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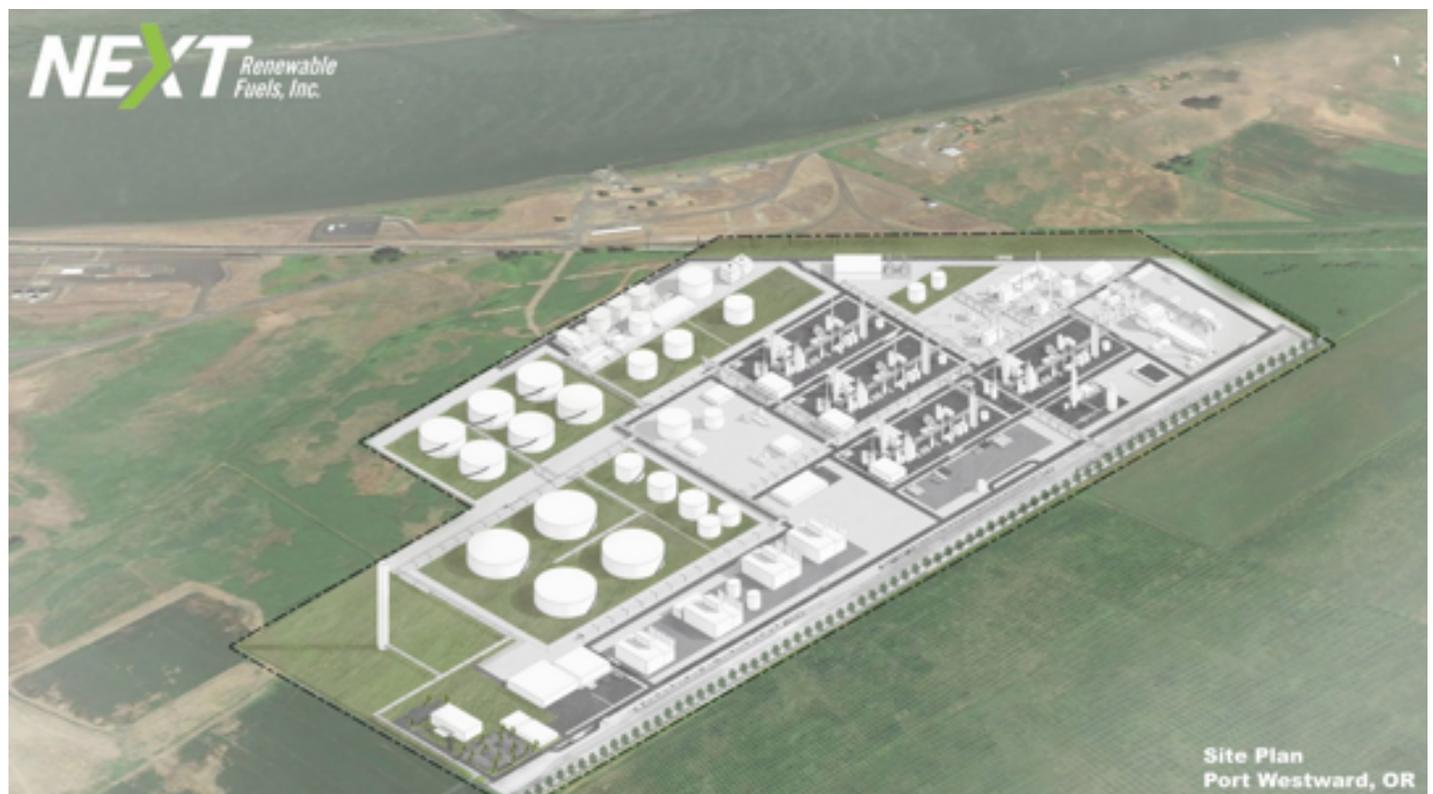
# Most Viewed / NEXT Gets County Approval: Bio fuels plant land use permits OK'ed

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Feb 9, 2022

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners has unanimously approved local land use permits for NEXT Renewable Fuels' \$2 billion clean fuels project.

The action came during the Columbia County Board of Commissioner's regular meeting Wednesday, Feb. 9 in St. Helens.



The \$2 billion NEXT Renewable Fuels plant is proposed for Port Westward at Clatskanie.

Courtesy

The permit approval allows NEXT to build a renewable diesel facility at Port Westward that company officials said will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7 million tons each year and significantly reduce toxic emissions from vehicles that disproportionately impact high density urban environments.

