from large, industrialized agriculture to small-scale farms using sustainable practices that serve their local communities.

4) We believe humans are indivisible from the Earth.

- We acknowledge the fact that society holds a widespread belief that humans are separate and independent from the natural world. This belief has proven to be dangerous and largely contributes to the climate crisis we face. In order to effectively overcome the climate crisis, we must fundamentally change this perception and acknowledge our role as a part of a diverse interdependent ecological community.
- We must recognize that life is a function of an indivisible community to which all contribute.

5) Educational institutions should be models and leaders in the transition to a sustainable, just, and prosperous energy future.

- The dynamics of our relationship with the environment is of fundamental importance now and in the future. In order to prepare today's youth for a livable future it should be standard practice to teach and model environmental sustainability by including it in the curriculum and function of all schools.
- It is the responsibility of educational institutions to prepare children for the future. It is also the responsibility of educational institutions to prepare a livable future for children.
- The underlying objective of educational institutions should be to develop students' understanding of their relationship with nature and to enable self-realization. The role of schools and teachers should be to holistically assist the child in igniting their own natural passion for and love of learning.
- Campuses and schools should be centers of innovation and hubs of ideas that prepare youth and community members for our roles in a sustainable energy future.
- Youth and students of all ages need to have access and space - both physically and intellectually - to critically engage with the situations that have brought us to this climate crisis, as well as to consider solutions and healthy responses.

Following from the principles listed above, **we believe our region must take the following immediate actions to begin a healthy response to the climate crisis.** All citizens of the Pacific Northwest have a role in approaching and fulfilling these actions. In particular, **we seek commitments from current decision-makers to work towards implementing these immediate actions:**

1) Commit to prioritizing energy efficiency and conservation measures.

• The Pacific Northwest has been a consistent leader in energy efficiency and conservation and can continue to pioneer new ways to get the most out of our existing energy supplies. Energy efficiency and conservation is the cleanest, cheapest "source" of energy available, and saving energy should be prioritized before constructing new energy generation facilities.

2) Commit to providing strong support for the development of clean, renewable, local, and just energy resources to meet our region's remaining energy needs.

• The Pacific Northwest is home to abundant, local, renewable energy resources with enough potential to meet much of our region's energy needs. Developing these resources keeps jobs and money in the Northwest, strengthens our region's economy, and creates a cleaner, healthier energy infrastructure.

3) Commit to immediately halt all new fossil fuel infrastructure development projects to serve our region's energy needs.

- The first step in tackling the climate crisis to stop the development of fossil fuel infrastructure projects that lock us in to new, long-term investments that exacerbate the problem. We can meet our region's energy needs with energy efficiency and conservation and clean, renewable energy sources and do not need new investments in dirty, fossil fuels.

4) Commit to immediately begin phasing out the importation of fossil fuels into the Pacific Northwest.

- We must also begin to strengthen our region's energy independence and cut our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing our use of imported fossil fuels. To assist this process, we must prioritize the development of a transportation network that is efficient, sustainable, and livable. We must also provide incentives and support to individuals and businesses to actively participate in this transition.

5) Commit to adequately funding educational institutions as centers to train, empower, and otherwise prepare youth and community members for their roles in the transition to a sustainable, just, and prosperous future.

- This effort should involve the establishment of a "green job corps" training program to provide vocational training opportunities for the thousands of new jobs this transition will create. In order to ensure a socially just transition to a new energy future, access to these training programs should be prioritized for people in poverty and in situations where the transition will cause them to become unemployed. Continued training opportunities should be provided to ensure upward mobility for workers in this new energy economy.

Finally, fulfilling each of these commitments in a democratic and just manner will require the establishment of a committee or other body that allows the involvement of impacted communities, including youth, in resources decisions that guide our transition to a sustainable, just, and prosperous future for all.

View and sign the Cascade Climate Declaration at www.CascadeClimate.org