



Nick Fowler, Chair
Denton County Planning Commission

RE: Coffin Butte testimony

April 18, 2025

Dagmar Johnson, Fred Hughes
1455 NW Greenwood Place
Corvallis OR 97330

Benton County Planning Commission
Nick Fowler, Chair

Dear Mr. Fowler,



We are writing in opposition to the plan to expand the Coffin Butte Landfill, and urge the commissioners to **reject** this dangerously shortsighted proposal.

First of all, Valley Landfills has proven to be an untrustworthy partner in the past:

Dangerous under-reporting of methane pollution by Valley Landfills, despite 2023 satellite images that show some of the largest methane plumes in the Pacific Northwest emanating from Coffin Butte. In 2022 and in 2024, the EPA found levels of methane 20 times higher than EPA limits leaking from Coffin Butte, after Valley Landfills had reported only negligible leakage.

Other hazardous pollutants, including mercury, lead, industrial solvents, and “forever chemicals” (PFAs) leach out of the landfill and end up in the Willamette River. In 2021, 31 million gallons of leachate were pumped out of Coffin Butte and sent to wastewater treatment plants in Corvallis and Salem, where the leachate passed through treatment plants **not equipped to capture PFAs**, and then dumped into the Willamette River. Their leachate discharge permit has not been renewed, so where will they dispose of it next?

Where is the evidence that Valley Landfills will adhere to regulations in an expanded landfill?

Regarding your **Criteria 1**:

A landfill expansion will seriously interfere with the health and well-being of adjacent residents and public lands within a four-mile radius, where widespread drift of noxious chemicals is regularly detected by residents and recreationists.

The environmental impact of Coffin Butte extends well beyond the landfill itself. The smell of rotting garbage percolates across the northern part of Benton County along with a cocktail of toxic chemicals: vinyl chloride, ethyl benzene, toluene, benzene; that endanger public health and welfare. Expanding the Coffin Butte landfill will certainly expand the release of these toxins.

Criteria 2:

A landfill expansion will increase toxic pollution into the Willamette River, putting increased burden on public utilities by further fouling municipal sources of drinking water.

Expanding Benton County's burden of risk and liability will seriously hamstring the county's capacity to make future public improvements, facilities, utilities, or services available to the area and to the residents of Benton County.

Criteria 3:

Coffin Butte already receives one-third of all of Oregon's garbage, much of it in large loads of unsorted solid waste. Valley Landfills makes little effort to encourage recycling and waste reduction. An ever-larger landfill serves far-flung communities that choose to ignore the importance of waste reduction and leaves the residents of Benton County with ever increasing liability and cleanup costs.

An expansion of the landfill and the current status-quo approach to waste management violates the shift toward Sustainable Materials Management criteria endorsed by Benton County and the state of Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration,


Dagmar Johnson


Fred Hughes