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JCSA Scholarship Essay

As an avid surfer, I feel an intrinsic connection to the environment. There is no better feeling than catching the perfect wave. It is the way the ocean pushes me forward with gentle hands, the way my surfboard glides across its smooth surface that makes reality dissolve. If the conditions are good, I can get lost in the lull of the ocean, the hot sun on my back while I scan the horizon scouting for the ideal wave. I become sheltered by the sea.

My love for the environment was instilled at an early age. Born as the daughter of two staunch environmentalist Deadheads, I have always been connected to nature. I grew up listening to the stories of my father's missions at GreenPeace, and looking at the newspaper clippings of him tied to smokestacks in protest of their pollution. When I was young, my mother always encouraged us to play outside and get dirty. We spent summers rushing to the local wildlife sanctuary in hopes of saving the young birds that fell in our driveway, the hurt skunk that crossed the road, or the injured flying squirrel that somehow ended up in our living room.

My parents made many choices in raising our family that taught us to be stewards of the environment. I was lucky enough to grow up in a household that promoted a conscious mindset and environmental awareness. I never quite understood how people could be so careless when it came to our planet, for it is an overarching commonality among all humans; the Earth is our home. I've come to understand how truly fortunate I am to have been educated about the planet at such a young age. My path to sustainability had a jump start; unlike many of my peers, I never needed an environmental awakening.

These days, I am increasingly worried about the future of our planet. When I stand on the sandy shores, I am careful not to step on the plastic bottle caps or broken glass. When I paddle out past the break, I feel the remnants of grocery store bags slip between my fingertips. As the sun sets, I know total darkness will not come. Man's artificial light has forever altered the brightness of the natural night sky.

Although much of this damage began decades ago, we continue to sustain unsustainable practices. The plastic I see on the beach and the debris floating in the ocean when I surf are the result of human negligence. We are facing a climate crisis. Without action, humankind will soon face the threat of extinction.

As I enter college, I plan to major in environmental conservation. I grew up going to the beach and spending long days at the Manasquan inlet. My love for the ocean and our planet are inviolable and unchanging. Regardless of where my career and life path take me, environmental activism will be part of it. I want to teach my children to surf in waters that are free of plastic, breathe air that is free of pollutants, and enjoy the natural beauty of our earth. Our planet is too often taken for granted, and given that humans are the reason for its demise, it is up to us to restore and preserve it. Action is crucial in shortening the list of what is already lost.