



Klickitat County Port District

News release

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Subject: EDA reserves \$1 million for Bingen project

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Industrial development on Port of Klickitat property at Bingen gained a major boost last week as the US Economic Development Administration reserved \$1 million to prepare the land for construction.

The grant will accomplish two important tasks: first, it will help distribute 700,000 cubic yards of excavation spoils on the site, raising the land's elevation sufficiently to allow permanent construction. Then, it will pay for initial infrastructure to building sites. Job recruitment in a timber-dependent community is the project's main focus.

"When that phase is completed, the port district will be able to complete a task it started in 1950, when it purchased more than 100 acres on the Bingen Point," noted Betty Thompson, port commission chair. "The land's low elevation prevented construction, since it was within the river's 100-year floodplain and the Army Corps of Engineers retained flowage rights.

"Only now will we be able to solve that dilemma, by literally raising the land's elevation above the floodplain," Thompson said. "This will allow us to provide permanent construction for new industries -- and that will bring jobs to our community."

In fact, the port has already received expressions of interest from potential clients; these initial responses indicate at least 200 direct, permanent jobs created as a result of the project. (That doesn't include construction positions for the project itself, nor long-term indirect jobs to support the main industries.)

"We've set two basic tasks as a port district," said port commissioner Bill Schmitt. "We must protect existing jobs in the timber industry, and we must

diversify our economy by providing additional industries. This project is critical to both of those goals.”

Of the \$1 million, \$300,000 will be used to provide infrastructure on the property, including water, sewer, electricity and roads.

The remaining \$700,000 will be used in conjunction with port district, state and federal funding from the Farmers' Home Administration to spread and selectively compact 700,000 cubic yards of excavation material from the Bonneville NavLock construction project.

This material is provided and transported at no cost to the Port of Klickitat under contract with the US Army Corps of Engineers; in itself, the contract represented a successful campaign by a coalition of local, state and national officials to use the excavation spoils within urban areas of the Columbia Gorge. Originally, the material was scheduled for use near Portland.

While the port district won't be charged for the material itself (slated to start arriving next summer), the port still faced the challenge of spreading a small mountain of excavated rock and sand from Bonneville navigation lock construction. This is estimated to cost \$1.5 million.

Funding components for that task include \$500,000 spearheaded by Sen. Brock Adams (D-Wash.) via the Farmers Home Administration, a \$250,000 loan from the State of Washington, approximately \$100,000 in port district funding -- and now, the final piece of the puzzle, \$1 million from the EDA. Total secured funding is \$1.85 million.

“This isn't just a port project,” noted Brian Shortt, Port of Klickitat manager. “It involves crucial assistance by many different organizations and individuals throughout Klickitat County and the region.”

The move came in response to a grant “pre-application” submitted by the Port of Klickitat and Mid-Columbia Economic Development District last month. The port must now complete a full application to EDA, but the agency's grant committee agreed last week to reserve the funds.

The Economic Development Administration is an agency of the US Department of Commerce.