From: Bill Briskey
To: Benton Public Comment
Subject: Oppose/Deny Reference Application File Number LU-24-027
Date: Wednesday, April 16, 2025 4:15:22 PM
Attachments: KEklund Petra Schuetz letter 1-2025 methane.pdf

I have three primary concerns:

1. Landfill gas impact on health of my family, which includes an infant and a 5-yr-old
2. Effluent concerns since I have a well
3. Impact on how I use my land

My property shares 1580 feet of fence line with the NW corner of the landfill and the topology brings the smell right to us anytime there's a south component to the wind direction. When we bought our land 35 years ago, we were told by a Valley Landfills, Inc. representative that the original deposit location, called Cell 6, was closed so all future garbage would always be moving away from us. Since Republic moved all the refuse out of Cell 6 and Knife River blasted to remove more of the Butte at that NW corner, we've already experienced more odor and picked up more airborne garbage that blows over the fence. The quarry blasting has caused structural shifts in our house, broke a window, and we now have major cracks in concrete slabs in out-buildings. Understandably, we're very interested in the outcome of the expansion discussion.

I am becoming increasingly concerned about my family's exposure to toxic gasses every time a breeze comes from SE to SW. The gas being comprised of methane, carbon dioxide, plus other aerosols including toxic PFAS (per- and poly**fluoroalkyls**) was just last year measured by the EPA to exceed the maximum allowable emission level by 219 times. I have not seen any evidence that the ongoing problems in the existing methane collection system have been corrected since the last EPA visits, just continued gas emissions indications from satellite images and my own nose. This clearly violates BCC 53.215 (1) and makes me wonder why it doesn't get the attention it deserves by Benton County and EPA officials.

I haven't complained about the odor because, hey, I live next to a dump. But the **increase in odor** is also raising my awareness to the apparent lack of mitigation and potential long-term damage from toxicity exposure. I hosted business associates once and the stench forced me to cancel the meeting and everyone left – I haven't been able to host events since then. Before there's any expansion allowed, I'd like to see Republic get a handle on what they already have to manage. I'd also like to see evidence that they are actually solving the problem instead of dismissing complaints.

My family's well is located 500 feet from the landfill property. The migration of effluent

carrying toxic levels of arsenic to the east is alarming. When Republic starts filling Cell 6 with garbage and takes advantage of the newly exposed hillside there, I'm hoping that there won't be a westward flow of escaped effluent into the aquafer that feeds my well. Its depth is roughly 250 feet (130 ft ASL) below the bottom of the closest corner of Cell 6.

I used to have a small pond on my place, on the east side of the landfill. Water from the pond fed a small livestock tank downhill from the pond. A few years back the pond dried up. It turns out that even before Cell 6 was excavated and the quarry blasting began, the landfill decided to divert surface and shallow water flow off the Butte away from my property without discussing it with me. They did call me prior to that and offered to buy that portion of my land because they said that there was a chance that my field would experience "brighter areas" caused by runoff from the landfill. So my intended use of the pond for a livestock reservoir has been permanently curtailed.

There's no easy solution for waste, but how about accountability? It's pretty clear to me that the practice of hiding violations in the past has turned into a standard operational procedure. It's unlikely that Republic can change its practices to be transparent with the County, and the county's contract representative (legal counsel) is not negotiating on behalf of the stakeholders in our county. Ken Eklund, past Chair of the Disposal Site Advisory Committee, has been closely following the connected issues of climate damage through methane and odor impacts, both of which come from excessive leaks of landfill gas. The letter he wrote (attached) to the Planning Official and her consultant, Winterbrook Planning, does an admirable job of summarizing several areas of concern that mirror my own and highlight a lack of accountability.

I see first-hand how the landfill disregard for environmental and local land use impacts my family. I encourage our county commissioners to visit a neighborhood downwind of the landfill and think about the long-term impact when they stand there breathing in the potpourri of nasty gasses. It might be several years before science solidly connects these gasses to human health issues – even if Republic is still a viable company at that time, the expected class-action lawsuit will certainly target Benton County. The short-term financial benefits might look nice now, but the future impact will destroy Benton County and that legacy will be tied to the people making decisions today. I vote no for any expansion and would prefer that landfill operations cease. It's time for another county to carry the load.

