From: Mark Yeager
To: Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals
Subject: 1973 Chemeketa Plan - Coffin Butte
Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 3:46:15 PM
Attachments: North Benton County Advisory Committee Letter to Planning Commission November 1973.pdf

October 5, 2025

Commissioners Wyse, Malone and Shepherd

Testimony in Opposition to LU-24-027

My name is Mark Yeager, and I live at 37269 Helm Drive in Corvallis. I have lived at this residence since 1987. I am a professional Environmental and Civil Engineer in Oregon as well as a Certified Water Rights Examiner. I have served in multiple appointments on the Benton County Solid Waste Advisory Council and the Disposal Site Advisory Committee.

I submit this testimony today to provide some context within which to consider the current proposal to build a new landfill south of Coffin Butte Road, masquerading as an expansion rather than its true purpose as the first phase of a forever-expanding dump.

On November 5, 1973, Authur L. Tollefson, Chairman of the North Benton County Citizens Advisory Committee (NBCAC) and PHD professor at OSU wrote to James Davenport, Chairman of Benton County Planning Commission (letter attached):

"Let it be clearly understood that we are unalterably opposed to the long-term continuation of the use of the Coffin Butte site for its present service area. We are even more vigorously opposed to its expansion to serve a three-county area."

Side note – the Coffin Butte dump now serves more than 23 counties.

Further, the letter from the NBCAC states: "There is a substantial body of facts relating to the unsuitability of this site and the surrounding area which have seemed so evident to us as to make any serious consideration of the Coffin Butte site utterly ridiculous, totally intolerable."

Finally, the letter states: "Given the ecological and geological factors, the population considerations, and the aesthetic and recreational potential, Coffin Butte is far better suited to be a public park than a public dump."

Here we are 52 years later, and the madness continues. It must stop now. You can take the first step to implement a waste management paradigm shift to a brighter future. I urge you to uphold the Planning Commission decision and deny this conditional use permit.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Yeager

November 5, 1973

Mr. James Davenport, Chairman
Benton County Planning Commission

Gentlemen:

The North Benton Citizens Advisory Committee has been advised that truly serious consideration is being given to the Coffin Butte site for a regional disposal station for three counties. It is our understanding that the consideration is not based on the fact that it is a good site but more on the basis that it 1) is slightly better than two flood plain sites proposed in Benton County, 2) there has recently been a seeming lack of opposition from the residents of the Coffin Butte vicinity, and 3) it has continued to be a disposal over long-standing objections of the local residents.

Let it be clearly understood that we are unalterable opposed to a long-term continuation of the use of the Coffin Butte site for its present service area. We are even more vigorously opposed to its expansion to serve a three-county area.

We have not recently voiced our objections for the following reasons:

1. We thought everyone knew how obviously bad this site was for even a county disposal area, let alone an expanded version, else why would they have looked further?

2. There has been a long-standing commitment on the part of the Corvallis Disposal Company and the county to close the present operation as soon as another site could be found. This commitment was most recently reconfirmed to this Citizen's Advisory Committee when we were preparing our recommendations to the Benton Comprehensive Plan.

3. Although the date of closing the present operations has been delayed time after time, the people felt the commitment was made in good faith and therefore have demonstrated patience, tolerance and understanding concerning the difficulties entailed in finding an alternate site.

There is a substantial body of facts relating to the unsuitability of this site and to the surrounding area which have seemed so evident to us as to make any serious consideration of the Coffin Butte site utterly ridiculous, totally intolerable. These facts cluster into three groups which include ecological and geological considerations and population distri-

bution in North Benton County, and aesthetic and recreational factors. Consider the following:

A. Ecological and Geological Considerations

1. The Planning Commission has established as a guiding principle that land should be zoned for its highest and best possible use. The North Benton Committee recommended that Poison Oak Hill just south of Coffin Butte be zoned for a minimum of 20 acres because of the shallowness of soil. The Planning staff and Commission decided that a five-acre residential zoning would be acceptable if care were taken in siting of leech fields and septic tanks. It is obvious that neither the North Benton Committee, the County Planning Staff, nor the Planning Commission would consider any higher density. The risk of pollution and other unpleasant consequences given the topography, shallowness of soil and rainfall were deemed to be too great. Coffin Butte and Poison Oak Hill are not only in the proximity but are very similar in type of soil, permeability, and steepness. It therefore seems illogical that Coffin Butte could safely absorb the runoff from the expected 182, 150 tons of solid waste per year (see Page 31. Item 4 of the feasibility study) by 1980, while adjacent areas of similar soils are deemed inadequate for more than one septic tank per five acres.

