

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) would like to provide additional clarity on its input to Columbia County (dated 12-21-21) regarding NEXT Renewables' proposed biofuels development project. The department considers development of renewable energy infrastructure to be essential to solve the climate crisis. The department supports well-sited, adequately mitigated, and responsibly operated renewable energy developments. Well-sited, adequately mitigated, and responsibly operated renewable energy developments are:

1. sited in locations that avoid or minimize impacts on fish, wildlife, and their habitats;
2. assessed to determine how unavoidable impacts may be adequately mitigated;
3. implemented with temporally and spatially adequate mitigation in place; and
4. operated in compliance with regulatory requirements or conditions established to protect fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

The proposed facility is a renewable energy development project. The proposed project site is zoned for industrial development. While the site does provide some habitat functions and values to fish and wildlife the current habitat is impacted and degraded by past and current management practices. The developer is proposing habitat mitigation that, once completed, the department expects should provide a net benefit to the affected fish and wildlife species that currently utilize the impacted habitat. The department remains available if the Department of State Lands requests technical assistance on elements of the mitigation plan specifically intended to compensate for effects on fish and wildlife habitats.

In summary, the department typically seeks to direct new terrestrial and freshwater developments to already degraded, low functioning habitats that are unlikely to be become high functioning. The department believes this proposed renewable energy project is sited appropriately, and it is consistent with the department's climate goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

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