“We are ecstatic that the Board of Commissioners approved our permits,” NEXT Chairman and CEO Chris Efird said. “With these key local permits, we move another step closer to construction. We are grateful for the outpouring of supportive comments from local community leaders and environmental experts.”

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) also stated its approval of the project.

“The department believes this proposed renewable energy project is sited appropriately, and it is consistent with the department’s climate goals,” ODFW Regional Wildlife Conservation Biologist Susan Barnes said.

NEXT officials said the renewable diesel facility would be a cornerstone investment in making Oregon’s clean fuel goals a reality.

“Renewable diesel is 60-80 percent cleaner than traditional petroleum diesel and because it is chemically identical to petroleum diesel, it can be used in current diesel fleets without any vehicle modifications,” NEXT said in a release. “Renewable diesel is made by converting recycled organic material, like cooking oil, into fuel and it costs the same at the pump.”

Clatskanie City Manager Greg Hinkelman said The NEXT project will meet a rapidly growing demand for clean, renewable fuels in the United States and will benefit the local community.

“The City of Clatskanie will benefit greatly from (the plant) locating near our community,” Hinkelman said. “Our residents will find new work. Our taxing districts will get a new source of sustainable funding. Our local environment will thrive.”

Estimates provided by NEXT show the facility would generate more than \$16 million in annual tax revenue to Columbia County. Tax revenues could be used for public safety, libraries, veterans' programs or other county services. The facility will create more than 3,500 green jobs

during construction and more than 240 permanent green jobs during operation. An independent study anticipates that the majority of work will be filled by Oregonians, according to Efird, who emphasized a corporate focus on hiring locally first.

“NEXT has committed to restoring more than 450 acres of wetlands,” Clatskanie School District Superintendent Cathy Hurowitz said. “Not only will Columbia County get a clean fuels facility and green jobs, but we will also get a thriving wetland that enhances our local ecosystem.”

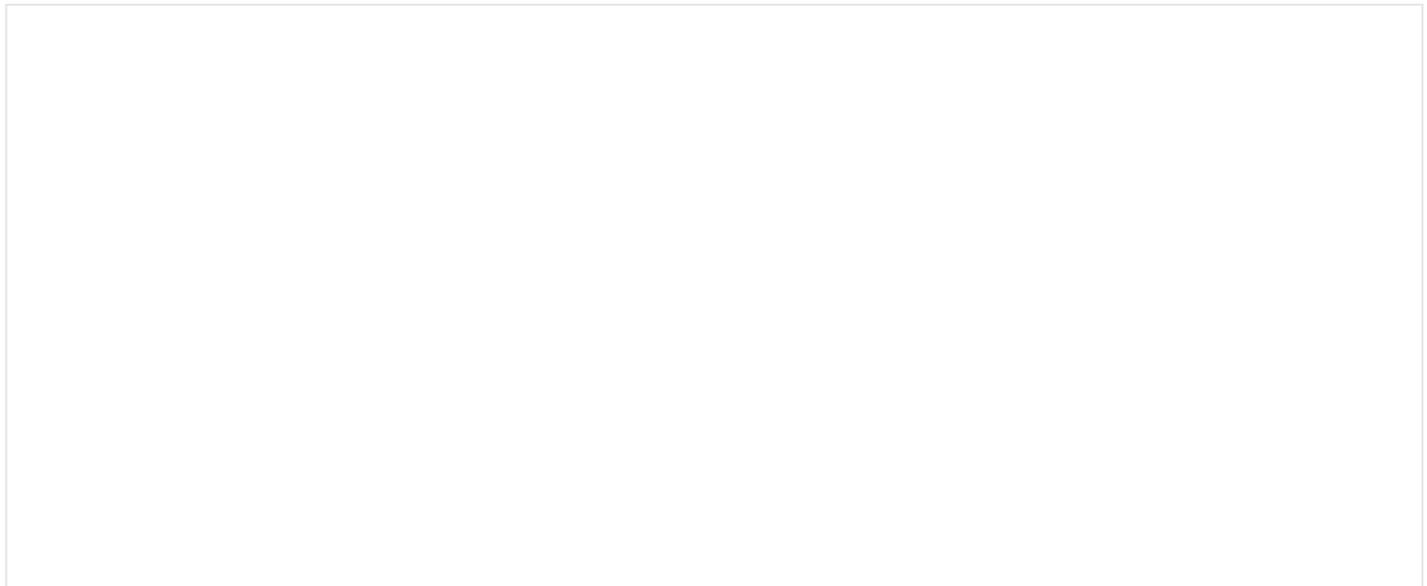
The Clatskanie School District is coordinating with NEXT to create an environmental science curriculum for local students. The program would be tied to wetland restoration and provide students with both in-classroom and hands-on learning opportunities.

