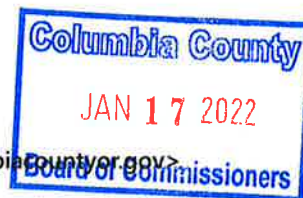


NEXT Renewable Diesel proposal

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To: Jacyn Normine <Jacyn.Normine@columbiacountyor.gov>; ePermits - Planning <planning@columbiacountyor.gov>



Dear Columbia County Board of Commissioners,

This past summer, I invested all of my savings and bought my dream home in Clatskanie. The quiet, close knit community and gorgeous natural surroundings beckoned me and I was delighted to leave behind a lifetime of living in apartments in urban areas, most recently in Salem. It has been devastating to learn of the environmental degradation and quality of life degradation my new, but already beloved, community will face if you allow the NEXT renewable diesel plant and mitigation site to go forward.

I am sympathetic to those who see economic salvation in NEXT's big promises of good paying jobs and increased tax revenue, but if the last two years of "15 days to slow the spread" have taught us nothing else, they should have taught us to scrutinize all promises that sound too good to be true. The NEXT backers' history of broken promises and disastrous environmental impacts in the Transmessis Columbia Plateau failure and the cleanup site in Odessa show that these people do not stand by their word. They are not environmentalists or good samaritans trying to improve the environment or life for us in Columbia County. They're big Texas oil guys prepared to sell us out to make a buck and to meet the demands of their customers *in California*. It's time to make it clear that Oregon is not for sale to Texas or California. Oregon's citizens are the stewards of and should be the beneficiaries of our irreplaceable natural resources.

Particularly offensive is that this project will do untold environmental harms here (fracked gas combustion in the processing, unlimited road and rail transit when more convenient than water, risking our levees, contaminating our water, adding pollution to an already polluted environment, and many more) all in the name of making California's skies cleaner with cleaner burning fuels. What a tragedy (and an avoidable political embarrassment) if this project is approved! At a time when we are aware that globally we likely only have 50 years of farming left if soil degradation continues at its current rate, contaminating the incredibly fertile agricultural land of the Columbia watershed for such a project would be a mistake of colossal proportions. And taking up four times the project footprint for its mitigation site (required in recognition of the extensive environmental harms the project will inevitably cause) means an even greater permanent loss of invaluable agricultural lands at the very time that loss can least be afforded.

Even more immediately than those lasting environmental harms, the construction and other traffic from this project will put at risk my own safety and that of the many children and seniors who live near highway 30 and its offshoots. The Clatskanie city park, playground, and swimming pool (our pride and joy and a center point for the community) are directly on the route these large and dangerous vehicles will take for construction and for importing raw materials to the plant. Adding a final insult to injury is the laughable claim (on which its permitting depends) that this project is water dependent...it's not; many renewable- and biodiesel plants do not use water-based transportation, and at last week's public Clatskanie City Council meeting, NEXT CEO, C. Efird, admitted the project would use land transit (through my backyard) as needed/convenient.

This project is not consistent with the values of our community; the project will harm our beloved Columbia River (despite not being truly water-dependent); and the true beneficiaries of the project are slated to be a Texas oil guy and California. This is the wrong project for the fertile Columbia watershed and for these small communities and Efird and NEXT have proven they are the wrong people to trust with our irreplaceable natural environment.

Say no to this disastrous proposal.

Sincerely,

Liberty Smith, Ph.D.
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