



Danielle Hudson, Ed.D.  
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Phone: 503-728-0587  
**Confident. Considerate. Creative. Clatskanie.**

January 2, 2024

Board of Commissioners, Columbia County  
230 Strand Street  
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local Land Use Permits

Dear Columbia County Commissioners:

I am the Superintendent of the Clatskanie School District and am in charge of enriching the lives of more than 700 school children. I am also a strong supporter of the NEXT Renewable Fuels project. I request the Board of Commissioners approve the county permits. NEXT has designed a world-class clean fuels facility that protects our local water resources and creates a wetland mitigation site that is beneficial to the local environment.

I find the NEXT proposal in line with county requirements, and in line with county economic and environmental goals. The facility will be built in an RIPD-zoned area and built upon barren, low-grade wetlands. In turn, NEXT has committed to restoring nearly four times the wetland acreage (more than 450 acres) that will meet high restoration standards. Not only will Columbia County get a clean fuels processing facility, but we will also get a thriving wetland that enhances our local ecosystem.

The mitigation site is of particular interest to the Clatskanie School District. We are coordinating with NEXT to create an environmental science curriculum that pairs with the wetland development. Our students could have the opportunity to grow the trees that get planted in the wetlands. Or they can learn how to test the soil for nutrients or observe the biodiversity as the wetland takes shape. The mitigation site is an invaluable resource for my school district and we are happy NEXT has chosen this location. Their commitment to restoring wetlands near their impacted site and their commitment to restoring nearly four times the acreage at the "enhancement" level is a testament to their social license to operate and promise to work with the local community.

Beyond the technical aspects of the project, NEXT will be among the largest investments made in Columbia County. We want the \$2 billion clean fuels project in our region and welcome the significant

economic benefits that come with it. The project will create hundreds of high-paying permanent jobs that our local workers are qualified to fill. The facility will generate more than \$45 million annually in tax revenue, with a key portion of that returning to our local schools so we can improve the education experience for our students. Other funding will support critical city and county services which, again, helps our students and their families. But more importantly than just the numbers is that this project is a long-term investment that creates sustainable funding that our district and other taxing entities can depend on for decades. Sustainable tax funding is the key to providing reliable education and attracting talented teachers and administrators.

This project has been through years of public evaluation. And it is time the NEXT project finally moves forward. I urge you to approve the county permits without delay and thank you for all your diligent work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DH' with a stylized flourish.

Dr. Danielle Hudson, Superintendent  
Clatskanie School District  
P.O. Box 768  
Clatskanie, OR 97016