

## THE COLUMBIA RIVER CLEAN DIESEL PROJECT COMMITTS TO REDUCING DIESEL EMISSIONS

Representatives of the marine, rail, and truck cargo sectors as well as government representatives from Washington and Oregon recently agreed to a declaration of cooperation (DOC) to reduce diesel emissions along the Columbia River/Interstate-5 corridor. In just under one year, this divergent group of businesses and government entities identified collaborative means of reducing diesel emissions and progressing regional economic efforts and formally agreed to pursue those ends. The DOC sets out a series of goals and initiatives being taken by the Ports of Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington, as well as railroads, tug and barge fleets, and other groups to upgrade fuel sources, reduce idling, and investigate additional measures to reduce diesel emissions. This voluntary effort illustrates a model of collaboration and innovation for pooling resources to identify sources of diesel emissions and target those sources for reduction.

### Background: Focusing on a Growing Problem

The Portland/Vancouver region is one of five international gateways on the U.S. West Coast. The region is well served by major trade facilities in marine, rail, and truck cargo. Each of these modes uses equipment powered primarily by diesel engines. Freight transport through the region is expected to increase over the coming years driven by projected population growth as well as geographic considerations that make the Portland-Vancouver region a strategic location for distribution. Given these trends, the Governors of Oregon and Washington felt a need to develop a sustainable approach to handling the increased emissions associated with this projected growth.

The Governors of Washington and Oregon co-designated the Columbia River Clean Diesel Project to enhance the sustainability of the regional economy through management of diesel emissions of freight transport in the Columbia River area. The effort focuses on the freight transportation industry that uses Portland and Vancouver as a hub and transports goods through the Columbia River and Interstate five corridors. The innovative task of the project involved not a focus on diesel emission reductions alone, but a parallel view that included economic drivers. The

holistic approach taken by the project's conveners provided the platform for finding solutions that incentivized change.

### Obtaining Commitments: The Declaration of Cooperation

Joining the project were the Ports of Portland and Vancouver, as well as some of the major Columbia River tug and barge companies, and representatives of rail and truck companies. The purpose and goal of the project was to pool the resources and knowledge of these distinct groups to reduce diesel emissions associated with marine, rail, and truck freight in a manner that protects human health, slows climate change, and improves long-term profitability. The participants in the project worked together to form a public, private and nonprofit "Solutions" group. The project's conveners were tasked to obtain a signed declaration of cooperation that outlines the commitments of the various partners, *i.e.*, with commitments for individual and collective actions on specific areas of focus.

The project focused on identifying current and projected future sources of significant diesel emissions and investigating means of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions while not obstructing economic growth. Specifically, project participants investigated diesel fuel usage and emissions, use of alternative fuels, logistical improvements, and particularly collaborative funding requests to obtain capital for substantial retrofitting and equipment upgrades.

After nearly a year of investigation and problem-solving, the parties to the DOC formally pledged their cooperation to the actions, as individual entities, to reduce diesel emissions associated with freight movement in the Portland-Vancouver region. In particular, the parties agreed to identify opportunities and solutions to contribute assistance and support and to collaborate with other participants in promoting the reduction of diesel emissions.

These general commitments are further backed by commitments to specific actions to reduce diesel emissions. Parties agreed to upgrade existing fleets with fuel efficiency and emissions reduction technologies; use cleaner burning diesel fuels, including ultra low sulfur diesel and biodiesel fuels; and investigate

and develop operational efficiency policies. These improvements can provide economic advantage for those entities transitioning in advance of being required to do so and benefits for the environment such as air and water quality improvements. Similarly, the reduction in diesel emissions will benefit regional air quality, counteracting climate change impacts, and provide health benefits for the people working and living near diesel engines. (See, "U.S. EPA Report Finds that Global Climate Change Will Harm Regional Air Quality," 2 *Climate Change L. & Pol'y Rptr* 54 (June 2009).)

Importantly, the DOC is not a legally binding contract. The project's parallel focus on economic development led to solutions that reduce diesel emissions while also providing a platform for continued economic growth. For example, participants work to secure grants for retrofitting equipment will reduce emissions and may also increase the efficiency or use-

ful-life of the engine. This win-win solution format makes follow-through easy on the project's parties. The project continues to seek additional measures to reduce diesel emissions and provide support for funding diesel emission reduction projects.

### Conclusion and Implications

The commitments of the parties show the promise of great economic and environmental progress. Yet, implementation of many of the commitments will take years. The parties have all agreed to remain with the project to assist each other in implementation and to continue to work together to identify sources and pool resources to target reductions. In an environment of increasing government regulation of greenhouse gas emissions, the Columbia River Clean Diesel project illustrates the viability of voluntary projects that can benefit a region's environment and economy. (B. Flanagan)