During the public review process for the land use permits, opponents of the plant expressed fears that biodiesel fuel production would be detrimental to surrounding wildlife, properties, and agriculture.

President of Beaver Drainage District Warren Seely called the mitigation site “a massive host site for agriculturally damaging weeds and pests,” and lodged concerns over the drainage of 650,000 gallons of wastewater the NEXT plant would produce.

The plant project was launched in 2016 and applications started in 2019 for official review. NEXT officials will now continue through the state and federal public permitting processes.

If the project is approved, NEXT officials expect the plant construction to be completed by 2024.

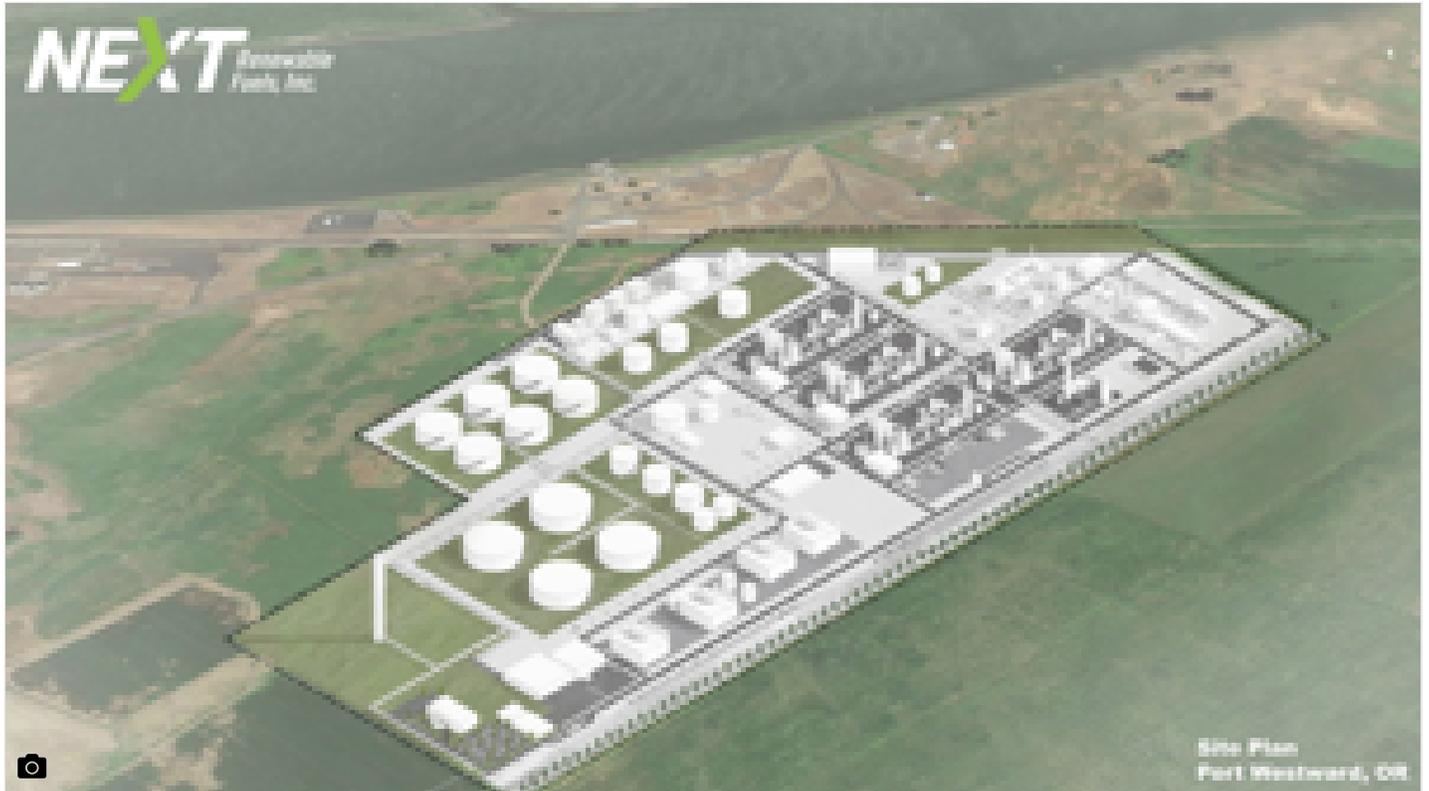




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