

DATE RECEIVED: 5/6/25
FROM: Mark Henkels
PHONE OR EMAIL:

Deborah Wolf, who was registered for this time slot, could not make it tonight. Deborah ceded me her time. I am Mark Henkels, Benton County resident and former professor of Public Policy and Administration at Western Oregon University. I am combining Deborah's time with my later reserved time. Recognizing the volume of public comments, I will keep mine to four minutes.

Testimony in Opposition to Coffin Butte Landfill Expansion:
Application file number: LU-24-027

Mark Henkels

Revised May 6, 2025

First, let me say that I appreciate your diligence to this review task. You clearly recognize that this decision will affect Benton County residents for many, many decades.

I helped research and write the context and history section of the Benton County Talks Trash document. I originally planned to emphasize how the BCTT makes clear that residents and experts have recognized for over fifty years that Coffin Butte is not suitable as a permanent landfill site. Even the "Chemeketa Agreement" making Coffin Butte a "regional landfill" envisioned it would close by the year 2000 and that only wastes from specific areas of Polk, Benton, and Linn County would go there. Coffin Butte was never considered ideal, and the idea of unlimited wastes being deposited defies all historical perspectives.

But these hearings have made me focus on three other specific points. First, as members of the Planning Commission have suggested, we need to think broadly when considering the area affected by the dump, especially regarding how the proposed use affects the character of the area. I live seven miles away and on the other side of Logsden Ridge, but still sometimes can smell the facility. I also drive up the Independence Road and Highway 99 very frequently and am appalled by the

litter from landfill traffic. I have seen papers float out of Republic Trucks driving on 99W.

The “character” of the area also requires more attention. On April 29th, the Planning Department said that they did not consider the expansion’s visual impact a problem since there is a landfill there already. The landfill’s visibility and noise have changed greatly since the cap rose over 1 million tons and as the mountain grew larger, truly harming the experience of visitors to E.E. Wilson and anyone driving by or living in the area. Still, the area has many lovely characteristics that a second mountain of trash and the extension and increase of industrial activities will destroy. This area provides highly valuable agricultural, recreational, and wildlife resources. Expansion, and the lifting of annual waste limits, guarantee that the quality of this area will be harmed and more deeply threatened for decades more.

Finally, Benton County should not rely on any added “conditions of approval” to mitigate problems and risks. Conditions of Approval are unlikely to be consistently enforced and probably would not address the deeper problems and risks anyway.

Consider how the methane leaks found by the EPA and state environmental inspectors just recently far exceeded Republic Services’s self-reported leaks. No government bodies consistently monitor and enforce landfill regulations, and we should not rely on Republic Services or its contractors for this reporting. The expansion will open large surfaces above and below the wastes for all time. Leaks in the linings will create health, fire, hydrological, and climate change risks.

As noted in my written submission, a USGS publication notes that the EPA has concluded that all landfills eventually will leak into the environment.(
<https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/fs-040-03/pdf/fs-040-03.pdf>).

Even the existing operation violates the character of the area and the environmental values stated in our County codes. It’s time to set limits.

Thank you for your attention.