

From: [Lang, Jackie](#)
To: [Benton Public Comment](#)
Subject: From WM (formerly Waste Management): LU-24-027 - proposed expansion of Coffin Butte Landfill
Date: Thursday, May 8, 2025 4:59:30 PM
Attachments: [WM Benton County Letter Final 2025.5.8 .pdf](#)
[WM Peace of Mind for Benton County 2025.5.8.pdf](#)
Importance: High

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Please accept the two attachments from WM regarding LU-24-027 – the proposed expansion of Coffin Butte Landfill.

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Learn about WM's innovative research and pilot programs to reduce waste and improve recycling at innovation.wmnorthwest.com





WM Portland
7227 NE 55th Avenue
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May 8, 2025

Benton County Commissioners Nancy Wyse, Pat Malone and Gabe Shepard
Benton County Planning Commission
Benton County Solid Waste Division

Dear Benton County Commissioners, Planning Commission Members and Solid Waste Staff:

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information as you contemplate Benton County's long-term needs related to solid waste.

By way of introduction, WM is North America's leading provider of comprehensive environmental solutions and the largest recycler in North America. We operate the largest landfill network and lead the industry in transporting waste by rail. WM also manages the most extensive network of landfill gas-to-energy plants in North America and currently owns or hosts more than 20 renewable natural gas (RNG) facilities that convert landfill gas into pipeline-quality RNG. We have served Oregon communities, from Portland to Klamath Falls, for four decades with a track record of safety leadership, operational excellence, environmental compliance and world-class logistics expertise.

We are reaching out now to encourage you to consider a new solid waste solution that is environmentally sound, logistically smart and economically feasible for Benton County.

As we have discussed with Benton County staff, WM is prepared to offer a long-term, regional solution that uses rail to transport waste from the Mid-Willamette Valley to WM's state-of-the-art landfill in Gilliam County.

Three elements make this a workable solution for Benton County -- the availability of the intermodal site at Millersburg, WM's rail expertise and WM's state-of-the-art landfill in Gilliam County:

1. **MID-WILLAMETTE VALLEY INTERMODAL CENTER:** This infrastructure is readily available and ideally suited for waste transport by WM and Union Pacific Railroad. In fact, Union Pacific is already our rail partner for transporting waste to WM's landfill in Gilliam County. Because WM and Union Pacific have worked together for three decades, we could be operational at this site in six to nine months after agreements are in place.
2. **WM'S RAIL EXPERTISE:** No company transports more waste by rail than WM. Rail service is part of WM's logistics expertise.
 - Consider a unit train going directly from Millersburg to Gilliam County. No trucks traveling hundreds of miles on I-5 or I-84. No stops, detours or complicated rail switches along the way. Safety, reliability and a far smaller carbon footprint than trucking!

- WM has transported Seattle's waste by rail for more than three decades -- from Seattle to Columbia Ridge Landfill. It's an arrangement that has made sense because it is cost effective for the city and it delivers a smaller carbon footprint compared to trucking.

3. WM'S COLUMBIA RIDGE LANDFILL: Columbia Ridge is a leader in environmental compliance and renewable energy. It is permitted and operating in good standing as a Subtitle D landfill. The facility has capacity for more than 120 years and has earned strong community support from neighbors and community leaders.

- For Benton County, Columbia Ridge offers peace of mind through environmental performance. Columbia Ridge's dry climate, unique geology and superior environmental protection systems set it apart from other landfills. With leachate, as an example, other landfills can struggle with the cost and logistics of transporting leachate for processing. In Gilliam County, where rainfall averages nine inches a year, Columbia Ridge generates far less leachate than landfills in other parts of the state. This allows WM to manage the leachate onsite – with no discharge to a public waterway or a treatment facility.
- Columbia Ridge uses landfill gas to generate renewable energy to power homes and businesses.

For your consideration, we have included an attachment that overviews this solution. We are grateful for the opportunity to share this information and look forward to discussing how WM may be of service to the citizens and businesses in Benton County.

Most sincerely,



Rob Jones
Area Director - Pacific Northwest
WM Transportation and Recycling Operations



Dave Rettell
Area Director – Pacific Northwest
WM Disposal Operations and Environmental Protection



Peace of Mind for Benton County

Questions about Coffin Butte's future create uncertainties for Benton County.