2. The disposal site as it now exists handles only 38, 190 tons per year (see Page 2, Item 2 of study) and seriously pollutes Soap Creek. If 182, 150 tons per year are placed on the site, the name of the stream might well be changed to "Sewer Creek".

3. It also appears illogical that soils which are so poor for septic tanks that the "suburban residential classification has been considered for elimination" (Page 7 of study) should be suitable for handling the leachate from the dump runoff despite the development of additional systems.

4. Nowhere in the feasibility study is there any statement that the site would be a good, or even an adequate site from a geological or ecological point of view. The report contains numerous statements which either contraindicate the use of the site, or which equivocate on key points. Other points are open to question. The following may serve as a few examples.

(a) The existence of three ponds high on the south slope, Artesian wells on the north, and many springs in the existing dump area strongly suggest the importance of the butte as an aquifer and the existence of large amounts of water trapped inside the hill. The report admits that it, plus the rainfall and steep slope would hamper sanitary landfill methods in the winter months. In addition, we would suggest that ground water contamination would be highly probable.

(b) Whereas much is made of dry wells and related matters (Pages 4 and 5) the evidence of trapped water is literally ignored.

(c) We also take exception to the statements concerning prevailing wind patterns (Page 8), because of the specific geography of the site. During the several years when burnir was permitted, local residents have become experts concerning prevailing wind patterns. These consistently flow from west to east around Coffin Butte either to the north or south. The valley between the two hills in which the proposed dump would be located is a wind chute.

(d) There are numerous other questions of great importance relating to the geology and ecology which the feasibility study does not answer - for example:

(1) Does the shallow highly fractured chlorite and basalt sub-rock which has been quarried for years act as an aquifer to surrounding wells?

B. Factors related to population concentrations in proximity to the disposal site.

1. Because Corvallis, North Albany, Philomath and Monroe are the four largest incorporated cities in Benton County, it is easy to assume that they also represent the four largest population concentrations. This is not the case. The Lewisburg area contains more people than Monroe, but this area is so closely tied to Corvallis that it tends to be viewed as part of the city. But the Adair-Tampico Road-Arboretum Road area

is farther from Corvallis than Corvallis is from Philomath. Perhaps few people realize that it also currently contains more people than does the city of Monroe. There are approximately 600 people living on the Adair base itself. The Tampico Road and Arboretum Road areas each contain thirty or so homes. Directly north of Adair are another dozen or so homes. Within about a mile of the main entrance to Adair, there are presently approximately 1, 000 people.

2. In the areas in the region which have been tentatively zoned by the Planning Commission for five-acre parcels, there are about 1, 200 undeveloped acres, including more than 500 acres on Poison Oak Hill directly across the county road from the proposed disposal site. Assuming 4 people each on the more than 200 potential sites, plus additional probable utilization of Adair, more than 1, 000 additional people can be expected in the area in the near future. These figures do not include the present or future population in the immediate vicinity of Coffin Butte itself or in other differently zoned land parcels.

Whether it was planned or not, the Adair Hills area is the de facto northern terminus of the linear city of which Corvallis is the focal point. It is essential that present and potential population concentration of the area is recognized.

C. Aesthetic and Recreational Considerations

1. It is doubtful if there exists a more beautiful view in Benton County than those which can be had from the crests of either Coffin Butte or Poison Oak Hill. For example, to the south one can see the entire length of the Soap Creek Valley, and over the pass at its end rears Mary's Peak.

2. The report mentions screening of the site from the existing residences and the county road. It does not concern itself with screening from Highway 99 nor from the 5-acre homesites which will be developed on Poison Oak Hill. The remarks on Page 7 concerning zoning are therefore in error.

3. Much of the land in the Soap Creek area below would be potentially suitable for recreational purposes - golf courses, hunt clubs, riding trails, etc. The area owned by the game com-

mission to the east is already used for related purposes, and has the potential for considerable greater use.

4. The planning task force indicated its recognition of this aesthetic and recreation potential by designating both hills as potential park sites.

Given the considerations presented above, as well as other specific facts and details too numerous to mention, it is the concensus of the North Benton Area Committee that the location of a regional disposal facility would be extremely short-sighted and very dangerous. Given the ecological and geological factors, the population considerations, and the aesthetic and recreational potential, Coffin Butte is far better suited to be a public park than a public dump. It should certainly no longer be considered for a three-county regional facility, and the agencies and officials of Benton County are strongly urged to honor their long-standing commitment to terminate its present use as quickly as possible. It would seem there would be more suitable sites in less populous areas, perhaps in one of the other two counties for which no sites have been proposed to date.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur L. Tollefson

Arthur L. Tollefson
Chairman, North Benton
Advisory Committee

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