Outlook

Testimony: Port of Columbia County Rezone

From Rebecca Gilbert <rebeccangilbert@everyactioncustom.com>
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To Jacyn Normine <Jacyn.Normine@columbiacountyor.gov>

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Dear Board Office Administrator Jacyn Normine,

I oppose the Port of Columbia County's effort to rezone 837 acres of high-value farmland at Port Westward. My business is located less than 5 miles from Port Westward and the proposed bio-diesel refinery. The Port's plans conflict with Oregon's land use laws that protect farmland. Major industrial uses like liquid fuel production and storage are an unacceptable risk for the Columbia River Estuary, neighboring wetlands, and family farms at Port Westward, not to mention air quality for neighbors like us.

Specifically:

- The Port's rezone would allow petroleum refineries, coal export facilities, ammonium nitrate fertilizer plants, explosive weapons storage facilities, wood pellet plants, and liquid tank farms—these activities do not belong on agricultural lands next to the Columbia River.

- The Port's proposal to trade the county's prime farmlands for dirty fossil fuel development ignores our neighborhood concerns about health and safety, as well as impacts to farmland and water quality.

- Oregon's land use process requires protecting high-value farmland. The Port's proposal does not adequately address impacts to the surrounding farms and livelihoods.

- The Port's desire to industrialize wetlands threatens the Columbia River Estuary and sensitive water resources.

- The rezone affects critical salmon habitat. Billions of dollars have been invested in salmon restoration. Allowing liquid bulk fuel and other hazardous industrial uses undermines progress towards salmon restoration.

- Columbia County has a thriving agricultural community that should be uplifted, not paved over.

- The Port of Columbia County has long courted development by the fossil fuel industry—this rezone would open the door to even more ill-conceived and damaging industrial proposals.

For these reasons I urge the Port and the Columbia County Board of Commissioners to reject this attempt to rezone this land.

Sincerely,
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