

From: [Mark Henkels](#)
To: [Benton Public Comment](#)
Cc: [Mark Henkels](#)
Subject: LU-24-027: New Testimony, comparison to Eastern Oregon landfill
Date: Thursday, May 22, 2025 7:03:22 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: Mark Henkels, 7540 NE Pettibone Drive, Corvallis, OR 97330
<mphcorvallis@gmail.com> May 22, 2025

Planning Commission:

Thank you for your tremendous commitment to a proper review of Republic Services' Coffin Butte expansion request. Your efforts are truly admirable.

I hope that the number and quality of the arguments against the expansion convince you to make the judgement that the expansion would greatly harm the character of the area and will greatly impose burdens on those who live, recreate, and farm or work in the County. I am glad such thoughtful people have the legal power to stop this.

I have pasted below a 2023 article from The Other Oregon regarding Gilliam County's Columbia Ridge Landfill. There are positive alternatives to extending the Coffin Butte industrial facility far past what was envisioned for the site over its history. More importantly, this article shows why other places are more suitable.

I think two specific points really demonstrate how Coffin Buttes truly contrasts with Columbia Ridge.

First, *"A 10,000-acre buffer surrounds the site 10 miles south of Arlington, preserved for wildlife habitat, wheat farming, cattle ranching and wind turbines."*

People live, recreate, and even hold 4H events and animal training clinics right next to Coffin Butte. And the odors and blowing waste affect them directly.

Second, *"Dave Rettell, area director of disposal operations for Waste Management, said Columbia Ridge Landfill has the capacity to continue running for another 120 years based on volume projections from customers, including Metro. Eastern Oregon is a good place for the landfill, Rettell said, in part because of its drier weather to protect against contaminants seeping into groundwater."*

"You are in a better environment to put a landfill on the east side of the Cascades," he said."

Consider the leachate, runoff and long-term hydrology of Coffin Butte compared to a site that has no local wells, does not border a significant recreational wetland area, and receives one fourth the rainfall.

Thanks again for your attention.

Mark Henkels, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor, Public Policy and Administration
Western Oregon University

Cash for trash: Columbia Ridge Landfill benefits Gilliam County

Published 7:00 am Friday, December 22, 2023 By
GEORGE PLAVEN

The Other Oregon



View of the green energy plant at Columbia Ridge Landfill in Gilliam County. This facility harnesses landfill gas to generate 12.8 megawatts of renewable electricity. The landfill is also surrounded by a 10,000-acre buffer preserved for wildlife habitat, wheat farming, cattle ranching and wind turbines.

The year was 1988, and residents of rural Gilliam County had an important decision to make.

Would they become the site of a new dump where Portland sends its trash?

The city had previously disposed of its garbage in the St. Johns Landfill near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers, but that facility was nearing capacity. Building a new landfill elsewhere in the metro area was proving unpopular, so officials had to consider other alternatives.

Waste Management already operated one hazardous waste dump south of Arlington, 137 miles east of Portland up the Columbia River Gorge. The company proposed building a second landfill to take Portland's trash, which would also create new jobs and revenue for Gilliam County — population 2,005.

Then-county judge Laura Pryor decided to take the idea to her neighbors and constituents, meeting them at coffee shops, backyard barbecues and in their homes. They ultimately decided it was a good thing, with some even wearing pins to public meetings that read "Portland's trash is Gilliam County's cash."

Columbia Ridge Landfill opened in 1990, and has gone on to become the county's largest employer.

"I think it's a really good example of a symbiotic relationship between two communities that, from an outsider, couldn't be more different," said Elizabeth Farrar Campbell, the current

county judge, who was just 10 or 11 years old when the partnership began.

‘A better environment’

Today, Columbia Ridge Landfill receives about 500,000 tons of garbage every year from Metro, the regional government entity that regulates Portland’s trash disposal.

The 12,000-acre landfill also takes trash from the city of Seattle and Kitsap and Skagit counties in Washington. A 10,000-acre buffer surrounds the site 10 miles south of Arlington, preserved for wildlife habitat, wheat farming, cattle ranching and wind turbines.

Metro renewed its 10-year contract with Waste Management in 2020 to haul garbage to Columbia Ridge, with options for two, five-year extensions.

“Columbia Ridge in Gilliam County plays an important role in our region’s solid waste system, and is an important part of rural Oregon’s economy,” said Lynn Peterson, Metro Council president. “I’m proud that we’re an active partner in rural Oregon’s economy.”

Dave Rettell, area director of disposal operations for Waste Management, said Columbia Ridge Landfill has the capacity to continue running for another 120 years based on volume projections from customers, including Metro.

Eastern Oregon is a good place for the landfill, Rettell said, in part because of its drier weather to protect against contaminants seeping into groundwater.

“You are in a better environment to put a landfill on the east side of the Cascades,” he said.

The facility is also fitted with modern environmental protections, including a double liner system to capture any leaching and run the water into nearby ponds to evaporate. In 2009, Columbia Ridge began capturing landfill gas from decaying garbage on the site which it uses to generate 12.8 megawatts of renewable electricity, or enough for 12,500 homes.

Waste Management plans to install technology at the landfill to turn that biogas — largely methane — into pipeline-quality renewable natural gas, or RNG. When Columbia Ridge injects RNG into the interstate pipeline system, the company will generate credits under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Renewable Fuel Standard. Participating in the EPA program allows Waste Management to allocate RNG to its natural gas-powered trucks in Oregon, Washington and California.

RNG emits less greenhouse gases than fossil fuels, providing cleaner air for communities, Rettell said.

That facility is expected to break ground in 2024 and come online in 2025.

Economic benefits

Farrar Campbell said the landfill has been a valuable economic engine for the county.

Not only does it provide 140 family-wage jobs, but generates millions of dollars in annual host fees that go toward road maintenance, workforce housing, Main Street revitalization projects, access to early childhood education and a Homestead Rebate Program for local homeowners.

Between Waste Management and several large wind farms, Farrar Campbell said the county is able to punch above its weight providing services.

“It’s really been a tremendous blessing for us,” she said. “We would have a pretty modest tax base without those industries here.”

Waste Management paid \$1.5 million to the county in host fees in 2022. Beyond that, the company has contributed \$8,000 per year toward college scholarships for high school students in Arlington and Condon, and \$25,000 per year to the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, which represents Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler counties.

Jackie Lang, a company spokeswoman, said Columbia Ridge stands as an example of one of the state's most successful urban-rural bridges.

Farrar Campbell agreed, saying she believes the landfill will continue to be a staple of the county for decades to come.

"We are open for business, and want to keep hosting Waste Management," she said. "They are really critical to the work we're doing in Gilliam County." George Plaven is a reporter for the Capital Press in Salem.

Read more at: <https://theotheroregon.com/2023/12/22/cash-for-trash-columbia-ridge-landfill-benefits-gilliam-county/>