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Melissa Hartley

Testimony in opposition to expansion of Benton County, Oregon landfill  
Public Hearing, May 8, 2025

This is a revision of testimony that I sent via email on May 6. However, it was not confirmed that testimony was actually accepted, so I have revised that testimony with some additional information, and I am submitting this testimony document for the May 8 hearing.

I grew up in the south Salem area, and settled in Corvallis in 1982. My opinion based on experience of the area, that the Coffin Butte Landfill in Benton County landfill should not be granted approval to expand. Here are some of my reasons:

- \* Proximity of toxic pollutants in the landfill to the Luckiamute State Natural Area (4 miles) and the Willamette Greenway. Sensitive threatened wildlife in the area such as the Western Pond Turtle, and downstream life are at risk from airborne toxicants, ground contaminants, and toxic leachate that is eventually released into the Willamette River after partial treatment at the Corvallis water treatment facility.

- \* Leachate treatment needs improvement.

- \* Transport of toxic leachate in tanker trucks on busy highway 99 is a potential hazard.

- \* Many adverse health impacts to life in the area come from the landfill pollutants. For myself for example, I have genetic variants that reduce my ability to detoxify toxicants. Avoidance of toxic chemicals is very important to my health. An exposure to fumes such as natural gas, cleaning agents, fragrances, diesel and gas fumes, paint, pesticides, and chemicals such as bleach and ammonia, can cause my throat to close, ears ring loudly, migraine headaches, exhaustion, vertigo and disturbed vision, and can take a week to recuperate.

- \* Regulations pertaining to monitoring pollution from the landfill are not enforced.

- \* Landfill extension site is of great value for recreation, tourism, housing, and conservation. Property values within smelling distance of the landfill are negatively impacted– a larger landfill would be worse.

\* Site is close to population centers (Adair and Corvallis) and residences, which are at risk for disease and as well as property value loss from air and ground pollutants.

\* Better waste management practices and a waste management plan are needed before investing in a new landfill.

\* Stench from the landfill is general to the area and is unacceptable.

Coffin Butte Landfill accepts garbage from nearly two dozen Oregon counties. Eighty-eight percent of materials for the landfill are transported from distant communities, a large expenditure of fuels which also contributes to pollution. There are likely better sites for a landfill. The present site was selected when the population of the area had many fewer residents. It is time for other areas to do their share and take responsibility for their own waste.

We often travel near the landfill, the quickest way from our house in Corvallis to the Willamette River Greenway four miles east of the landfill. You can't miss it the landfill. It is a huge mountain next to Highway 99. The dump is usually busy with large garbage trucks coming and going during the day from the steaming mountain of garbage on Coffin Butte Road pulling onto or across Highway 99. Smaller trucks also go back and forth to the dump, such as contractors and community members.

As we turn east off 99 toward the Willamette River on Camp Adair Road, I stop holding my breath to avoid the airborne toxic particles. The dump stinks.

Garbage is strewn on both sides of Camp Adair road as we travel east toward the Luckiamute Landing State Natural Area on Buena Vista Road. Somewhat less garbage is on the sides of Springhill Road on our route. The garbage doesn't look like normal fast food litter, it looks like things that were destined for the dump. I have seen garbage fly off trucks.

It is a beautiful area of rolling hills and flat farms if you don't look in the direction of the dump. The dump's plastic covered mountain is incongruous with the natural beauty of the area, and it is inappropriate use of this area to have this blight on the landscape. Whenever I see the landfill, I wonder why anyone ever thought that burying toxics and garbage in such a beautiful valley so near human habitations and wells was an acceptable idea. It was expedient during WWII to dump toxic materials in that area. We can do better now.

When we reach the Luckiamute Landing State Natural Area, the dump is still in view across the valley's fields and forests to the west. The landfill's mountain of garbage is visible for miles and sends up plumes of vapor. Sometimes The state natural area includes the confluence of the Luckiamute, Willamette, and Santiam Rivers. There are hiking trails, and

the north section of the area has been restored to native flora. The south section has lakes and is protected habitat for the Western Pond Turtle, which is listed as sensitive/critical in Oregon, and endangered in Washington.

This area should be kept free of toxic pollution, but the Willamette River here is downstream from where toxic effluent, inadequately treated by the City of Corvallis, is released into the river. Besides Corvallis, Wilsonville and Sherwood also get their drinking water from the Willamette after the toxic dump liquid is released into it, and other downstream Willamette Valley counties plan to use the Willamette's water to provide drinking water for the Willamette Valley Water Supply System.

Driving back from hiking in the Luckiamute State Natural Area, where I often photograph, usually requires waiting at the intersection of Coffin Butte Road and Highway 99. While we wait, we observe the landfill and highway traffic, looking for a break in traffic to get onto 99 to Corvallis. The vast steaming mountain is partially covered with black plastic tarps, with roads and trucks crossing the surface. This dystopian view to the west is out of character in the otherwise beautiful landscape. It is obvious that this is not the best use of this land.

Still waiting at the intersection with highway 99, large tanker trucks full of toxic liquid leachate from the dump also pull out of the Coffin Butte Road onto the highway. The tankers are loaded with liquid toxic effluent bound for the Corvallis water treatment plant, which is not equipped to treat it properly, but they make an attempt before it is released into the Willamette. This toxic liquid travels downstream, eventually to the Pacific Ocean, poisoning everything it comes into contact with to some extent: the fish we eat, the crops grown, the myriad life forms living downstream: the herons, red winged blackbirds, pheasant, beaver, bright yellow backed garter snakes, deer, bears, red racers, blue skinks, newts, hawks, otters, whales, and others.

We need state of the art methods to prevent and deal with waste, regulations not to produce toxic products in the first place, and to render any remaining toxic substances harmless before we are done with them.

We do not want other people's waste in Benton County. We don't want our own waste to persist in the environment in Benton County. Oregon is a special place that should not be wasted. Benton County's has done more than its share to take garbage into its landfill. It's time that other localities take care of their waste.

I agree with Ken Ecklund's testimony.

Thank you.

Melissa Hartley  
2535 NW Pendleton Place

Corvallis, OR 97330

[hartley\\_me@yahoo.com](mailto:hartley_me@yahoo.com)

541 740-6203