

From: [Emily Wells](#)
To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Subject: Arguments for Denial of LU-24-027
Date: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 5:17:59 PM
Attachments: [EmilyWells Testimony LU-24-057.pdf](#)
[Appendix EmilyWells Photos.pdf](#)

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Dear Commissioners Wyse, Malone and Shepherd,

Please find attached my written testimony and supporting photographic appendix in opposition to the proposed Coffin Butte Landfill expansion (LU-24-057).



Nature's Way Playschool

Play-Based Farm & Forest Playschool
North Corvallis, Oregon — Near Adair Village
Email: Natureswayplayschool@gmail.com

DATE: 10/7/2025

TO: Commissioners Shepherd, Wyse, and Malone, of Benton County Oregon

FROM: Emily Wells, Adair Village, OR

RE: Arguments for Denial of LU-24-027

My name is Emily Wells, and I am the director and founder of Nature's Way Playschool, a registered nature-based preschool near Adair Village that I have successfully operated since 2017. I am a lifelong resident of this area, a parent, and a credentialed teacher with dual degrees in Environmental Sustainability and Sociology. My entire academic and professional life has focused on understanding the relationship between ecological health and community well-being. I am writing to strongly oppose Republic Services' expansion application (LU-24-057) and to urge you to uphold the Planning Commission's unanimous denial.

My connection to this land is lifelong. I remember visiting the Coffin Butte site as a child when it was a much smaller operation, and it is heartbreaking to witness its relentless growth. This deep commitment to our local environment is the reason I founded a school dedicated to fostering a joyful, respectful connection between children and the natural world. Our program serves children ages one through five in a farm and forest setting, with a foundational philosophy of immersive outdoor learning. Please see the attached photographic appendix, which visually demonstrates the 'character of the area' and the 'public service' that Benton County Codes 55.215(1) and 53.215(2) are designed to protect from serious interference and undue burden

The proposed landfill expansion poses an unacceptable threat to the core of my program: a safe and healthy natural environment for children. Families and staff already experience periodic landfill odors that make outdoor play difficult, and any expansion will worsen these conditions. Allowing this expansion would permanently undermine the air and water quality that families rightfully expect. This constitutes a serious interference with our lawful educational use of the property, in violation of Benton County Development Code 53.215(1), which requires that a proposed conditional use "not seriously interfere with uses on adjacent property." The purpose of our program and the character of this area are defined by safe, nature-centered learning—values fundamentally incompatible with an expanding landfill.

This expansion violates the specific criteria Republic Services must prove. First, by degrading the safe, natural environment essential to my program, it 'seriously interferes with the character of the area and the purpose of the zone,' which fails the requirement of Benton County Code 55.215(1). Second, as a registered childcare program, Nature's Way Playschool is a service available to the public. Imposing this environmental degradation is an 'undue burden on a service available to the area,' and therefore also violates Benton County Code 53.215(2). This not only threatens my business but a vital resource for working families, undermining the community stability the code is designed to protect.

Please see the attached photographic appendix, which visually demonstrates the 'character of the area' and the 'public service' that Benton County Codes 55.215(1) and 53.215(2) are designed to protect from serious interference and undue burden. Furthermore, it makes little sense to impose this burden on our community when viable regional landfill capacity already exists elsewhere. Choosing to expand Coffin Butte, despite its documented impacts on surrounding homes, small businesses, and environmental quality, is inequitable when less damaging alternatives are available.

But beyond zoning codes and economic consequences, this decision is about moral responsibility. We cannot teach children to care for the natural world while allowing it to be irreplaceably abused and destroyed in their own backyard. My child drinks the water here. My students drink the water here. We must be able to trust its safety. The choice before you is simple: protect the health of our children and the environment they will inherit—or prioritize the expansion of a landfill and the profits of an out-of-state corporation. When it comes to people's safety, money should not win out every time.

The Planning Commission's unanimous rejection of this proposal sent a clear, powerful message. I stand firmly with their decision. I respectfully urge you to do the same: deny this appeal, protect our children's health, and uphold the values that make Benton County a place we are proud to call home.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

Emily Wells, Director
Nature's Way Playschool

"A nature-immersive learning environment where children thrive through exploration, play, and connection with the natural world."
