



# CITY OF CLATSKANIE

---

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

January 2, 2024

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local County Land Use Permits

Dear Columbia County Commissioners:

I am writing to comment on the proposed NEXT Renewable Fuels permits being considered by the Columbia County Board of Commissioners. The Clatskanie City Council has authorized me to write on its behalf to express, in the strongest possible terms, our support of NEXT Renewable Fuel's proposal to build a renewable diesel facility at Port Westward.

As you well know, Port Westward offers the most suitable site for this project. The Port Westward site is already zoned Rural Industrial-Planned Development (RIPD) and the property NEXT will build on is a combination of industrial land and defunct wetland that has acted as passive grazing land for decades. The facility will have access to the river and barges by partnering with an already-permitted third-party. The facility's renewable diesel will be able to reach all the major markets along the west coast and Columbia County will become a hub for green fuel production.

NEXT is also developing a world-class wetlands mitigation project that restores nearly quadruple the amount of wetlands that are impacted. NEXT plans on turning more than 450 acres of commercial timber property back to thriving wetland habitat that will benefit adjacent landowners and the region as a whole. The restored wetlands will attract pollinators and eliminate non-native species. It will be quadruple the amount of habitat for wildlife, meaning that it is, without question, a net benefit to local species we love having in our county. The wetland design will bolster the area's ability to withstand major storm events and it won't impact local irrigation operations. The NEXT team continues to work with all impacted stakeholders to address concerns and tweak the design to accommodate reasonable requests.

The NEXT renewable diesel project will bring significant benefits to the City, let alone the County and State. During operation, NEXT will create more than 240 family-wage jobs that our local talent pool is qualified to fill. Also, during operation, NEXT will generate more than \$16 million in county property tax revenue annually. Local tax revenue will help support local education, public safety, health services, veteran services, and more. NEXT will generate roughly \$5.5 million in Port fees annually, which

will directly support the modernization of our deepwater port, which is one of our county's most important economic engines.

The NEXT project relies on river and rail transportation that, within Columbia County, are only available at Port Westward, and it is consistent with heavy industrial and energy uses already established at Port Westward. The RIPD zone specifically allows "production, processing, assembling, packaging, or treatment of materials; research and development laboratories; and storage and distribution of services and facilities" if certain conditions are met. According to the County's own Comprehensive Plan and Zone Code, this zone is appropriate for uses that take advantage of river and rail access, and which may "require a rural location in order to take advantage of adequate rail and/or vehicle and/or deepwater port and/or airstrip access." Lastly, the project's impact on farm-zoned land is very minimal and amounts to a small corridor of land necessary to extend rail service to the project, the vast majority of which is owned by the Port of Columbia County and is intended for industrial development and operation.

The project's impact on farm-zoned land is very minimal and amounts to a small corridor of land necessary to extend rail service to the project. The vast majority of this land is owned by the Port of Columbia County and is intended for industrial development and operation.

The NEXT project will meet a rapidly growing demand for clean, renewable fuels in the United States, and the City of Clatskanie will benefit greatly from them locating in our community. Our residents will find new work. Our taxing districts will get a new source of sustainable funding. Our local environment will thrive.

We respectfully urge the Board of Commissioners to approve all applicable permits for NEXT without delay.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Hinkelman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg Hinkelman, City Manager  
City of Clatskanie