

**LU-24-027 IN-PERSON TESTIMONY
SUBMITTAL COVER SHEET**

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Date: 10/23/25

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BOC ID: BOC2

IDENTIFIER: TO 661

Good Evening Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you this evening. I have been a resident of North Corvallis for more than four years. I wanted to start by giving you a brief background on my credentials. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Penn State University, a Master of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of California at Berkeley, a Master of City Planning degree in City and Regional Planning, also from UC Berkeley, and many years of dedicated public service in various government positions related to these fields of study.

So I understand both the scientific and public policy considerations that you must take into account when making this critical decision. This may in fact be the most significant and important decision that you make as Commissioners, on behalf of your constituents and your community, and it will have long lasting, serious, and likely irreversible impacts on the health, safety, and wellbeing of Benton County residents for generations to come. I am coming to you tonight in my personal capacity as a Benton County resident to ask you to please reject the proposed landfill expansion. My wife and I and many of our friends and family regularly use the Willamette River for recreation, we love to paddleboard and kayak on many different stretches of it. It is an essential public resource that must be protected.

As we all know, we live in a very wet climate for nearly half of the year here. Much of the rainwater that falls on the landfill percolates through the trash and absorbs a wide range of pollutants including PFAS, heavy metals, and other hazardous chemicals, creating a toxic soup that collects at the base of the landfill. Think about how much more of that trash is electronic waste today compared to just 10 or 15 years ago.

According to a 2021 EPA Science Matters newsletter published by their Office of Research and Development, which amazingly hasn't been removed from their website yet, [QUOTE] "cell phones, televisions, laptops, tablets, watches – there is always something shinier, newer, faster, and smarter to choose from in the world of electronic devices. Americans currently own more than 3 billion electronic products. The average American has 24 devices per household. As the use of these electronic products has grown, the average lifespan of these products becomes shorter. This in turn has resulted in increased volume of discarded and obsolete electronic devices. The resulting waste, commonly known as "e-waste," is the fastest-growing component of the municipal waste stream in the United States." [End quote]

But most of that waste is recycled or diverted from landfills, right? No, in fact the same EPA newsletter estimates that less than 30% of e-waste is recycled. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research reported last year that e-waste generation is rising 5 times faster than e-waste recycling, and the gap between e-waste generation and recycling is expected to continue to grow. To quote from the report, "challenges contributing to the widening gap include technological progress, higher

consumption, limited repair options, shorter product life cycles, society's growing electronification, design shortcomings, and inadequate e-waste management infrastructure."² [End quote] More electronic waste in municipal waste streams means more heavy metals and other toxic contaminants in landfills and in their leachate.

The expansion of the Coffin Butte landfill would generate millions of *additional* gallons of leachate each year contaminated with PFAS, heavy metals, and other hazardous pollutants that currently pass through the Corvallis and Salem wastewater treatment plants largely unfiltered and enter the Willamette River, not to mention the unknown quantities of leachate that inevitably enter the groundwater and the river completely untreated. And I say inevitably because any reputable scientist will tell you that all landfill liners eventually leak (the EPA has acknowledged this as well), and monitoring systems only detect a fraction of these leaks. Therefore, I strongly believe that this landfill expansion would place an undue burden on this precious public facility, our prized Willamette River.

With all due respect to the hard work that staff and their consultants have put into their report and recommendation, I believe that it is based on a fundamentally flawed assumption that the County has the technical expertise, capacity, financial resources, and willingness to meaningfully enforce the dozens of conditions that they are recommending be included in the approval. The history surrounding this landfill has clearly shown that this is not feasible, and a mere \$80,000 annual contribution from the Applicant for compliance monitoring and enforcement would not even come close to remedying the situation. With the ongoing severe and potentially permanent cutbacks to the federal government, especially within the EPA, the federal government's ability and willingness to effectively monitor the landfill's operations and emissions are now and will likely continue to be hampered for decades. That unfortunately puts more of the burden on state and local officials to do this work. As you know, the track record for the state DEQ in this regard has been dubious at best.

Despite what some testimony here tonight and questionable interpretations of the law may lead you to believe about the narrowness of your discretion in making this decision, you do have not only the discretion, but also the right and the *duty* to deny this proposed expansion to protect your community from harm. Denying this application to expand the landfill will not close the landfill any time soon. The County and its citizens still have plenty of time to develop and implement much better and more sustainable alternatives to our waste management needs. Building a huge landfill in such a wet climate was a bad idea from the start. Please don't make another huge mistake by expanding it. Your primary responsibility as Commissioners is to represent the interests of *Benton County* residents. Benton County residents do not need this landfill expansion, and Benton County residents *clearly* do not want this landfill expansion. Please do the right thing, uphold the carefully considered and unanimous decision by your Planning Commission, and vote to deny this application.

Thank you for your time.

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¹<https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/helping-communities-manage-electronic-waste>

²<https://ewastemonitor.info/electronic-waste-rising-five-times-faster-than-documented-e-waste-recycling-un/>