

From: [Steve Michaels](#)
To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Subject: Coffin Butte testimony
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October 3, 2025

To: Benton County Board of Commissioners

From: Steve Michaels

Re: LU-24-027

The application to expand Coffin Butte Landfill does not meet the decision criteria and must be denied. The facts have not changed. Operational problems including: discharging methane, odor, airborne particulates and toxic leachate are well documented. Why would the Board of Commissioners overturn a unanimous denial by the Planning Commission? Republic Services goes to great lengths in an attempt to persuade the Board that the expansion will not repeat existing problems. But our county needs to defend itself against Republic Services and advocate for a healthier future.

The application does not meet BCC 53.215(1). Coffin Butte Landfill currently has an adverse effect on surrounding permitted uses. Methane leaks, odor and air borne particulates are known to effect surrounding permitted uses through numerous complaints to the County and governing governmental agencies. These issues remain unresolved. The applicant would have you believe that the landfill expansion will not replicate these adverse impacts. No amount of prospective research can prove there will be an absence of adverse impacts. In fact, it is well known that landfills age badly. Case in point, Chiquita Canyon Landfill in Castaic, California is smoldering deep inside the pile of trash evaporating toxic chemicals including benzene and compromising the stability of the nasty leachate stew. The best landfill engineering practices cannot be counted on to protect surrounding uses or the public from a deteriorating landfill. It is reasonable to expect that an expanded landfill will continue to have an adverse effect on surrounding permitted uses.

The application does not meet BCC 53.215(2). Trash needs a home, but a landfill is a hazardous land use. The existing landfill is more than problematic. And the reality is Coffin Butte could evolve into an even greater public health and land use problem. An expanded landfill adds to the potential hazard. At the present, the existing landfill may be functioning without imposing an undue burden on public improvements and services. In the future, that will not be the case. A failing, toxic landfill will impose an undue burden on public improvements, facilities and utilities. An expanded landfill will make it worse. The County cannot accept that risk.

I recognize the need for proper collection and disposal of trash. I have been a Republic Services customer for many years. But, the opportunity to establish a regional solution to a regional trash problem is now, before expansion. This is a legacy case. It is up to the Commissioners to protect the health and well being of Benton County.

Steve Michaels
1215 NW Kainui Drive
Corvallis, Oregon