



CITY OF CLATSKANIE



January 13, 2022

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

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels; Application DR 21-03 and V 21-05; Application CU 21-04

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 City Council of the City of Clatskanie has authorized me to write on its behalf to express our support of NEXT Renewable Fuel's proposal to build a renewable diesel facility at Port Westward.

As you are well aware, 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. It will 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 NEXT renewable diesel project will bring significant economic benefits to the City, let alone the County and State. The jobs (240 proposed) and property tax revenue (estimated at \$16 million) will have consequential positive impact on the local districts that rely on property tax revenue.

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 deep-water 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.

We respectfully urge the Board of Commissioners to approve all applicable permits for NEXT. Thank you.

Yours,

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

Greg Hinkelman, City Manager
City of Clatskanie