

From: [Eliza Murphy](#)
To: [Benton Public Comment](#)
Subject: DENY: LU-24-027
Date: Saturday, April 26, 2025 12:36:02 PM

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April 25, 2025

To: Benton County Planning Commision

Re: LU-24-027, Coffin Butte Landfill Expansion Conditional Use Permit
Application

I am writing to urge you to oppose Republic Services request to expand Coffin Butte Landfill. I am a registered nurse with expertise in environmental health, specifically the health impacts of climate change and plastics pollution.

Landfills are the third largest source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change.

Landfills serve as a significant pathway for PFAS, "forever chemicals", to enter the air. So far, PFAS have escaped regulation, despite robust scientific studies that link these chemicals to cancer, birth defects, liver disease, fertility problems, changes in immune systems, and other health problems.

The bloated behemoth rising out of bucolic Soap Creek Valley spews explosive levels of methane gas, leaches a cocktail of synthetic chemicals and heavy metals, belches noxious odors that curtail outdoor activities and lures wildlife

to its exposed guts littered with macro and microplastics scientifically proven to cause harm is a DUMP.

A dump filled with unknown waste, including unspecified industrial waste. Coffin Butte is a dump that operates without sufficient oversight about what gets emptied onto its open face. Republic Services is not required to conduct audits or inspections for vehicle contents to ensure hazardous substances and prohibited materials don't get buried there, making it easy for people to dump anything there – like the bodies of murdered women exhumed from the dump.

Nothing about this disgusting eyesore, nor the trash-spiked roads Republic Service garbage trucks use to get quickly to the dump, fits into the *character of the area*.

Denying the expansion will help preserve the pastoral *character of the area*.

Republic Services is not a good neighbor. It has a history of operating without consideration of the rules and regulations developed to protect human health and the environment. It operates with flagrant disregard of its existing permits, like its failure to completely cover a day's trash.

During an unannounced 2022 EPA inspection to monitor surface methane emissions from the dump, the inspector shortened his inspection because he ran out of flags used to mark the exceedances. Of the 41 places where methane exceeded the legal limit of 500 parts-per-million, 21 spots were leaking methane over 10,000 ppm – enough to cause an explosion!

In the EPA inspector's written report, he noted eight exceedances at the leachate cleanouts. When asked about them, the Republic Services employee accompanying the inspector responded it is "not required" to monitor at those

sites.

Republic Services consistently does only the bare minimum, or only what is legally required by state and federal permits. But, evidence proves the company buries data, underreports its findings, and cheats on how it measures surface methane emissions by exploiting regulatory loopholes.

Approving this CUP request will remove the current daily cap on the volume of trash Republic Services accepts at Coffin Butte.

Once that cap goes away, the dump will accept unlimited amounts of garbage hauled to the site from outside of Benton County. Adding more trash from afar to an additional area of this rural valley will multiply the environmental damages and further compromise public health. And all of the liability will be foisted on Benton County and its residents. Its toxic legacy will be passed on for generations, a legacy that will come at great expense.

More garbage equals higher methane levels,, more leachate, more traffic, higher fire risk, more air, soil and water pollution – all of which adds up to an unacceptable loss of quality of life for area residents, and diminished property values.

A local winery already lost a potential buyer due to touring the place on a "dump day"-- one of those days when the odor from the dump is wretched enough to force people indoors.

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Republic Services continually behaves like a most unwelcome neighbor – dishonest, cavalier, sloppy, and it treats people, especially its engineers and

operators, as if we're disposable.

What evidence does the county have that Republic Services would comply with environmental regulations in the expansion area? Although tasked with addressing the CUP, I ask each of you to ask yourselves if Republic Services is trustworthy.

It's crucial to put the expansion request into a broader context. The ongoing gutting of federal environmental regulations, firing of federal workers, halting of scientific research, and the removal of language pertaining to climate change, emissions, social justice, etc. from federal databases, restructuring of federal agencies assigned to regulate greenhouse gases and pollutants and protect public health and the environment might prove beneficial Republic Services, the second largest waste management company in the US.

Considering the current federal trend toward deregulation, if Republic Services obtains permission to expand, there's no guarantee that greenhouse gas emissions or pollution will be regulated at levels capable of *supporting* life, let alone *sustain* it.

When Benton County residents made their values known in the county's published Comprehensive Plan, they made it clear people here value the "beauty and life-sustaining qualities" of the place they call home. They value its rural character. And they value "clean air, water and healthy natural systems and recognize their importance in sustaining the quality of life that residents value for themselves, their children and grandchildren."

Coffin Butte is a blight on the landscape. It harbors substances known to be hazardous to humans and wildlife – substances that don't stay put, substances

that migrate into the air, soil, water, the food supply, our bloodstream, brains, breasts, testicles, fallopian tubes, placentas, amniotic fluid, our offspring. Substances causing irreparable damage to the web of life.

Dirty clouds of toxic incinerator ash used to (partially) cover a day's trash blow off the open face of the dump are not life-sustaining. That dust contains deadly dioxins and other known contaminants.

Bubbles of methane gas inflate the plastic tarps, seeps out tears in the synthetic membrane, and escapes through all sorts of portals where excessive amounts of this potent greenhouse gas enters the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. The climate emergency is a threat to life as we know it. It is not life-sustaining for local inhabitants, nor for inhabitants worldwide.

Organic matter rotting in the wet, dark of the dump mixes with heavy metals, and tens of thousands of synthetic chemicals to form toxic leachate. Tanker trucks haul the contaminated liquid to waste water treatment facilities in Corvallis and Salem, neither of which was engineered to filter out or treat known carcinogens, endocrine disruptors and neurotoxins like PFAS, BPA, phthalates, flame retardants, and microplastics.

Instead, these "emerging pollutants" get disgorged directly into the Willamette River, a source of drinking water for downstream communities. A river home to treasured wildlife. A river where people recreate. A river that acts as a conveyor belt carrying plastic particles and a cocktail of synthetic chemicals out to the Pacific Ocean.

I strongly urge Benton County Planning Commissioners to carefully review the Benton County Environment and Natural Resources Advisory Committee's

vote to recommend the **denial** of the Conditional Use Permit requested by Republic Services to expand Coffin Butte Landfill released on April 16, 2025. ENRAC includes an abundance of facts to support its recommendation.

ENRAC voted 5-1 to deny Republic Service's CUP application.

I ask you to consider if expanding the dump will reflect or disregard the values of Benton County residents.

Does a massive dump that pollutes the air, water and soil fit with the prized *character of the area*?

I offer testimony based on scientific research, medical expertise, hours of interviews and public presentations, documentation of roadside litter, observations of the surrounding area, and visits to the summit of what remains of the actual butte to see the monster of a dump from a bird's eye view.

I can say for certain there is nothing about the plastic-wrapped mound of garbage, the flares from twin towers, the hobbled fences, the tube emptying leachate from hidden ponds into a tanker truck that fits the character of the lovely valley stretching south along the verdant forest blanketing Tampico Ridge.

I urge you to deny Republic Services request to expand the landfill. Thank you.

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