

Testimony of Governor Chris Gregoire

EPA Endangerment Hearing May 21, 2009

****AS WRITTEN****

Good morning. I'm Chris Gregoire, Governor of the great State of Washington. On behalf of the citizens of Washington, thank you for the opportunity to testify on EPA's proposed findings that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare.

Washington is the Evergreen State – a place where our economic success and our environmental stewardship go hand in hand. We have a state full of diverse agricultural bounties, expansive forests, abundant marine resources. It's a home for thriving families and businesses that depend on a clean and safe environment for their health and well-being.

Climate change threatens all of that, and all of us who live here.

That's why we have taken a leadership role on reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Since I took office:

- In 2005, we adopted the California “clean car” standards.
- Also in 2005, we adopted some of the nation's most progressive and stringent energy efficiency and green building codes.
- In 2006, we enacted adopted renewable energy standards for our baseload electrical generation, by an initiative of the people.
- In 2007, we set targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions by executive action, and in 2008, we adopted those reduction targets into law.
- In 2009, we renewed our tax incentives for clean energy projects. Washington is now the 5th largest generator of wind power in the country.

And later today, I will issue an Executive Order that directs additional actions to further reduce climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions in Washington State.

Climate shapes everything — ecosystems, crops, water, fisheries, economy, lifestyles, health. We know that while a degree or two change in temperature may not feel like much, it can be the difference between rain and snow, between droughts and floods, between a healthy forest and wildfire, and between abundant salmon runs and extinction.

The consequences to our health, environment and economy are staggering.

The effects of higher temperatures on our health are serious and wide-ranging. Projected increases in illness and death associated with heat stress, air pollution, and infectious disease outbreaks all clearly support EPA's endangerment finding.

And just this month, a study released by the University of Washington shows we've already lost 20% of our snow pack. As a skier, I find that disappointing, but let's think about what a significant loss of snowpack really means:

- Millions of our citizens rely on snow melt for drinking water.
- Our multi-billion-dollar agriculture industry needs the water stored in snow pack to irrigate crops that feed our families and our economy.
- That same water feeds the rivers and streams that nurture the salmon we rely on for food and commerce.
- Less water means problems for our clean hydropower system, which provides more than 60 % of our region's electricity.

We face other threats from climate change:

- In my first four years as Governor, I made more emergency declarations than ever in the history of the state. Within 13 months, we suffered through two 100-year floods. In the summers, we are enduring more droughts and devastating wildfires.
- And rising sea levels threaten nearly 40 communities – including several of Washington's largest cities – along our 2,300 miles of shoreline.

Climate Change poses as big a threat to the economy as it does to the environment.

In February 2009, a report detailed the economic costs in Washington State of a "business-as-usual approach to climate change." Economists concluded that Washington's families, businesses and communities are likely to incur billions of dollars of **annual** economic costs if we fail to drive reductions in climate-changing greenhouse gas pollution.

Increased public health expenses alone could account for \$1.3 billion a year.

I urge EPA to make the endangerment finding quickly. Use that finding and your knowledge of what's possible from innovative states like Washington to take strong national action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This problem is too big and its consequences too dire to wait any longer.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. It's a great pleasure to have partners in the other Washington. The Obama administration is making good progress on addressing climate change and I look forward to make great progress together.