

Young environmental activists prevail in first-of-its-kind climate change trial in Montana

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Young environmental activists scored what experts described as a ground-breaking legal victory Monday when a Montana judge said state agencies were violating their constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment by allowing fossil fuel development.

The ruling in this first-of-its-kind trial in the U.S. adds to a small number of legal decisions around the world that have established a government duty to protect citizens from climate change.

If it stands, the ruling could set an important legal precedent, though experts said the immediate impacts are limited and state officials pledged to seek to overturn the decision on appeal.

District Court Judge Kathy Seeley found the policy the state uses in evaluating requests for fossil fuel permits — which does not allow agencies to look at greenhouse gas emissions — is unconstitutional.

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