

**From:** [Abigail Haberman](#)  
**To:** [Benton Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony opposing Coffin Butte landfill expansion  
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Date: [4/13/2025](#)

To: Benton County Commissioners

From: Abigail Haberman, M.D.  
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I live on one acre that is about 2.75 miles, as the crow flies, from Coffin Butte Landfill. There are days I cannot be outside because the stench from the landfill is too strong. Despite going back inside, I am being exposed inside my home and I can smell and even taste it inside some days. It is impossible to open the windows for “fresh air” at times and I cannot leave the windows open at night in case there is a temperature inversion or fog that creates the worst of “stench days.” I mistakenly took the dogs for a walk one “stench day” and my lungs burned afterwards.

I moved my office to my home a number of years ago for several reasons, one of which was to reduce my exposure to toxins in the building I was working in. But the ever-increasing emissions from the landfill have increasingly affected my health.

Republic Services has been dumping the leachate from the landfill into the Corvallis treatment plant, which empties into the Willamette. 7 miles downriver at Hyak Park, the water supply for Adair Village is pulled from the Willamette. I have many fruit trees and a large vegetable garden that I have maintained organic and chemical-free for the almost 20 years I have lived here. The leachate-contaminated water is what I have to use to water my garden. This water is used for drinking, cooking, showering, and watering gardens for the residents of Adair Village, the surrounding area, and everyone else downstream. I go to significant effort to obtain clean water from another source for drinking and cooking.

The Mid-Willamette Bird Alliance testimony, which has already been submitted to you and I will not repeat here, clearly outlines all of the code and legal violations that Benton County and Republic Services are already engaging in. Expansion of the landfill would just increase the already negative impact to human, animal, plant, and environmental health.

Albany, Oregon, was long known as the “armpit of Oregon” because of the stench emitted by the paper mills there. That stench was sulfur-based compounds, hydrogen sulfide in particular. It took community pressure and environmental regulations to get the mills closed. Benton County is already becoming the next “armpit of Oregon,” and would be increasingly so if county commissioners approve expansion of the landfill.

Hydrogen sulfide is one of the many gases that the landfill is producing. When hydrogen sulfide is combined with oxygen, it produces sulfur dioxide. When it is combined with water, it produces hydrosulfuric acid.

It has taken agencies, organizations, and news reports (Beyond Toxics, Carbon Mapper, the Statesman Journal, to name a few) outside of Benton County and Republic Services to identify all that the landfill is emitting and leaching and to a much greater extent than Republic Services was reporting. In addition to hydrogen sulfide, methane, carbon dioxide, heavy metals, forever chemicals, vinyl chloride, benzene, dioxins, nitrogen dioxide, fiberglass, and plastic particles are some of the known compounds. We don't want to be drinking or breathing any of this. They are toxic to the health of humans, wildlife, plants, waterways, air quality, and the environment.

A few years ago, there was a thriving heron rookery with many birds and nests on the south side of Coffin Butte Road. According to the Mid-Willamette Bird Alliance, this has been abandoned. I wonder why? Did Benton County leaders ever abide by the code of the county and have this area protected? Did they engage the state and federal fish and wildlife departments to protect this area?

The fire hazard of a methane-producing landfill speaks for itself. And expansion of the landfill would close Coffin Butte Road, one of the evacuation routes for residents in the Soap Creek area in the event of wildfire.

Benton County's motto on the website is, "At your service, *every day*." By approving expansion of the landfill, Benton County would only be serving the pocketbooks of Republic Services and not the residents of the county. If revenue produced from the landfill and paid by Republic Services to Benton County was that significant, why haven't residents of the county seen a decrease in property taxes? I've only seen ongoing and significant increases to my property tax bill. The leaders of Benton County would not be serving the residents of Benton County, particularly in the matters of health, environment, or finances, by approving the expansion of the landfill.

Benton County's website has the following, which appear contrary to the landfill expansion:

1. The Sustainable Material Management Plan was to look at environmental impacts of the landfill, including on climate change, air quality, and water quality. Where is this information? The non-profit organization Beyond Toxics has done air quality studies but nothing has been forthcoming from the county.
2. "Benton County strives to *reduce pollutants* entering our ground and surface waters to ensure our water is drinkable, fishable, and swimmable. The county has established programs, control measures, and permit processes that help protect water quality so everyone can safely enjoy this critical natural resource." Why is this not being applied to the landfill?
3. "By cutting down on food waste, buying and using less, or purchasing second-hand items, we can help keep Benton County cleaner, healthier and more sustainable." County residents can make and many are making all of those efforts and still suffer the health effects of an ever-burgeoning landfill because Republic Services is taking waste from *many* areas *outside* the county.
4. Benton County Trash Talks "spent countless hours" on an over 1,000 page report but, interestingly and despite all the public information collected, "did NOT opine on Republic Services' expected Coffin Butte expansion application." Then what was the point?
5. "Benton County is protecting and enhancing natural habitat for future generations of people

and wildlife.” Why is this not being applied to the landfill?

6. “Benton County’s goal is to reduce emissions from County operations by 50% of 2010 levels by the year 2030, and to be net-zero by 2050.” Again, why is this not being applied to the landfill? The county and its residents can make astounding efforts to be more environmentally friendly, only to have that be a drop in the bucket compared to the extraordinary amounts of greenhouse gases being emitted by the landfill.

7. “Benton County monitors the greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted by County operations.” Why is the county not monitoring the GHGs emitted by the landfill?

8. Under the Climate Action Plan accomplishments, “Benton County has made progress on these Climate Action Plan (CAP) objectives,” which includes “reducing landfilled waste.”

The county is not reducing landfilled waste. The county is enabling the significant increase of landfilled waste by allowing the landfill to take waste from multiple surrounding areas. The county is enabling the irresponsible behavior of others by allowing them to create all the garbage they want and conveniently dump it in our county’s “back yard” and allowing Republic Services to profit from it.

Instead, we should be doing the following:

1. Setting healthy boundaries, requiring surrounding areas to become responsible for their own waste. This would incentivize their reduction of waste because they would have no place to dump it.
2. Setting the trend for reducing waste in our own county, creating a “circular economy” like Finland, where no waste is created, rather than supporting a large corporation to profit from garbage created.
3. Holding corporations accountable to make everything recyclable, repairable, or compostable.
4. Leading the younger generation in these efforts rather than the younger generation leading us.
5. Creating a healthy community for the following generations to live in rather than creating a second “armpit of Oregon” in Corvallis instead of Albany.
6. Taking responsibility for the garbage we create rather than creating more superfund sites for the following generations to deal with.

Republic Services needs to be held accountable for the climate, health, and environmental impact and the air, land, and water pollution they are already creating and be prevented from causing further damage by expanding the landfill. Benton County commissioners are the leaders in the position to enforce this accountability.

The questions beg to be asked. Are Benton County leaders going to hold Republic Services accountable? Why would you approve the expansion of Coffin Butte Landfill despite all the opposition occurring, the issues being raised, and county codes being violated? Makes one wonder.