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Dear Petra,

I have some notes for you, as you consider the final Application by Republic Services in order to make an official determination about its completeness as Planning Official.

1. The missing 2024 EPA Inspection Report.

> A final report from the 2024 EPA inspection is not yet available, but Applicant is aware that the inspectors found exceedances while conducting surface emissions monitoring.
>
> – Jeff Condit, Burden-of-Proof-Revised-January-15-2025.pdf, p. 102

This final report of the 2024 EPA Inspection is available, and was available prior to January 15. (I received a copy third- or fourth-hand on January 14; more about this report and its implications here). **A discussion of this report is vital to an honest narrative about methane emissions at the landfill.** A reminder that when the EPA released its inspection of the landfill in 2022, Republic similarly did not relay its report to the County, but suppressed it instead for over a year.

In the 2024 report, as in the 2022 report, the inspectors narrate a process where they find an exceedance, document it, walk a short distance (often very short), find another exceedance, and so on. They are finding another exceedance three minutes later or fifteen feet apart. In each report they cover a remarkably small proportion of the landfill surface yet find a similar high level of exceedances. The photo documentation in the 2024 report shows visually obvious problems that have been problems for some time, i.e., tears in the tarp with weeds growing out of them that are three feet high. Most notably, the 2024 report includes an instance where *a gas well was uncapped entirely*.

The 2024 report casts doubt on the Applicant's "we were upgrading the gas collection system" narrative of their 2022 report, suggesting instead a narrative where the Applicant is in a perpetual state of system "upgrade" because of deferred maintenance. The "we were upgrading the gas collection system" account does not explain why every time that an entity that is not paid by Republic has pointed a methane detector at Coffin Butte Landfill in the last two years, that entity finds excessive landfill gas emissions :

- in June 2022, the first EPA inspection uncovers 61 exceedances, including several that flamed out/approached or exceeded the lower explosive level of methane;
- in July 2023, Carbon Mapper aerially surveyed the landfill for a ten-day period and mapped multiple landfill gas plumes from multiple sources, with a combined average leak rate of approximately 3.4 metric tons of landfill gas *per hour*;

- in July 2024, the EPA's return inspection again found multiple exceedances, including one with a methane concentration over 110,000 ppmv (the EPA threshold for reporting is 100 ppmv and for remediation is 500 ppmv);

- in September 2024, Carbon Mapper surveyed the landfill from space and found the landfill was still super-emitting methane with an average leak rate of approximately 1.8 metric tons of landfill gas per hour.

In no instance did a survey fail to find dozens of leaks, including leaks with high and very high methane concentrations (EPA) or leaks that are super-emitters many times over (Carbon Mapper). The narrative that these independent sources establish is one where Coffin Butte Landfill's condition has not been maintained properly and now landfill gas emissions are burgeoning out of control of the operator.

2. DEQ's notification of investigation, August 2024.

> In August 2024, members of Oregon's congressional delegation called for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to complete an investigation into concerns about the landfill. Also in August 2024, DEQ issued a formal warning to Coffin Butte for not complying with new requirements to reduce methane emissions from the state's landfills.
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> – Tracy Loew, Salem Statesman-Journal, January 10, 2025

Several DEQ officials accompanied the EPA inspectors on their 2024 inspection, and when the EPA prepared its report in August 2024, DEQ issued the formal warning highlighted above. **A discussion about this warning from DEQ is necessary for the application to be deemed complete.** The formal warning from DEQ calls into question the Applicant's narrative that it is in compliance with federal and state regulations; instead it seems that Applicant is in a recurring state of being out of compliance with regulations, and successful only at keeping one step ahead of being fined.

