

From: [Katharine Harris](#)
To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Subject: Deny LU-24-027 to Ensure Safe Evacuation
Date: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 4:59:41 PM

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Dear Commissioners Malone, Wyse, & Shepherd,

My name is Kate Harris, I live at 37268 Moss Rock Dr and I'm the mother of three young children who have lived in Adair Village and now live in Soap Creek Valley. All three have them have lived under the shadow of the landfill since infancy.

I am writing to you today to implore that you deny LU-24-027, the application to expand Coffin Butte Landfill, based on BCC 53.215, with arguments below showing that this application does indeed *seriously interfere with safe use of adjacent properties and places undue burden on public facilities*.

I have a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Portland, where I studied transportation engineering, drinking water & waste water treatment, and the Coffin Butte Landfill specifically during my solid waste management studies. I have a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Oklahoma, during which I studied community leader ethics among other topics.

I was an evaluator pilot in the US Air Force, where I was responsible for the safety of 40-person crews, which along with requiring specific flying expertise, included many emergency training situations, gas chamber training, and real-life tornado safety while living in Oklahoma. My paid profession for over 10 years was literally to keep all aspects of potential scenarios in mind while preventing my airplane from crashing, ensuring the safety of those on board & on the ground below us. Whether in the air or on the ground, I was specifically charged with the safety of the subordinates under my leadership.

You have been voted into your positions by the citizens of Benton County, with the charge and responsibility of focusing on and ensuring the health and safety of those same current residents and a follow-on responsibility to all future generations who will live in Benton County.

In 2021, the Benton County Planning Commission rejected the expansion application for Coffin Butte Landfill, partially due to Republic's request to place garbage over Coffin Butte Road, a primary emergency egress route that provides for the safety of the residents of Soap Creek Valley, Tampico, and surrounding neighborhoods.

LU-24-027 narrowly eliminates the request to close Coffin Butte Road, but falls short of guaranteeing that this will never happen.

It is at this point that I need to highlight the very real likelihood that Republic will seek to close Coffin Butte Road if this expansion is approved. Documents are still in play that do not fully remove the potential for future landfill expansion covering Coffin Butte Road, indicating Republic's intention to move forward with their original plan, only in stages this time instead

of all at once.

Based on ORS 368.326-366, once landfilling is approved for both sides of Coffin Butte Road, Republic, as the sole owner of both of those properties, may petition the Public Works department to vacate Coffin Butte Road, with no opportunity for public input. Your only way to guarantee that this never happens, is to deny the application in front of you now. We can all hope that we could believe that Republic would never close this road, but statutorily, it will be a very easy process if you approve this expansion now.

The only way that the current sitting commissioners can guarantee that Coffin Butte Road stays available for emergency egress in perpetuity, is to deny this application now.

In previous county CWPPs (Community Wildfire Protection Plans), the Oak Creek community has been afforded much time and attention, including county support for building a new egress road through Oregon State University property. In emails obtained through FOIA, during the last draft of the CWPP, then-county employee Inga Williams specifically omitted the Coffin Butte Landfill from inclusion in the wildfire protection plan because she didn't have enough expertise to include it in the plan. Why has the northern section of Benton County not been afforded this same level of time and consideration?

A wildfire erupted the last weekend of this September, near Granger and Pettibone, between Lewisburg & Hwy 20 resulted in Level-3 "Go Now!" evacuation notifications for approximately 20 homes, and required support from four counties and numerous fire organizations. The next day, another wildfire occurred between Philomath and Alsea, and also required a multi-day/multi-organization response to address. Evacuation-level fires can and DO happen right here in Benton County.

Since the landfill was not even considered in the most recent CWPP, you have no basis with which to state that you can safely close Coffin Butte Road as an emergency egress route. The only way for you to ensure that our primary egress route remains a viable option, unless and until proven otherwise, is to deny this expansion application.

Approving LU-24-027 *seriously interferes with* and places an *undue burden* on the safe use of adjacent properties & public faculties, including the safety of all current and future residents of Soap Creek and Tampico neighborhoods during wildfire, earthquake, or other emergency egress situations, because we will no longer be guaranteed that this road will not be closed by future persons responsible for the landfill or employed by Benton County.

The sitting commissioners as of October 2025 are solely responsible for ensuring this egress route stays open in perpetuity. Please embrace the faith and responsibility that the current residents of Benton County have placed in you when you make your decision on this land use application.

Respectfully & faithfully,
Kate Harris