

What's driving the Portland youth behind the May 2022 Climate Strike?

Background on the four big issues that matter to Portland students and why they believe the community needs to come together to take collective action.

What is the May 20, 2022 Portland Climate Strike?

Portland students are organizing a city-wide intergenerational march on Friday, May 20th, 2022. The students are inviting community members and organizations from around Oregon to kick off a “summer of climate action.” Young people will be highlighting local Climate Villains in Portland who are contributing to climate change through their emissions, using marketing techniques and misleading advertising to confuse the public, and spending money on lobbying and campaign contributions to undermine the democratic process and opportunities for strong climate action through public policy. The youth will demand that decision makers pick a side: climate justice and a livable future or the Climate Villains.

The community will gather at 11 am at City Hall, where the youth will announce their demands and ask elected officials to sign a climate pledge. At noon, the youth will lead a march ending at Revolution Hall around 2 pm where they will join the [Portland Climate Festival](#).

Follow Portland Youth Climate Strike on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest developments.

The Climate Villains, the key issues, and the demands from the youth

- **NW Natural (“NW ‘Natural’”)**
 - NW Natural is a fracked gas monopoly and the single largest fossil fuel company in Oregon working to undermine our democracy through enormous political spending and misleading advertising about the risks to the climate and public health from its dirty product, as well as advancing false solutions for decarbonization to delay electrification policy
 - From lobbying against common sense climate policy at the state and local level, [to filing a lawsuit against the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s landmark Climate Protection Program \(CPP\)](#), the corporation is aggressively fighting key regulations aimed at reducing climate pollution and protecting public health.

- Currently the fossil fuel corporation [is engaged in a ratecase with the Public Utility Commission to raise rates almost 12% to pay for executive bonuses and shameless greenwashing](#). This hike comes on the heels of a 13% rate increase last November, and would mean an increase of rates of over 26% in the past 12 months.
- The youth are demanding that the City take action to stop the expansion of new gas infrastructure and create a realistic, funded plan for converting all buildings to be gas free by 2040 prioritizing disparately impacted communities who suffer the worst impacts of air pollution and the climate crisis broadly.
- More information:
 - [Oregon Gas Utility Wants to Bill Customers Millions for Executive Bonuses and ‘Misleading’ Advertising](#), *DeSmog Blog* (May 9, 2022)
 - [Stop Litigating and Start Cutting Emissions, Citizens’ Utility Board Says to NW Natural and Other Gas Producers](#), *Willamette Week* (March 27, 2022)
 - [Questions loom over the future of natural gas in Oregon](#), *OPB* (January 12, 2021)
 - [Gas Ban Monitor: West Coast pushes new boundaries; pro-gas state bills stall](#), *S+P Global* (April 26, 2022)
- **Zenith Energy (“Zenith Oil by Train”)**
 - Zenith Energy’s [Portland Terminal](#) is a fossil fuel transloading facility in the Northwest Industrial Area. Zenith transfers crude oil from trains to ships (through Chevron’s dock across NW Front Ave.). Most, if not all, of the oil is not used here in Oregon. Since 2019, community advocates have campaigned against planned facility expansions. In August 2021, the City of Portland rejected Zenith’s request for a Land Use Compatibility Statement (LUCS), a crucial authorization the facility needs to acquire an air permit. An outpouring of community opposition led to the [denial of Zenith’s LUCS](#), including:
 - 46 neighborhood organizations signed and submitted a [letter](#) demanding the LUCS be denied;
 - 20 Oregon state legislators sent a [letter](#) to Commissioner Dan Ryan asking for a denial of the LUCS;
 - The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners issued a [statement](#) opposing Zenith’s LUCS application;
 - 17 environmental and community advocacy organizations sent a [letter](#) in opposition to granting the LUCS; and
 - Thousands of residents called or emailed city officials.

