**EVENT PROPOSAL FOR FEB/MAR 2020**

***Accountability for Climate Change Harms in the Pacific Northwest:***

***Scientific, Policy and Legal Perspectives***

**Context.** Given increasing pressure on local and state budgets in the face of a global public health pandemic, it is increasingly important to identify new streams of revenue to address climate change—and to support community adaptation and resilience—in a way that is just and equitable for all Pacific Northwest residents. This need is greater than ever, as local and state governments throughout the Pacific Northwest begin to assess the unprecedented damage caused by the historic wildfires of 2020. A growing trend in the United States and elsewhere around the world, climate litigation is a powerful tool that communities can use to recover the costs associated with these and other climate damages and hold polluters accountable for their fraudulent and deceptive actions.

From coast to coast, 18 municipalities, five states, the District of Columbia and one industry trade association have filed suit against the world’s largest investor-owned fossil fuel companies for deceiving consumers, policymakers, the media and the public at large about the dangerous climate impacts their products would cause. The plaintiffs in each of these cases have made the following demand: the fossil fuel industry knew, they lied, and they should be held accountable for their actions. These lawsuits provide a critical means for affected communities to recover costs associated with recovery and adaptation measures that would otherwise be borne by taxpayers. More information on the status of lawsuits brought against the fossil fuel industry can be found [here](https://payupclimatepolluters.org/cases).

**Purpose.** This event is intended to educate the state’s legal and policy communities—as well as the general public—on the local climate impacts and associated costs now facing Pacific Northwest communities and taxpayers; and to initiate a public dialogue on the growing trend of climate damages and fraud litigation in the United States. Panelists will discuss the extent of climate harms in the Pacific Northwest as well as the scientific basis for holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for these harms. Panelists will also offer legal and community perspectives on climate litigation as a potential means to fill budgetary gaps and shift some of the burden from taxpayers to polluters.

**Date.** The event will take place in February/March 2021 [TBD] and will be held virtually.

**Format.** The format of this online event will consist of (1) opening remarks by one or more high-level public officials, and (2) 1 hour panel discussion featuring legal and scientific experts as well as local public officials, including (3) an opportunity for Q&A to allow for an exchange of ideas and discussion among the panelists and participants. Event moderator and other potential roles remain TBD.

*Proposed Opener (5 minutes):*

* **[TBD - ask Attorney Ellen General Rosenblum]**

*Moderator:*

* **Melissa Powers, Professor and Director of the Green Energy Institute, Lewis & Clark Law School**

*Invited Panelists:*

* **Karen Shell, Associate Professor and Climate Science Program Head of the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University,** who will discuss ***local/regional climate impacts*** and the costs associated with the adaptation and resilience measures that need to be taken to prepare for and respond to these impacts. Karen will also introduce the ***scientific basis*** for holding the fossil fuel industry to account, specifically the body of attribution science that has helped to link climate impacts to the emissions of specific fossil fuel companies
* **Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County Commissioner,** who will offer a ***local governmental perspective***, describing the climate challenges Multnomah County is facing and steps the County is taking to prepare for severe storms and other climate impacts
* **Daniel Mensher, Attorney at Keller Rohrback,** who will discuss the ***legal basis*** for bringing climate liability lawsuits, not only the legal claims but also the body of evidence that lends support to the argument that the fossil fuel companies can and should be held accountable for climate damages

**Coordination/Collaboration.** The event is proposed to be co-sponsored by Lewis & Clark Law School, the Oregon Bar Association, the Center for Climate Integrity, and other regional organizations [TBD].