

Senator Maria Cantwell

North Pacific Paper Company (NORPAC) Ribbon Cutting Event

October 19th, 2022

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

CANTWELL: Thank you Craig, and thank you for that nice introduction. I'm certainly here with the who's who of Cowlitz County. Thank you so much.

I really feel honored to have an opportunity to say a few words given that there are so many electeds here in the audience. I guess it was reminding me though, when I first got elected I remember Senator Murray and I came down here to Cowlitz County and we were basically protested by people who were saying electricity rates were too high. That was the beginning of the Enron crisis, but I'll never forget that.

People would say, here in Cowlitz County, "we've got to do something about the electricity rates." And obviously, we were able to push very hard against the Enron manipulation and get new laws and obviously get a little bit of relief. But, I always think about electricity and electricity pricing.

So one of the things that happened during that whole effort in showing that electricity prices that had been manipulated could never be just and reasonable and [they] shouldn't make us be the deep pockets, in the Northwest, to pay on fraudulent energy contracts, was that I met a guy named Robert McCullough. And he was the lead investigator, he literally was hired by Snohomish County PUD, to show the Enron manipulation.

Well, Robert McCullough calls me up after several years and says, you've got to help NORPAC. And I trust Robert, and I trust his judgment, and I said, well, let me talk to them. And sure enough, Craig and I started talking and we understood what an incredible vision that the company had. An incredible opportunity they had in front of them, but they needed to get over a short term hurdle as it related to the electricity rates and the pricing.

And so I just wanted to say congratulations to Craig for his leadership. We endured a little while but Craig endured and his team endured a long time to make today reality. You're one heck of an innovative CEO and leader of this company.

So it's great to be here with a whole NORPAC team because not only have you saved 500 jobs, you added 100 new jobs and that's very exciting. With this 500 mill pulper and other mill infrastructure you can take all this waste from Washington, and Oregon, and Idaho and transform it into recycled paper as that video that your granddaughter watched so many times shows, I think it's something we should show all over.

But the improvements in recycling capacity from 300,000 tons of waste per year to more than 800,000 metric tons per year. That's impressive, very, very impressive and so exciting. And as you mentioned, the shortage is stopping in the Asian market. It's a problem, but NORPAC saw a solution and so we're so excited to be here to celebrate.

Now wastepaper will be transformed into linear board in an Amazon box. And I think when we were talking at the time, I kept saying, let's talk to Amazon, let's talk to Amazon and kept pushing them to talk to you and I'm glad that that's part of this process. And your innovation and investment solves a big problem for all our communities, because what were they going to do with the constant cost of the environment and the paper at our landfill?

So today is about a big achievement. It's about economic success. Besides Craig, I want to thank Tom Rosewood, Ted Sprague, Cowlitz PUD, I have to say yes, BPA and all the things to help NORPAC shift their line of business to this new focus. It certainly would not have happened without that help and transformation.

I do also want to thank, from my office and is no longer with us, but Rich Glick who just happens to be the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and at the time worked for us on the [Senate] Energy Committee. I can't tell you how many hours I mean, weeks, months that we spent on the phone battling over this and obviously the challenge that we faced in trying to get this transformation to get a little relief for NORPAC so they could make this major investment.

So I think it's a lesson for the entire nation. I really do. You know you're a community in transformation. Sectors change. Look at how we got to this particular place, the transformation in the newspaper industry even in and of itself, but NORPAC answered the call. They created a new market, they created a new opportunity, and they created a lot of jobs, and they saved a lot of jobs here, in Cowlitz County.

So congratulations to everyone today for the great success and future vision that you're providing for our state. Thank you.