- Zenith is challenging this denial in state court while also misrepresenting its operation as a “renewable fuels” terminal in an effort to greenwash its image and confuse the public and regulators. On May 11, 2022, the Oregon Court of Appeals [affirmed](#) a [Land Use Board of Appeals decision](#) that the City of Portland retains the authority to reject necessary land use authorizations for Zenith’s air permit renewal.
- The youth want this facility’s fossil fuel activities shut down completely. The youth demand that the facility receive no further state or local authorizations for new or existing infrastructure. This facility is out of line with Portland’s values and is a danger to the community.
- More information
 - [Environmental Activists Protest Zenith Expansion](#), *Portland Mercury* (July 27, 2021)
 - [Industrial Hub in Northwest Portland Will Cause Catastrophic Oil Spill During Earthquake. Report Finds](#), *Portland Mercury* (July 26, 2021)
 - [Advocates Say City Has Opportunity to Stop Zenith Expansion, City Officials Unsure](#), *Portland Mercury* (June 17, 2021)
 - [Press release](#) for City’s denial of Zenith’s Land Use Compatibility Statement request
- **Portland Business Alliance (“Portland Business-As-Usual Alliance”)**
 - The Portland Business Alliance (“PBA”) is an umbrella organization for many of Portland’s worst climate polluters and anti-democratic actors. A brief search through its member database reveals a who’s-who of industries who oppose environmental regulation at all levels of government (i.e. Zenith and NW Natural), communications firms that help major polluters greenwash their brands, major media outlets who provide ideological cover for these actions, and the law firms that represent polluting corporations in court (i.e. Stoel Rives, representing Zenith Energy in lawsuits).
 - In the past two years, the PBA has gained even more influence in city government and the result has been numerous city climate policies being abandoned due to aggressive lobbying from the PBA and corporate polluters. In April 2021, the PBA [was fined for repeatedly violating City of Portland lobbying rules](#).
 - The PBA has recently launched a campaign against the Portland Clean Energy Fund — a popular climate action program that over 60% of voters approved in 2018. True to form, the PBA is using discontent around houselessness, the pandemic, and the 2020 protests to stealthily attempt to roll back climate programs and policy.

- Immediately prior to the 2020 elections, Mayor Wheeler’s former staffer and campaign manager [Amy Rathfelder](#) became the Director of Government Relations of the PBA right as a dark money advertising campaign aggressively painted Wheeler’s mayoral opponent – a strong environmental and climate advocate – as the “ANTIFA candidate”. This effort swung the election to Wheeler and the PBA’s influence over local policy increased dramatically. This is a prime example of revolving door corruption in government with a former mayoral staffer being a mouthpiece for polluting industry at city hall.
- The youth demand that city officials cut ties with the PBA and publicly rebuke the organization for its anti-democratic activities and polluter friendly advocacy.
- **Oregon Department of Transportation (“Oregon Department of Freeways”)**
 - The transportation sector contributes nearly 40% of Oregon’s carbon emissions, yet the state department of transportation continues its status quo plan to spend billions of dollars widening freeways instead of robustly investing in public transportation across the region and state. Youth organizers with Sunrise PDX’s [Youth Vs ODOT campaign](#) are fighting for a rapid and just transition for the state’s transportation system that promotes clean air, greater transportation options for the 1 in 3 Oregonians who can’t or don’t drive, and dramatically lowers carbon emissions. For more than a year, the youth have held bi-weekly strikes urging the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Oregon Transportation Commission, and Governor Brown to fund their futures, not freeways. Their rallies have garnered national attendance and over a dozen elected officials have attended and spoke at the events.
 - The youth demand that:
 - ODOT conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Rose Quarter freeway expansion
 - A moratorium on all freeway expansion within Portland’s Urban Growth Boundary
 - A youth advocate be appointed to the Oregon Transportation Commission
 - All available funding from the federal infrastructure bill go to projects that will reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
 - More information:
 - [Can Portland Be a Climate Leader Without Reducing Driving?](#), *New York Times* (April 21, 2022)
 - [The Road Warriors](#), *Bloomberg* (January 22, 2022)

- [Oregon will fail its climate goals if ODOT acts on big freeway projects, environmentalists say](#), *The Oregonian* (November 28, 2021)
- [Adah Crandall Stands in the Way of Additional Freeway Lanes](#), *Willamette Week* (January 5, 2022)
- [What Can One Teenager Do About Climate Change? Adah Crandall Will Find Out](#), *Vice* (January 31, 2022)