



January 12, 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 on behalf of more than 15,000 members of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council to support NEXT Renewable Fuel's efforts to build a renewable diesel production facility at the Port of Columbia County's Port Westward site. Our members include thousands of Columbia County residents that will build the \$2 billion NEXT project and we view this as a win-win opportunity for the economy and the environment.

All too often our skilled tradespeople have to move away to other states to find work, but the construction of this facility will hire more than 3,000 highly-skilled workers, the majority of whom already live in our region and other nearby parts of Oregon and southern Washington. Further, the NEXT facility will create more than 240 permanent direct jobs and hundreds of ripple benefit jobs in our county. These new jobs will inevitably lead to more money spent in our retail and grocery stores, on tourism and local recreation, and with local non-profits and organizations. The NEXT renewable diesel development will help Columbia County recover from the Covid slump and continue toward a healthy and sustainable local economy.

Oregon is a leader in the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable future and the NEXT proposal is a key element to meet aggressive state and federal goals to modernize the transportation sector.

I, and my 15,000 members, support the NEXT Renewable Fuels project because:

- NEXT will hire skilled union tradespeople to build their \$2 billion renewable fuels facility, creating more than 3,500 jobs during construction and prioritizing local hiring. This project supports hard-working union families and ensures highly-skilled labor builds a safe and reliable facility;
- NEXT will employ more than 240 full-time positions during operations, further supporting the success of our region. Most of these jobs can be filled by our local talent pool and NEXT has agreed to remain neutral in any future union organizing efforts for operating staff. Further, NEXT is working with the various trade councils to establish job training programs so Columbia County can become a green jobs hub in the transportation sector;
- NEXT will contribute more than \$16 million annually in local tax revenue and \$5.5 million in port fees, which can support vital county services, taxing district

projects and port modernization. This could lead to additional union work to improve infrastructure in the region;

- NEXT will restore more than 450 acres of defunct timber property back into thriving wetland habitat, which is a boost to the ecosystem and neighboring properties.

As the Board of Commissioners know well, Oregonians prioritize the health and preservation of our environment just as high as we prioritize responsible economic development. The very nature of NEXT's proposal is dedicated to overhauling a dirty transportation sector and building the foundation for immediate and long-term climate benefits. Our review of expert research on the subject concludes that renewable diesel:

- Is up to 80 percent cleaner than fossil diesel and doesn't require engine retrofitting
- Could eliminate more than 5 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, making the project a significant net benefit to cleaning our air
- Will drastically reduce NOx, CO and particulate matter in the transportation industry

These emissions reductions and vehicle efficiencies directly benefit our members. As construction workers, we are constantly working around diesel-powered equipment. It would be a game changer for our health to switch all of our equipment to renewable diesel. BUT, we need the fuel in order to realize those benefits. NEXT Renewable Fuels can make this a reality.

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.

We respectfully ask the Board of Commissioners to approve NEXT permits without delay so we can start building a cleaner future for our communities.

Sincerely,

Willy Myers, Executive Secretary-Treasurer
Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council
3535 SE 86th Ave
Portland, OR 97266