How will the county manage its waste in the decades ahead?

The county needs a plan that is economical, safe for the environment and reliable— a long-term plan that comes with peace of mind.

WM is equipped to provide this long-term solution and peace of mind for Benton County.

WM's solution for Benton County is economical, environmentally sound and logistically smart. In fact, the logistics in the WM plan are a game-changer because of WM's rail expertise.

Logistics Expertise

No company transports more waste by rail than WM. Rail service is part of our logistics expertise at WM.

For Benton County, WM would rail waste from the Mid-Willamette Valley Intermodal Center to Columbia Ridge, WM's state-of-the-art landfill in Gilliam County.

WM's solution would use existing infrastructure at Millersburg and WM's rail expertise to provide an entirely new and logistically smart solution. No trucks traveling hundreds of miles on I-5!

Benton County would also benefit in terms of safety and reliability of a unit train going directly to Columbia Ridge. No stops, detours or complicated switches along the way.



Mid-Willamette Valley
Intermodal Center

The new intermodal facility at Millersburg is ideally located for reloading Benton County's waste. The new 65-acre development includes a 140,000 square foot container yard and 16,500 linear feet of rail track. It's everything WM and Benton County need!

mvic-intermodal.com



Columbia Ridge Rail Yard

Columbia Ridge is the only regional landfill with rail capability on the landfill property. This keeps trucks off public roads, offering maximum safety, versatility and efficiency. The newly enlarged rail yard at Columbia Ridge stretches 40,000 linear feet and includes six switch lanes.

wmnorthwest.com/landfill/columbiaridge

Environmental Leadership, Community Support and Capacity

Columbia Ridge Landfill is a top performer for environmental protection and innovation — and it has capacity for another 120 years. For Benton County, disposal at Columbia Ridge would come with peace of mind.

No more concerns about environmental compliance.

- Columbia Ridge's dry climate and unique geology set it apart from other landfills. This translates to superior environmental performance for leachate management. With an average rainfall of only nine inches/year, the site generates far less leachate than landfills in other parts of the state. This allows WM to manage the leachate onsite simply and safely with no discharge to a public waterway or a public treatment facility.
- Columbia Ridge is a modern landfill engineered with overlapping environmental protection systems that meet or exceed rigorous state and federal regulations and are subject to highly regulated monitoring and reporting requirements. WM's commitment is 100% environmental compliance, and we use sophisticated monitoring protocols to verify that environmental systems are operating properly.

No more concerns about impacts to landfill neighbors.

- Columbia Ridge is surrounded by a 10,000-acre buffer that WM owns and manages for farming and ranching. The spacious buffer provides "elbow room," distancing truck traffic and operations from neighbors.
- WM has a 30-year track record as an engaged and valued community member in Gilliam County.

Economics

For Benton County, long-term economic benefits are possible by signing in 2025 as a priority rail customer.

Imagine the peace of mind that would come with a reliable, long-term solution that works economically—for Benton County and the entire Mid-Willamette Valley! Leaders from across the region have championed the Mid-Willamette Valley Intermodal Center for years. A long-term agreement with WM would resonate throughout the region, providing a stable revenue stream and stimulating visibility for additional economic development.

Innovation: renewable energy and drones at Columbia Ridge

Columbia Ridge is also an innovation leader—a platform for renewable energy and next-generation drone technology. We use landfill gas to power homes and businesses, and we use drones to capture real-time data to ensure safe and complaint operations.



Seattle's Success Story

WM has transported Seattle's waste by rail for more than 30 years—from Seattle to WM's Columbia Ridge Landfill. It's an arrangement that has made sense because it is cost effective and it delivers a smaller carbon footprint compared to trucking.

WM transports Seattle's waste on the Union Pacific Railroad, which can move a ton of freight 454 miles on a single gallon of fuel. That's four times more fuel efficient than trucks. Other benefits: lower GHG emissions and no trucks adding to highway congestion!

Where does Seattle's garbage go?

Watch the first two minutes of this video to see how WM transports and manages Seattle's waste.

tinyurl.com/seattlewastebyrail ▶

Learn more!

sustainability.wm.com ▶

WasteByRail.com ▶

Contact

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