



Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council

January 3rd, 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 writing on behalf of more than 15,000 members of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council to support NEXT Renewable Fuel's efforts to build a renewable diesel production facility at the Port of Columbia County's Port Westward site. Our members include thousands of Columbia County residents that will build the \$2 Billion NEXT project and we view this as a win-win opportunity for the economy and the environment.

All too often our skilled tradespeople have to move away to other states to find work, but the construction of this facility will hire more than 3,000 highly-skilled workers, the majority of whom already live in our region and other nearby parts of Oregon and southern Washington. Further, the NEXT facility will create more than 240 permanent direct jobs and hundreds of ripple benefit 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 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.

Our Council and the more than 15,000 members we represent support 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 NEXT Renewable Diesel project design depends on direct river access for the bulk of import and export movements. However, there are certain operational materials that must be moved by rail cars and rail provides an essential backup option if the dock becomes unavailable for any reason;
- 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.
- A rail connection to this facility has been part of the design since it was first discussed with the County in 2020 and NEXT has been open about what rail could be used for.
- The only rail improvement on agricultural land will be approximately a ¼ mile, meaning that there will be little-to-no impact on PA-80 zoned land;
- 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 hire skilled union tradespeople to build their \$2 billion renewable fuels facility, creating more than 3,500 jobs during construction and prioritizing local hiring. This project supports hard-working union families and ensures highly-skilled labor builds a safe and reliable facility;
- NEXT will employ more than 240 full-time positions during operations, further supporting the success of our region. Most of these jobs can be filled by our local talent pool and NEXT has agreed to remain neutral in any future union organizing efforts for operating staff. Further, NEXT is working with the various trade councils to establish job training programs so Columbia County can become a green jobs hub in the transportation sector;
- NEXT will contribute more than \$16 million annually in local tax revenue and \$5.5 million in port fees, which can support vital county services, taxing district projects and port modernization. This could lead to additional union work to improve infrastructure in the region;
- 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.

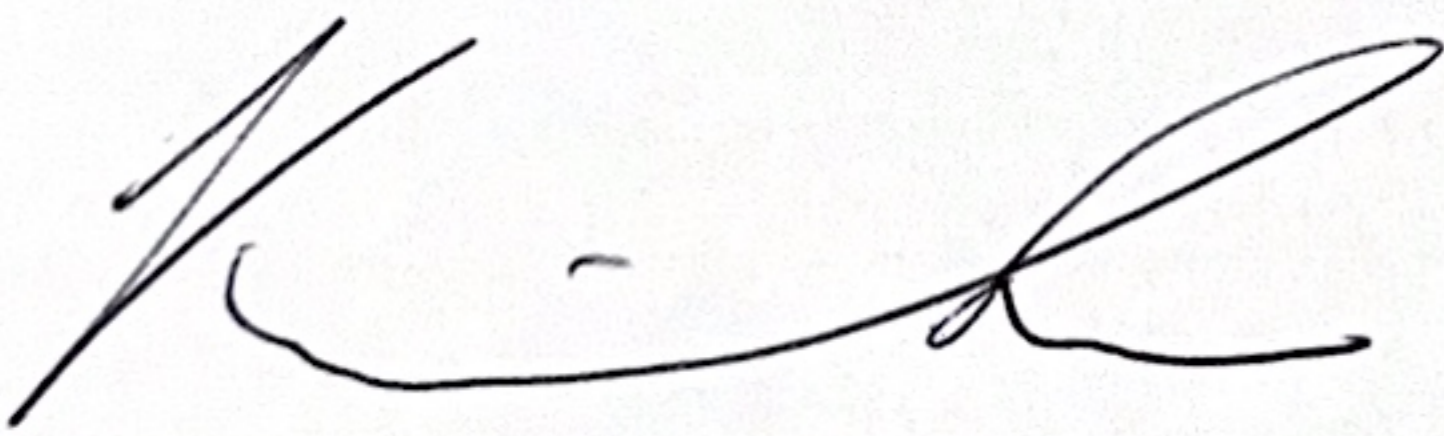
As the Board of Commissioners know well, Oregonians prioritize the health and preservation of our environment just as high as we prioritize responsible economic development. The very nature of NEXT's proposal is dedicated to overhauling a dirty transportation sector and building the foundation for immediate and long-term climate benefits. Our review of expert research on the subject concludes that renewable diesel:

- Is up to 80 percent cleaner than fossil diesel and doesn't require engine retrofitting
- Could eliminate more than 5 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, making the project a significant net benefit to cleaning our air
- Will drastically reduce NOx, CO and particulate matter in the transportation industry

These emissions reductions and vehicle efficiencies directly benefit our members. As construction workers, we often work around diesel-powered equipment of all sizes and the upgrade to renewable diesel is welcome, both for our health and the planet. BUT, we need the fuel in order to realize those benefits. NEXT Renewable Fuels can make this a reality.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Lux', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Kevin Lux
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council
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Oregon City, OR 97045