

*A Declaration of the Rights of All Waters
2nd Gathering of the Women's Congress for Future Generations
Minneapolis, Minnesota
November, 2014*

We, the women and men of the second Women's Congress, have gathered on behalf of the waters of the world. Water speaks as one voice. She weaves together and through the lands of the world, has deep seas above and below the surface, flows from the mountaintops and in the veins of every living being. She has spoken and we are opening our ears to listen. The song she sings is one of deep anguish. She is calling upon us to be her guardian.

We, the waters of the world and all who rely on us, must have our voices heard loudly and clearly. No longer is there an option to neglect or betray us – for our survival is entangled with yours.

As the Ocean I have a right

To be clean, healthy and unpolluted: free of pesticides, chemicals, and toxicity

To be wild and free

To be powerful and playful, rageful, and joyful

To freely connect with, and welcome in, other bodies of water

To allow my intrinsic inbreath and outbreath to flow freely

To create, nourish and replenish life, and to take life, in sacred balance

To maintain and regenerate my inherent, teeming diversity

To maintain my natural and rightful temperature and pH balance

To be respected for my inherent value and beauty, and to not be commoditized

To be in relationship with all that is in the sky: to give water to clouds, to make tides with the moon

To be recognized with gratitude as the sacred source of life

To be protected as a part of the Commons, in perpetuity

As Lakes I Have a Right

To be loved, honored and respected as a full participant in the water cycle

To reflect the brilliant sky

To maintain my natural and rightful temperature and volume

To offer abundance for all beings who are dependent on me

To be clean, healthy, unpolluted, and free of invasive species

To receive clean, unpolluted water from the clouds and the bodies that replenish me

To change shape, form and phase; to lap gently and wave wildly

To meet untrammelled shores with my waves

To be recognized and honored as majestic, sacred, and great

To be protected as a part of the Commons, in perpetuity

As Rivers I have a Right

To flow freely without impediment by dikes, dams, and human-made channels

To be honored for my natural rhythms of flooding and retraction

To be clean and unpolluted

To be in intimate relationship with the land and with time, as a shaper of the earth

To connect to other beings and bodies of the watershed, including the ocean

To receive clean, unpolluted waters from the creeks, streams, tributaries, and rain clouds that feed me, and to give clean, unpolluted waters to the water bodies that I feed

To maintain my natural and rightful temperature and levels

To be enlivened with sunlight and embraced by moonlight

To support all the birds, fish, mammals, plants, and beings in the ecosystem around me

To be recognized as beautiful, sacred, blessed, and life-giving

To meander gently and to rush fiercely

To be protected as a part of the Commons, in perpetuity

As the Waters Above I Have a Right

To fulfill our role as a full participant in the water cycle

To travel through clean air, absorbing, and releasing clean water

To rumble, roar, and sing

To dance in our own way with the sun

To receive the prayers of the people, and to reflect the yearning of the human heart

To be free from the pain and horror of the human-made abomination – the mushroom cloud

To move, grow, and release water based on our own inherent rhythms

To be protected as a part of the Commons, in perpetuity

As the Waters Below I have a Right

To be respected, listened to and understood

To be honored and unexploited

To be free of contamination

To be carefully preserved, not wasted, knowing the immensity of time it took to create me

To be held as sacred, and honored as the divine life giver that I am

To be protected as a part of the Commons, in perpetuity

As Humans We have Responsibilities

To honor, love, respect, and acknowledge all water bodies as wild, free, powerful, essential components of an interconnected water cycle that is living and the source and sanctuary of ALL LIFE

To have empathy, compassion, and reverence for the integral boundaries and relationships of these water bodies

To learn from these water bodies by heeding the warnings from beings and systems under duress, and to act with urgency to repair and restore these water bodies

To take active responsibility to educate ourselves, children, and decision-makers to better understand the interconnectedness of the water cycle. Part of this responsibility is to revive traditional wisdom from communities that hold intimate and long-term knowledge of the interconnectedness of these water bodies, and to act on and learn from their wisdom

To uphold existing laws and policies to protect these water bodies, and to create new laws and policies and new institutions to safeguard these waters, such as to create Guardians and to elect people who will defend the aforementioned rights

To protect these water bodies by not damaging their ecosystem or the ecosystems from above and below which feed them

To treat other humans with justice and fairness, giving and sharing water with respect for the needs of each person and our mutual dependence on water. Each commoner has an equal right to share in the Commons

To withdraw our consent from practices that do not fulfill our responsibilities to uphold the rights of all waters and to give our free, prior and informed consent to practices that repair, restore and protect the waters

To cultivate relationships with the waters, shared across all cultures, of partnership rather than domination

