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To: [Coffin Butte Landfill Appeals](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on Behalf of Maryl Kunkel
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Maryl Kunkel
503-410-6976
2505 E Redwood Ct, Newberg, 97132

Written Testimony of Maryl Kunkel

Chair and Commissioners,

My name is Maryl Kunkel, and I hold a degree in Conservation and Resource Studies with a focus on Social Organization and Environmental Policy from the University of California, Berkeley, which is a very Berkeley way of saying I studied sustainable infrastructure and environmental policy. My interests have always centered on the intersection between environmental protection and economic feasibility, finding solutions that work not just in theory, but in real communities.

Let me be clear: I am not pro-landfill. But we also have to be honest about the reality we're living in. Coffin Butte is the only regional landfill currently serving this area, and with Oregon's stringent restrictions on siting and operating new landfills, there simply are no other short term viable options. The question isn't whether Coffin Butte is perfect, it's whether denying this expansion makes Oregon's waste management system more sustainable.

If we turn away this project, our waste doesn't vanish; it travels farther. Which means, more long-haul trucking, more diesel emissions, and significantly higher costs for families and small businesses who are already struggling with inflation and rising energy prices. The idea of transferring waste to Eastern Oregon may sound like a stopgap, but it comes at a tremendous environmental and financial cost.

From my perspective, this is a rock-and-a-hard-place situation. Oregon's recycling and waste reduction systems have not kept pace with demand. We can and should continue to invest in better recycling programs, stronger producer responsibility policies, and waste diversion strategies. But those are long-term solutions, and they are years away from being fully realized. In the meantime, we need a short-term plan that is responsible, accountable, and doesn't push the burden onto working families.

I believe that Coffin Butte's expansion provides exactly that. The 34 new proposed conditions only strengthen the existing environmental protections, addressing everything from groundwater and air quality to noise, litter, and wildlife management. This project also generates millions in annual revenue for Benton County, supporting local services and essential programs that benefit everyone in the region.

I understand the instinct to resist expansion, it feels counterintuitive to sustainability. But when addressing environmental policy we must live in a version of reality that both looks to the future and addresses the right now. Environmental responsibility requires a systems-based approach, not an emotional one. When you look at the data, Coffin Butte represents the most environmentally and economically sound option available to

us right now. It's not a forever solution, but it's the bridge to get us to what comes next.

Thank you for your time and for the thoughtful, transparent process you've provided to all sides of this conversation.

Maryl Kunkel

Social Organization and Environmental Policy, University of California, Berkeley