

## Brian Blake

Throughout my career, whether as a logger, an environmental specialist, or a legislator I've seen the people of southwest Washington work hard to balance their strong sense of community and pride they take in the natural beauty of our area with the need to promote more economic development that protects our environment. Today, with NW Innovation Works' proposed methanol facility at the Port of Kalama, we have the ability to strike the right balance between creating jobs and protecting our air, land, and water while making measurable progress in combatting climate change.

This project has been under intense review for nearly six years. The company and its regulators have proceeded with full transparency and the public has been meaningfully involved in process every step of the way. Like most big projects, this one has attracted some opposition ♦ that's part of the democratic process.

My friends in the progressive and environmental activist communities should take pride in knowing that their aggressive advocacy around this project has meant that we have all the facts to know that moving forward with this project is not just good for jobs, but good for creating a more sustainable and accountable system to measure climate change impacts and mitigate for them. NW Innovation Works' project meets the tests needed to move forward: we have all the facts, we know the impacts on our community, and we know that building the project will reduce the release of greenhouse gas emissions associated with manufacturing the products we all use every day.

The Department of Ecology's Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement details how building the Kalama methanol facility will result in a net reduction of 6 million metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually, which is equal to eliminating approximately two times the number of GHGs as the entire city of Seattle emits annually.

I have worked hard, on a bipartisan basis, with my legislative colleagues to ensure that the Washington State Department of Ecology's review of this project was both thorough and timely. With the just released Draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, I think the Department has met those goals. After receiving comments and completing the response process, there should be no further delay in finalizing the analysis and issuing all necessary permits. I intend to continue to work with my legislative colleagues to hold the Department accountable in this regard.

While Cowlitz County has rebounded from the deepest parts of the recession to a certain degree, it has been left behind the economic boom that much of the state is experiencing. Many of the county's economic and social indicators lag behind the rest of the state, which can be traced to a lack of access to good, family-wage jobs.

Southwest Washington historically has one of the highest unemployment rates in western Washington. The latest statistics indicated that the county's labor force participation is substantially lower than the national rate and that average annual wages are well below the state and national averages. Too many Southwest Washington families live in or near levels of poverty. The problem is especially acute for children with far too many living in poverty. Southwest Washington has significantly higher rates of poverty for the same cohorts for the state as a whole.

This lack of opportunity and the stresses families face in Southwest Washington result in impacts to school readiness and other social determinants. As an example, less than a third (30%) of Cowlitz County children are assessed to be kindergarten ready when measured by the WaKIDS' six domains. This compares to 47% for the state overall.

Many project opponents who don't live in Southwest Washington seem to think that these statistics will somehow, magically get better on their own, or they ignore them. They won't get better on their own and we can't ignore them.

Jobs make a difference for communities. Cowlitz County does not have enough good paying jobs. We need to create more. NW Innovation Works will create the right kind of jobs for our community.

The project is estimated to create 1,000 jobs during construction, 200 direct permanent family wage jobs during operations, and 500 indirect and induced jobs. They will support \$700 million in local spending on labor, goods, services and produce \$21 million in annual salaries - a significant percentage spent at local businesses.

NW Innovation Works is committed to local jobs and has agreed to a Project Labor Agreement with the Longview/Kelso Building and Construction Trades, along with the full support of the Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council and the Cowlitz/Wahkiakum Central Labor Council. This means that local Trades people are guaranteed the first chance at work opportunities on this project. Local workers making a family wage translates into the investment dollars spent on this project staying in the community and supporting the local economy. Increase in apprenticeship opportunities for our local youth, unemployed or underemployed community members.

And NW Innovation Works has planned partnerships with Lower Columbia College, Workforce Southwest Washington, and the Cowlitz County Economic Development Council to establish a program for training and hiring permanent employees from the local community that will include full tuition and stipend for students who are accepted into the training program and full-time living-wage employment at the facility upon program completion.

NW Innovation Works is investing in the community. Increased local spending will grow small businesses, increase land and property values and enhance overall opportunity & quality of life for residents. And the project will generate much needed tax revenue. NW Innovation Works has neither requested nor received changes in tax law or special tax treatment to build in Cowlitz County. The company will pay an estimated \$57.9 million in taxes during construction and \$30-40 million in annual taxes during operations which will further enhance the quality of life for local residents and their families - New community facilities, enhanced community services and infrastructure & improved local schools.

These are meaningful benefits that cannot be substituted for by rhetoric or good intentions.

Climate change doesn't respect borders. It is a global issue and our response to it must be done in a way that recognizes we are all in this fight together.

The Department of Ecology's report confirms that we are in a time of large and rapid increases in

global demand for methanol. Nowhere is demand for methanol rising faster than in China. China consumes approximately 50% of the world's methanol and approximately 80% of the methanol China produces is derived from coal. The Chinese government has continued to promote efforts to use their abundant coal resources for high value industries, notably, the chemical industry.

If we don't help to meet that demand here ♦ in an environmentally sound way ♦ that demand will be met by someone else ♦ probably in the Middle East, Russia, or China. That's not conjecture. That's a fact.

And what we know from the Department of Ecology report is that by producing the methanol in Kalama at NW Innovation Works' facility, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If we let others do it, those emissions will go up. Why would we pick that? The answer is, we shouldn't.

We now know, from the highest environmental regulatory authority in the state all that we need to know about this project. We are a state with tough environmental standards. This project meets those standards.

Opponents should join project supporters in understanding the bottom line facts regarding the environmental benefits moving forward with this facility means and embrace the progress represented by the project. Efforts to further delay this project means two things: bad outcomes for the working families of southwest Washington and bad outcomes in our fight against climate change.