

PRESS STATEMENT

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Local Farmers, Port Westward Residents, Buddhist Community and Climate Advocates Urge DEQ to Reject “False Solution” Non-Conventional Diesel Refinery in the Columbia River Estuary

Dozens spoke out against a proposal by DEQ to authorize the first major refinery on the Columbia River in Oregon.

Port Westward, OR—On Tuesday, October 8, an unusual cross-section of Oregonians came together to sound the alarm about a major potential mistake by Oregon DEQ. Oregon DEQ is taking public comments on its proposal to grant a Clean Water Act permit to Houston-based NEXT Renewables Oregon LLC to construct and operate a non-conventional diesel refinery and rail yard at a sensitive bend in the Columbia River Estuary. The highly controversial proposal faces staunch opposition from many in the local farming community.

Dozens of commenters weighed in during DEQ’s hearing, including local residents who provided detailed reasons why the Houston-based company should not receive permission to build a huge refinery in sensitive wetlands, among farms, salmon habitat, and dikes prone to failure. A majority of the speakers testified against the NEXT project.

Many pointed to the company’s [own analysis](#), which states, “The project **will adversely affect** essential fish habitat.”

“NEXT’s polluted runoff will likely result in ground water contamination of our area, the Beaver Drainage District. The company acknowledges that its discharges **WILL** harm fish habitat. Contamination will also contaminate food crops grown within the district, resulting in health and safety concerns,” stated **Warren Seely, a farmer at Port Westward**.

“DEQ is making an exceptionally egregious error by proposing to authorize the construction and operation of a massive polluter that will routinely harm the Columbia River while relying on fracked gas and unsustainable feedstocks to make non-conventional diesel,” stated **Dan Serres, Advocacy Director for Columbia Riverkeeper**. “DEQ is propping up a false climate solution that harms the communities that rely on air, water, and soil at and near Port Westward, meanwhile putting at risk the future of the entire region that depends on the Columbia River Estuary.”

"The proposed NEXT refinery would be one of Oregon's largest greenhouse gas emitters using large quantities of fracked gas and unsustainable feedstocks to produce so-called renewable diesel fuel. The feedstocks would be brought in by rail from the Midwest, increasing the release of diesel emissions, exacerbating climate disruption, and increasing air and water pollution, with the resulting adverse effects on human and ecosystem health," said **Dr. Theodora Tsongas, PhD, MS, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility**.

Most of the people who live close to the proposed refinery site at Port Westward urged DEQ to deny the refinery and rail yard because it violates the Clean Water Act.

- Hearing recording available [here](#). Find key opposition testimony at the following timestamps:
 - Dr. Theodora Tsongas, PhD, MS, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility at 1:18:30
 - Audrey Leonard, Staff Attorney at Columbia Riverkeeper at 1:20:57
 - Mary Stites, Staff Attorney at Northwest Environmental Defense Center at 1:26:00
 - Tracy MacGregor (local resident), on behalf of Warren Seely, President of the Beaver Drainage Improvement Company at 1:31:30
 - Wendy Schmidt (local resident) at 1:53:46
- View testimony to Oregon's Environmental Quality Commission from local residents, health professionals, members of Buddhist community, and others during the [Sept. 27 EQC meeting](#) – passcode: Nf#=L2Lm
 - Beginning at 2:43:45, twelve people addressed flaws in the NEXT project and DEQ's public process.

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