



January 22, 2024

Board of Commissioners, Columbia County  
Columbia County Land Development Services  
Attn: Planning  
230 Strand Street  
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local Land Use Permits

Dear Columbia County Commissioners,

As a publicly owned, locally controlled electric power utility, Clatskanie PUD has a responsibility to its customers to weigh in on decisions that align with our strategic plan and have a material impact on the communities we serve. We support NEXT Renewable Fuels' efforts to build a renewable diesel production facility at the Port of Columbia County's Port Westward site. This project is a mutually beneficial opportunity for the local economy and the environment.

Construction of this facility will require upwards of 3,500 highly-skilled workers, the majority of whom already live in our region. Further, the NEXT facility will create more than 240 permanent jobs in our county. These new jobs will inevitably lead to more money spent in our retail and grocery stores, on tourism and local recreation, and with local non-profits and organizations. The NEXT Renewable Fuels development will help Columbia County continue on its path toward a healthy and sustainable local economy.

Oregon is a leader in the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable future and the NEXT proposal is a key element to meet aggressive state and federal goals to modernize the transportation sector.

Clatskanie PUD supports the NEXT Renewable Fuels project because:

- Port Westward is one of only five deep water ports in Oregon and has been zoned for industrial uses (RIPD zone) since the County adopted its current comprehensive plan in 1984. This application would facilitate industrial uses on land that has been planned for industrial use, and takes advantage of the deep water port.
- The County has already decided that the NEXT Renewable Diesel facility can and should be constructed. These applications further that decision by ensuring adequate multimodal transportation availability.
- These applications conform to the Land Use Board of Appeals decision by removing entirely any siding tracks from the agricultural zone.
- These applications will provide for a major improvement of Hermo Road, which will improve the overall transportation system for nearby residents and farm activities in the area.

- NEXT will contribute more than \$16 million annually in local tax revenue and \$5.5 million in port fees, which can support emergency services, school districts, road improvements, and port modernization.
- NEXT will restore more than 450 acres of defunct timber property back into thriving wetland habitat, which is a boost to the ecosystem and neighboring properties.

Oregonians prioritize the health and preservation of our environment, as well as responsible economic development. The very nature of NEXT's proposal is dedicated to overhauling a dirty transportation sector and building the foundation for immediate and long-term climate benefits.

We respectfully ask the Board of Commissioners to approve the NEXT permits without delay so we can start building a cleaner future for our communities.

Sincerely,



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