

Camas Lilies- Testimony for Oregon Climate Cassidy Jones

Nestled between hills and the Columbia River, I am from the town of St. Helens. Scattered with miles of undeveloped trails and logging roads, it's not unusual to find people using this precious land recreationally whether it's for hunting, bird watching, or exploring—in fact, my best friend, Emily, and I call ourselves the Columbia County Bushwhackers, making use of the precious summer light to explore the untamed joys of our home.

A flower known to bloom in middle-to-late April, the camas lily is very special to the Pacific Northwest. It is precious to me because my mother always pointed it out as “my birthday flower”. Any little girl with a whimsical love for nature and fairies remembers her elusive birthday flower. The camas lily has left its mark here, as the Native Americans and the settlers from the Oregon Trail relied on it as valuable nutrition to their diets. In fact, the Columbia County Bushwhackers recognize the blooming camas lily as a sign of spring, a sign to begin exploring our home county again after a drizzly, grey winter.

Like many native plants and animals, the camas lily is as important to our heritage as the pine or the salmon. With an increasingly globalized world, it is clear that the health of the environment, much less heritage or culture, is not taken into account by government bodies and mass corporations.

I am not the first to notice the changing earth as a result of this; I can assure you that I will not be the last. Whether it's through depleted salmon stocks, the near extinction of the beaver, the changes in local climate, or the noticeable increase of extreme weather events—our home is changing and we are the reason to blame.

I am here to tell you that I see it in the basalt-based foundation of my home. The Camas Lilies are coming sooner and sooner. No longer arriving in Mid-April near my birth date, they arrived by the last week in March this year. Their early arrival comes as a small surprise to me, considering the plague of warm winters the Pacific Northwest has experienced recently.

I recently had the opportunity to study sustainability in Denmark, the most sustainable country in the world. Flying over the Arctic, it was heartbreaking to see large puzzle pieces of ice that cannot be put back together, because their fragile sides are melting and we cannot rebuild their complex locking bits.

I study in the windy city of Chicago. The harsh, biting cold of nearly -45 Fahrenheit; I experienced the coldest winter Chicago has seen in over 100 years in 2014. “Don't go outside,” the administration said, “you must be completely covered otherwise you will get frostbite in under 5 minutes”.

The flight time to and from Chicago has changed significantly—not because of technology—but because the jet stream is changing, shifting. The jet stream is moving farther south in the United States because the Arctic is melting, changing how air moves in the ocean. I study atmospheric science as a specialization to my major at school. I interned at the National Center for

Atmospheric Science last summer, studying the increase of climate-fueled extreme weather events. It is due to this experience that I know climate change is happening. It is happening because I can see it through the melting puzzle pieces of the Arctic. I can feel it; it feels like increased Winter days of -45 degrees. I know it. We must address it.

Seemingly unrelated mishaps and inconveniences all add up and indicate to one perpetrator. You're looking at her. My existence, the human experience, is the problem. We are all apart of the most costly, dangerous problem that our species has ever faced and we must speak up and change paradigms. "I speak for the trees" said the Lorax. We must act. The trees, the camas lilies, and the arctic ice—they are all speaking, and we must listen.

Such a scary and complicated problem deserves and demands a comprehensive, holistic systems solution. Cap and dividend is part of such a solution that will help Oregon reach it's goal of 85% emissions decrease from 1990 levels in 2050. I urge you to take this call to action and listen with your minds and hearts open today. Carbon pricing is a real, tangible way to address climate change. Carbon pricing is economically responsible, socially imperative, and self-sustaining. Oregon must be a leader in creating these policies. We must influence federal policymaking and we must take action.