

Submission for Next hearing 01/10/2024

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To: Jacyn Normine <Jacyn.Normine@columbiacountyor.gov>

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To the Columbia County Commissions,

January 10, 2024

Next claims, in this current permit application, that according to P&W Railways, it is a "Rail Spur" in question. P&W Railways own 516 miles of track, from Eugene to Astoria. So, perhaps for them, it is considered a rail spur. But from where I stand, approximately 1/2 mile from the proposed Next facility, this is a rail yard. According to Next, their "rail spur" would provide rail car transportation and storage capacity for 2 unit trains (one for offloading and one for empty cars), plus a runaround track for rail engines to move from one end of the train to the other. Two primary tracks for two-way traffic, and side storage tracks to ensure adequate and efficient unloading and loading of unit trains. How many tracks? Next is claiming the rail infrastructure would not result in a significant change to the local Agriculture, but the size of this project is over 800 acres! That is a significant impact on the local farmland.

So far, Next has failed to address the impact of the Rail Yard and their Renewable Fuel Refinery would have on the drainage, waterways and groundwater within the Beaver Drainage District and the conflicting needs of the agricultural neighbors around them. The prior approval of their rail yard proposal was reversed by LUBA and the land for "Section B" of their Rail proposal as presented to the Columbia Planning Commission was denied because the Port owned land, is leased by PG&E as their buffer zone for 99 years and is maintained by the BDIC and PG&E. Though it is zoned RIPD, Next had no agreement to use this land.

For the past 30 plus years, the Columbia Port Commissioners have been trying to rezone the prime PA-80 agricultural land to heavy industrial with no success. The Port has wasted millions of dollars on this venture. Money that could have been used to upgrade and expand their other properties, like the Scappoose Marina. Next has tried and failed to have this land rezoned. Then they tried to move their rail yard to RIPD zoned land that they did not have permission to use, because it is a buffer zone for PG&E. Now they are moving the rail yard back to the PA-80 Port owned land and claiming they can make whatever changes to are necessary to accommodate their facility, even though their are state laws in place to protect both the PA-80 prime farmland and the McLean Slough riparian corridor. Next is asking to put a rail yard in the middle of wetlands and prime farm land. This land is maintained by the Beaver Drainage District and is strictly for agricultural use.

As for "Section A" of the proposed Rail Yard; This land is zoned PA-80 (primary agriculture) and crosses the McLean Slough riparian corridor. Part of this land, until recently, has been used to grow mint, successful mint, nation wide distributed mint. To say this project would not effect farming in the area, is a down right lie. The dust, noise, vibration, fumes and runoff are definitely going to effect the local farms! And what about the McLean Slough? Next is riding on the assumption that there are no fish in our waters. How can this be, when we are connected to the Columbia River? I see water foul eating fish all the time out of my slough. They are also assuming that the pumps of the BDIC will handle any water situation and that the dikes are up to par with FEMA. Trains cause vibration and vibration lowers the levees that protect our farmland from flooding. It says in the proposal that NEXT's rail proposal will result in permanent impacts to the McLean Slough. The levies of the BDIC are already stressed from the current traffic, trains and trucks.... etc and natural erosion. All this threatens our FEMA protection in the event of catastrophic failure. This entire project will have a huge negative impact of the surrounding farmlands. Therefore, this rail yard project should be denied.

Thank you for your time,

Wendy Schmidt
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A question to Chris Efid: How do you propose to get 750 million gallons of product per year to the deep water dock with Pacific Global already maximizing the existing rail track and dock capacity for their translating facility?