

Dennis Weber

Good evening, I'm Cowlitz County Commissioner Dennis Weber. And this site is in my commissioner district. So I feel pretty passionate about the proposals that have been made. However, I understand that in the discussion of the site one important environmental element has been neglected: the human legacy. Your constant reference to International Paper is historically inaccurate. The original owner was Long-Bell. I say that because Long-Bell and International Paper were major employers. Nobody here has talked about the number of jobs that were created by this institution and this site. That's important because we want in the end to restore employment. As a County Commissioner, I've worked with the Department of Ecology and I've always been assured that folks in the Department want to help Cowlitz County. Quite frankly, we're still waiting. I'd like to have – I'd like to suggest a few other additional statistics for you to consider in your scientific review: the number 60, the number 50, the number 40, the number 30, the number 15, and the number 1.

60 refers to the percent of school children in Longview that qualify for free or reduced lunch. There's a poverty problem.

50 represents the number of live births in Cowlitz County that are drug-addicted.

40 percent refers to the number of people in Cowlitz County who are eligible for Medicaid.

30 percent represents how much below the state average for the median family income we find in Cowlitz County.

15 percent represents the number of adults with 4-year college degrees here in Cowlitz County – half of the state average.

And number one, unfortunately, is the rank of Cowlitz County in opioid-caused deaths. We need help. We need solutions that brings jobs. And we support the Port's proposal as one that will ultimately restore jobs at that particular site. Thank you.