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Subject: DEQ's Pre-Enforcement Timing for Coffin Butte Landfill
Date: Friday, January 16, 2026 10:40:55 AM

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Hi Rachel and Rick,

DEQ has been asked by Benton County staff to provide a statement regarding why DEQ issued pre-enforcement notice No. 2025-PEN-10025 to Coffin Butte on Nov. 6, 2025.

The timing of the pre-enforcement notice was driven by the timing of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's referral of the case to DEQ. It was unrelated to the county land use process for Coffin Butte Landfill expansion application.

EPA took the lead on investigating methane issues at Coffin Butte Landfill for years under a national compliance initiative focused on methane at landfills. Under that initiative, EPA conducted several landfill inspections in Oregon. EPA also issued national [enforcement alerts](#) in 2024. At Coffin Butte Landfill, EPA conducted Clean Air Act inspections in June 2022 and June 2024, identifying potential compliance concerns. EPA released inspection reports for the landfill in response to public records requests, and media outlets have run stories regarding these compliance concerns. DEQ's pre-enforcement notice addresses these compliance concerns and is based, in part, on EPA's publicly available data.

In addition to the inspections, EPA also followed up with information requests to Coffin Butte, and Coffin Butte submitted the requested records to EPA in May 2025. DEQ received the records from EPA on July 29, 2025, after they were also sent to a member of the public.

In the fall of 2025 EPA indicated informally to DEQ that it intended to refer the matter to DEQ for enforcement, and DEQ began a review of materials compiled by EPA over the past three years. DEQ's review and analysis of this material was the basis of our pre-enforcement notice. EPA formally referred the potential compliance concerns to DEQ for enforcement on Oct. 29, 2025, and DEQ issued the pre-enforcement notice when it was ready.

DEQ does not play a role in the conditional approval of the landfill expansion by the county. Likewise, county land use decisions do not have bearing on the timing of our pre-enforcement notice.

We know that accountability is important, and we take our role in protecting the environment and public health seriously. Once the case was referred to DEQ by EPA, we acted quickly and responsibly to issue our pre-enforcement notice.

Next Step

In the pre-enforcement notice, DEQ identifies violations, asks for more information, and asks Valley Landfills, Inc. to take corrective actions. The pre-enforcement notice is also a notification to Coffin Butte that the matter is being referred to DEQ's Office of Compliance and Enforcement for a formal order and penalty assessment, which will happen as a next step in the coming months.

Let me know if you need more information or would like to meet to discuss DEQ's enforcement process.

Sincerely,

Mary Camarata

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