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Attachments: [D. Mellinger testimony.pdf](#)

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My name is David Mellinger, 3798 NW Jameson Dr., Corvallis, OR 97330. Attached please find my testimony about the Coffin Butte Landfill expansion request. Please deny this request. Thank you.

David Mellinger, 3798 NW Jameson Dr, Corvallis; Co-president of Mid-Willamette Bird Alliance (MWBA; formerly Audubon Society of Corvallis)

I would like to address the character of the area, which includes its wildlife. Not long after I moved to this area in 1999, I went out to Coffin Butte to see the Great Blue Heron rookery there. (A rookery is a collection of nests, and during nesting season it's typically a busy sight, with birds flying in and out, guarding the nests, tending to chicks, etc.) The rookery was well-known in the birding community, and sure enough it was an impressive sight to see all those huge, gangly birds nesting up in the trees there. The herons aren't there anymore; apparently they left in 2022. The Republic Services wildlife person pointed out in testimony that Bald Eagles were seen by the nests, giving the impression that the herons were pushed out by the eagles. But Bald Eagles have always been present in the area; I saw them by the landfill when I went there way back in the early 2000's, and the herons co-existed with them for decades. Furthermore, Great Blue Herons are known to nest in association with Bald Eagles.¹ The thing that did change in 2022, per MWBA members, was that Republic Services started some activities on the south side of Coffin Butte Road near the rookery. It is my understanding they weren't supposed to do this under their existing permit, but I'm no expert on the legalities here. Herons *are* responsive to human disturbance², and they soon left, possibly because of this disturbance. The eagles seen at their now-former nests may have been just trying to find things left by the departed herons. The herons are still in the area, nesting on the east side of Hwy. 99W, and would probably re-occupy their former rookery if the disturbance stopped, but that's exactly the opposite of what the proposed expansion would do.

Also I would like to talk about what "nearby" means in the context of a large dump like Coffin Butte. Republic Services drew a rectangle on a map and said that that was the "nearby" area for the dump. That rectangle was less than 10 miles in width, so the dump in the center is less than 5 miles from the edge of this rectangle.

We've heard about the toxins present in both the airborne plume and the leachate, including PFAS, the so-called forever chemicals that, in the words of the EPA, "have been linked to immune, cardiovascular, liver, and developmental [health effects](#) such as decreased fertility or low birth weight, as well as an increased risk of certain cancers."³ The dump expansion will also have lead, cadmium, arsenic, and other toxic elements because while some people are diligent about recycling things correctly, plenty of other people are not, and just toss electronics, batteries, and so on into their trash. These substances are harmful in really, really minute amounts, so we should pay attention to where they're going.

The airborne plume with its PFAS and other toxins will extend for many miles in whatever direction the wind is blowing, far beyond the less-than-5 mile distance of the rectangle Republic Services considered “nearby”.

In addition, the leachate from the dump will get into groundwater once the dump liner starts to leak, which it will eventually do, and will also get into the Willamette River because there is no effective way to get the toxins out of it. Trucking it to Corvallis’s treatment plant isn’t going to solve this problem, since that plant has no special means to clean leachate. So “nearby” should include the Willamette River from the Corvallis treatment plant all the way downstream to the Columbia and thence to the ocean, because that’s where the toxins from this dump will go.

Approving the landfill expansion will change the character of the area, by changing the wildlife that can live both at Coffin Butte and in nearby places over a very large area downwind and downstream. Please deny this request for expansion.

Footnotes

- 1 “[P]hotographs taken by [Bryan] Watts during the Center for Conservation Biology survey reveal an anomaly: great blues and bald eagles nesting in the same trees.... Sometimes a great blue heron colony forms around an eagle nest, and sometimes an eagle moves into a great blue colony.” William and Mary News Archive (2014) “Blue herons are nesting among the bald eagles, but why?” Avail. at <https://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2014/blue-herons-are-nesting-among-the-bald-eagles,-but-why123.php> .
- 2 “Heron species tend to desert nests and entire rookeries if repeatedly disturbed during the periods of pair formation, nest construction, or egg laying.” Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (2002) “Guidelines for protection & mitigation of impacts to Great Blue Heron rookeries in Vermont.” Avail. at http://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Conserve/RegulatoryReview/Guidelines/Guidelines_for_Protection_and_Mitigation_of_Impacts_to_Great_Blue_Heron_Rookeries_in_VT.pdf .
- 3 Environmental Protection Agency (2024) “*National Rivers and Streams Assessment: The Third Collaborative Survey [2018-19]*”. (The survey was done in 2018-19 but results from it weren’t published until 2023, then updated in 2024.) Avail. at <https://riverstreamassessment.epa.gov/webreport/> .