

This FAQ answers questions about Houston-based **NEXT** Renewable Fuels' (NEXT) proposal to build a non-conventional diesel refinery in the Columbia River Estuary near Clatskanie, Oregon. Columbia Riverkeeper opposes NEXT's proposed refinery.

What is proposed?

The refinery would be one of the largest producers of non-conventional diesel on the West Coast. NEXT could make diesel from things like seed oils, animal fats, fish waste, or waste cooking oil, rather than petroleum crude oil.

- Through an energy-intensive process—using significant amounts of fracked gas, electricity, and water—the refinery would produce up to 50,000 barrels per day of diesel and other fuels.
- NEXT would use ships, trains, and trucks to bring in raw materials and carry away diesel made at the refinery.
- The project would include a 400-foot-tall flare stack, which would tower above the Port Westward area, emitting unhealthy, smog-forming pollution.



Above: Port Westward, site of NEXT's proposed refinery.
Photo by Alex Milan Tracy.

Is this “renewable” diesel?

No. NEXT's refinery would burn and use large amounts of fracked gas, a non-renewable fossil fuel. NEXT has also not committed to using renewable or waste feedstock such as waste cooking oil or fish carcasses. The term “renewable diesel” is therefore misleading when applied to NEXT.

Who is behind the proposed refinery?

Houston-based NEXT Renewable Fuels is the company behind the proposed refinery.

- NEXT's backers were involved in a failed biodiesel facility in Odessa, Washington, and left behind [a toxic cleanup site](#) and unpaid bills and taxes.
- The [Port of Longview rejected a refinery proposal from NEXT's backers](#) after OPB published [a detailed story about their failed biodiesel facility in Odessa](#).
- In 2020, NEXT's president was [arrested on child sex abuse charges in Texas and fired](#).
- In 2022, a key investor in NEXT attempted to gain a seat on the local drainage district board, but he lost the election resoundingly.

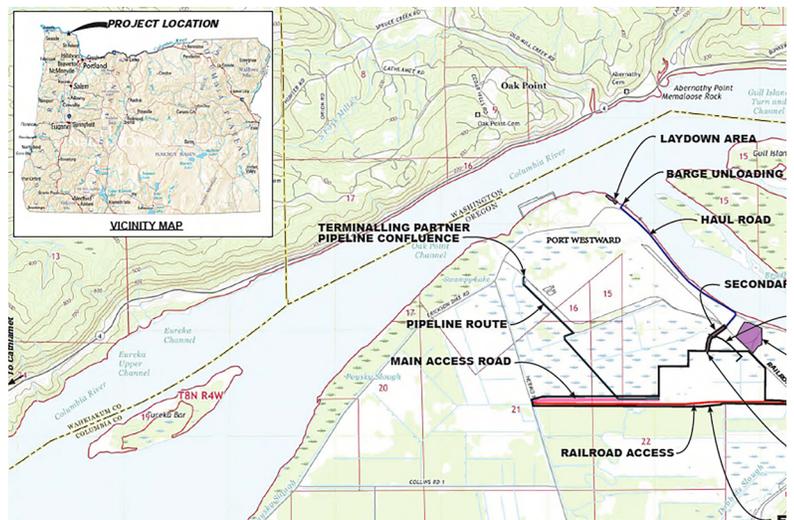
What are the impacts and risks?

- NEXT's refinery would emit over 1 million tons of greenhouse gas pollution each year and produce significant amounts of toxic and smog-forming air pollution.
- NEXT would grade, fill, and alter 140 acres of wetlands and sensitive drainages at Port Westward, in the Columbia River Estuary.
- NEXT would store over 1 million barrels of non-conventional diesel and feedstock near sensitive waterways. Diesel is toxic and flammable. A spill from the refinery, rail yard, pipelines, or ships could pose health, safety, and environmental problems. The area around the proposed refinery faces significant flooding risk, and the soils could liquefy in a major earthquake.
- NEXT would use about as much fracked gas as the entire City of Eugene. Methane leaks during the gathering and shipping of fracked gas to NEXT would further increase the refinery's greenhouse gas footprint.
- Using feedstocks from carbon-intensive sources, like virgin seed oil or palm oil, can dramatically increase the carbon footprint of non-conventional diesel—but NEXT has not committed to using low-carbon or waste byproducts to make diesel. NEXT may not be able to obtain lower-carbon feedstocks, which are in high demand elsewhere.
- The production, transport, and use of varying feedstocks can cause a wide range of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Potential feedstocks such as soybean oil or purpose-grown seed oil can have indirect effects on food systems. According to the [International Council on Clean Transportation](#), "The rate of planned renewable diesel capacity expansions has caused some analysts to predict a squeeze on vegetable oil supplies."
- Additionally, according to the International Council on Clean Transportation, expansion of non-conventional diesel has a "high risk" of indirectly driving expansion of palm oil production in Southeast Asia, a major concern because of rainforest deforestation, peat destruction, and biodiversity loss.
- By increasing the supply of diesel, NEXT's refinery may encourage more overall diesel consumption.
- NEXT could ship its diesel to California buyers, who currently dominate "renewable" diesel purchasing.

What is at stake at Port Westward?

The area around NEXT's proposed refinery is called Port Westward. Close to the town of Clatskanie, Oregon, Port Westward is in the heart of the Columbia River Estuary. NEXT proposes building its refinery in the midst of abundant berry fields, world-class mint production, forestry, salmon habitat, sensitive wetlands, dikes, liquefiable soils, and current and historic fishing grounds.

- NEXT's proposed developments are close to people's homes, businesses, and rural public gathering places, like the [Great Vow Zen Monastery](#).
- The Columbia River Estuary is at the center of a national effort to restore endangered salmon.
- Local farmers have voiced major concerns about how refinery construction could impact their sensitive drainage systems, water supplies, flood protection levees, and other resources.
- Local residents have spoken up about the damage the refinery and rail yard could cause to farms, water resources, air quality, and the community's safety. Check out this video: [Locals talk about NEXT at Port Westward](#)



Above: Location of NEXT refinery and rail yard.

What can I do to learn more and to take action?

We can stop this polluting project. In September 2022, [Oregon DEQ denied NEXT's request for a Clean Water Act permit](#) due to NEXT's application being riddled with errors and inconsistencies. In October 2022, the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals invalidated a permit for a railroad yard serving NEXT's refinery. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the EIS in early 2023. Although [some local and state permits have been issued](#), state and federal decision-makers still have the authority so say "no" to NEXT.

Join in the fight! Take a moment to [sign our petition](#) urging decisionmakers to reject the proposed NEXT diesel refinery.

Help spread the word! Share this FAQ with your neighbors and friends, and [sign up to receive updates](#) from Columbia Riverkeeper about upcoming opportunities to protect our river from NEXT's proposed diesel refinery.

Questions? Contact: Dan Serres, Conservation Director, Columbia Riverkeeper. dan@columbiariverkeeper.org or 503.890.2441



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