Side note: the Applicant's Environmental Manager, Ian Macnab, resigned in fall 2024, after the second EPA inspection, the formal warning from DEQ, the calls for the EPA to take action about the landfill's non-compliance, and the release of the Carbon Mapper quantifications of its methane emissions data.

3. The rapid decline in the efficiency of the Applicant's gas collection system.

> The US Environmental Protection Agency estimated in 2019 that Coffin Butte Landfill's methane collection system converts 57% of its methane to CO2, as compared to other Oregon landfills such as Columbia Ridge (85%) and Dry Creek (80%)[90] … Republic Services' notes that data it submitted to the EPA for inclusion in its 2021 greenhouse gas report estimates that Coffin Butte's landfill gas collection system has a collection efficiency of 91.2 percent.
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> — The BCTT report, page 669

In the January DSAC meeting (link), methane was on the agenda, a continuation of questioning begun in DSAC's December meeting. CBL's new Environmental Manager, Paul Koster read these notes (with landfill General Manager Bret Davis chiming in):

> [begins around 1:23:22]
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> PK: So, our last gas model was completed in 2023, and we'll be completing a new gas model spring of this year. So, looking at the gas model from '23, our efficiency was estimated about 70% for '24, and 73% in 2023. This is the total amount of methane generated 2024 – was about 3,923 to 4,100 scfm throughout the year, on average, every day, every minute. The loss in flow was largely due to – we did lose some flow between '23 and '24, was largely due to the commissioning of the new and closed flare construction project. So we had some changeover. We did lose a little bit on that.
>
> BD: Thank you for [adding]. We do a – we added wells, and so on. And so yeah, the system's not able to collect it a hundred percent. When we're adding wells or more collection.

So, to summarize, the landfill's gas collection system, which Republic reported was operating at 91.2% efficiency in 2021, by 2023 had declined to 73% and sagged further in 2024, to 70%, according to Republic's own gas modeling. **This is a critical consideration for any honest narrative about the landfill's methane emissions level**, as each decline of 1% in gas collection efficiency signifies a commensurate rise in fugitive emissions of landfill gas (by my calculations, each 1% decline in efficiency =

approximately 1.2 more metric tons of landfill gas released per day). The Applicant's representative, Paul Koster, stated this information became known to the Applicant in 2023, and was updated in 2024, and so it was well-known to the Applicant when they were preparing their application.

Note that the data is converging regarding this decline in gas collection efficiency: EPA inspectors have found it on the landfill surface, Carbon Mapper has surveyed and quantified it from the air and now from space. More data is imminently forthcoming, now that methane-detecting satellites pass over Coffin Butte Landfill several times a day. The decline in gas mitigation efforts requires a honest conversation about how low efficiency will go and what environmental impacts will be happening at that level.

4. Surging methane emissions equals surging landfill gas odors.

Methane is a pollutant and a potent greenhouse gas, and well deserves its focus in abatement efforts. The landfill gas from Coffin Butte Landfill is generally about 50% methane, 40% carbon dioxide, and 10% a mixture of many other gases, including odorifics and toxic gases such as aerosolized PFAS. So the unregulated releases of methane detected in EPA and Carbon Mapper surveys of Coffin Butte Landfill are evidence of increasing amounts of toxic and odorific gases being released by the landfill (the lead inspector for the EPA specifically mentions landfill odor in the 2024 report).

Odorific gases accompany methane, but they also occur in the pre-anaerobic phase of landfilling, and processes such as soil cover that oxidize methane do not necessarily reduce odorific gases.

The application should not be considered complete without a discussion of the relationship between the increasing amounts of landfill gas being released and the increasing number and duration of "dump day" odor events in the landfill region. As we've seen, over the past three years the Applicant has normalized a steep decline in its gas collection efficiency, so this discussion should include what measures if any the Applicant will implement to reverse the increasing odor impact upon other land uses in the region where they're occurring.

These are my first observations about the Applicant's revised application; I will likely be adding more. I'm happy to answer any questions, and hope this information will be of use to you and your consultants.

Respectfully,

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