



3 June 2026

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

RE: Letter of Support for the NW Natural MX3 Mist Storage Expansion Project

Dear Chair and Members of the Columbia County Board of Commissioners,

JH Kelly is pleased to submit this letter in strong support of Northwest Natural's MX3 project at the Mist Underground Storage Facility. JH Kelly is a fourth-generation, family-owned industrial contractor headquartered in Longview, Washington, with over 1,500 employees and offices along the I-5 corridor in Washington and Oregon. We have served industrial clients across the Pacific Northwest for more than 100 years. JH Kelly is one of the leading union construction trades employers in Columbia County, and the county's industrial base has been a core part of our business for much of our history.

Our presence in Columbia County spans decades and includes some of the most significant industrial facilities in the region. We have supported Georgia-Pacific's Wauna millsite since it was owned by Crown Zellerbach in the 1970s and continue to maintain an ongoing presence there today. At Port Westward, we were part of the original team that built the power plant and subsequently constructed the Columbia Pacific Bio Refinery. We continue to support multiple projects and maintain an ongoing presence at that site as well. Our project history in the county also includes work at the Cascades Tissue paper mill in St. Helens and the Cascades converting facility in Scappoose, the nitrogen manufacturing plant now operated by Columbia River Nitrogen near Deer Island, and the Rainier Transit Facility, among numerous other projects over the years. That lengthy project history reflects the depth and duration of JH Kelly's role as a trades employer in this county.

Our relationship with Northwest Natural at the Mist facility is also a long-standing one. Since 2019, JH Kelly has maintained a continuous embedded presence at the Mist site, performing routine maintenance and small capital projects year-round with a workforce that typically ranges from 10 to 40 personnel at any given time. That work has drawn consistently from multiple skilled trades, making the Mist facility an ongoing source of craft employment in Columbia County well beyond any single construction project. Over the last five years, JH Kelly has performed or is currently performing more than \$60 million in work at Northwest Natural's Mist and Miller sites in Columbia County. A significant portion of the value of that work has found its way back into the county through craft payroll, local lodging, meals, and services, and we are proud to have been a conduit for that economic activity.

JH Kelly has been selected as the contractor to perform the MX3 project for Northwest Natural, and we are pleased to support Northwest Natural in their continued investment in ensuring the reliability of the natural gas supply for Columbia County and the greater Portland Metro area. The MX3 project will generate substantial additional employment and economic activity beyond our ongoing site presence. The project is expected to sustain an average workforce of approximately 65 workers, with peak activity reaching approximately 120 workers. That workforce will represent a significant concentration of skilled construction employment, payroll, and associated spending in this community. The project will draw on a broad coalition of union trades, including UA 290, IBEW 48, Local 701, MEA 102, IW 29, SMART Local 16, Carpenters Local 503, LIUNA 296, IBB 242, Local 10, and Heat and Frost 36. As a union signatory contractor, JH Kelly is proud of the family-wage jobs and career development opportunities this project will create for the skilled workforce across our region.



The economic benefit of the MX3 project will also extend well beyond the jobsite and into the local business community. Our existing teams servicing the Mist site already frequent area lodging and local businesses, and MX3 project personnel will do the same, though at greater scale, throughout construction. Area lodging, including Clatskanie River Inn and RV Park, River's Edge RV Resort and Camping, The Caden Hotel, Scappoose Creek Inn, Best Western Oak Meadows Inn, OYO Hotel St. Helens, and Deer Meadow RV Park, can expect to see meaningful project-related occupancy. Local restaurants and food providers, including Colvins Pub & Grill, Big Guy Grill, Bundy's Café, Chavita's Mexican Food, Fultano's Pizza, Ixtapa Clatskanie, Don Pedro's in St. Helens, and Long Fellow's Inn, will see continued and increased business through catering, crew meals, and daily purchases. That spending supports local owners and employees and keeps project dollars circulating within Columbia County. Furthermore, continued investment at the Mist facility means these benefits will not be isolated to merely the MX3 project, but will remain part of an ongoing pattern of economic support tied to Northwest Natural's long-term presence in the county.

Northwest Natural's continued investment in the Mist facility also strengthens long-term energy reliability for Columbia County and the greater Portland Metro area. Underground natural gas storage plays a critical role in regional energy reliability by allowing gas to be stored during off-peak periods and withdrawn when demand is highest, helping meet winter peak loads and maintaining dependable service when other supply sources are constrained. The importance of this infrastructure was demonstrated concretely during the severe winter conditions of January 2024, when Mist provided a record volume of gas supply equivalent to serving hundreds of thousands of residential customers in a single day. This storage flexibility also supports broader grid resilience, including fuel availability for power generation resources that help balance intermittent renewable energy on the regional grid. Continued investment ensures the system remains safe, dependable, and capable of serving the current and future needs of the communities it serves.

JH Kelly respectfully urges the Columbia County Board of Commissioners to approve the conditional use permit for the NW Natural MX3 Mist Storage Expansion Project. This project reflects a responsible, long-term commitment to local infrastructure, skilled employment, community business activity, and regional energy reliability. We are proud to be Northwest Natural's contractor on this work, proud of our decades-long presence in Columbia County, and grateful for the opportunity to continue contributing to this community's economy and energy future.

Sincerely,

Mason Evans
President | CEO
JH Kelly, LLC
Longview, Washington