

ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

Coffin Butte operator sets stage for second dump expansion attempt

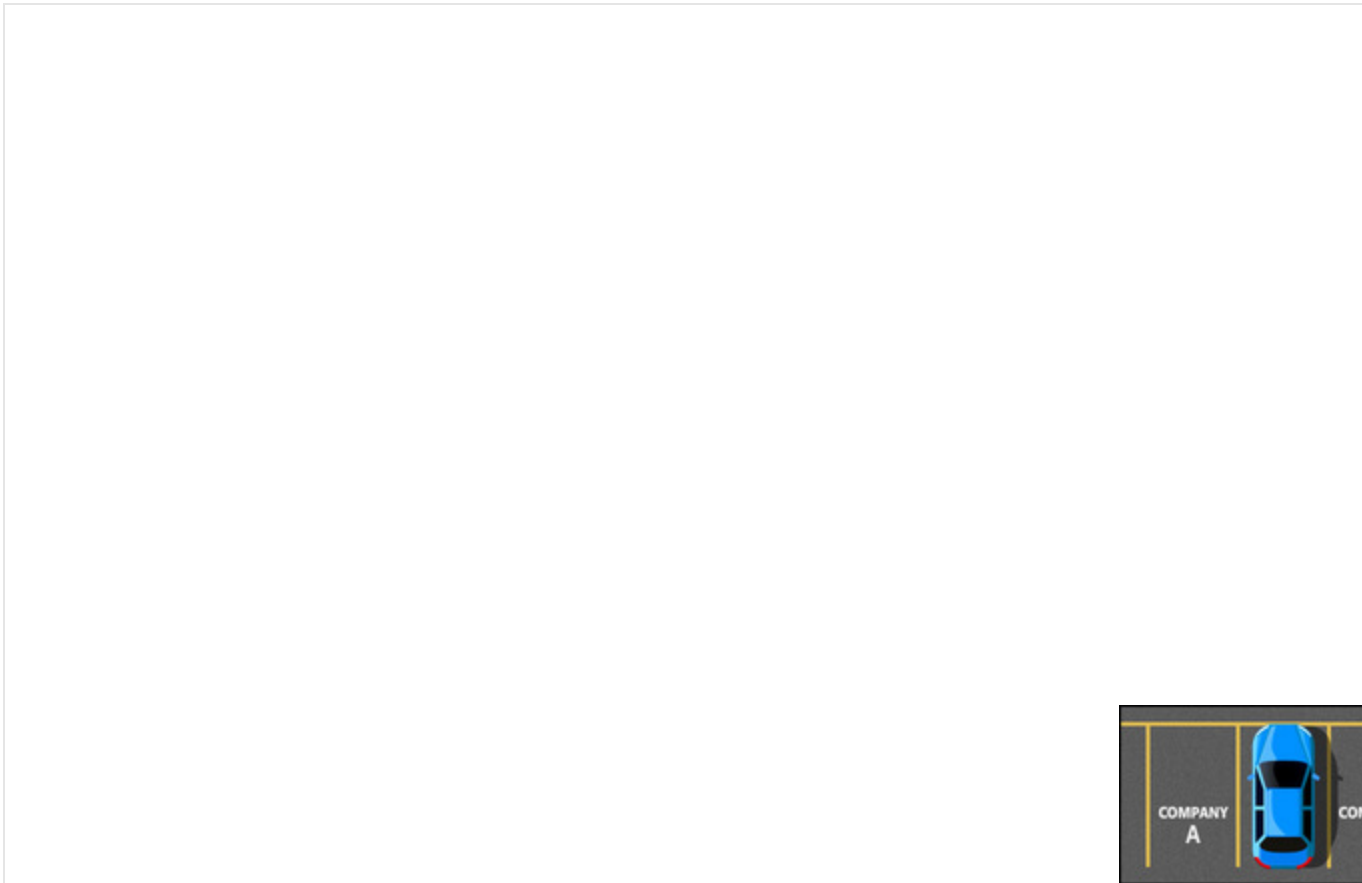


Alex Powers

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Coffin Butte Landfill’s owner and operator is ready to try again to expand the dump near Adair Village after withdrawing its first attempt in 2022 in response to a **denial from the Benton County Planning Commission**.

This month, Republic Services took the first steps to seek permission from Benton County leaders to expand the landfill's capacity, announcing a series of public meetings.





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"During these events, we will listen, whenever possible respond to community questions, and most importantly, consider feedback during this pre-application phase," Republic officials said in its notice to the community.

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It's not clear yet how the new application will differ from the previous one.



Take 1

That application sought a permit to store trash on the opposite side of Coffin Butte Road. Phoenix-based Republic Services withdrew those plans in 2022 after the county Planning Commission denied the permit.

Republic **had sought to appeal the commission's decision** before dropping the challenge and **pulling its application**, opting to start anew.

County officials **long anticipated the follow-up application**.


The Benton County Board of Commissioners empaneled a task force soon after the first, failed expansion to determine what the local government's trash policy should look like ahead of Republic's next attempt.



The owner and operator of the Coffin Butte Landfill in Benton County is taking the beginning steps toward a formal application to expand the dump, its second attempt in the 2020s.

Jess Hume-Pantuso, Mid-Valley Media (File 2023)

workgroup members who live near the dump.

Then the workgroup found **Benton County had not adhered to its own policies** in interacting with the private company franchised to haul trash and intern it north of Corvallis. 

It was Benton County's practice to investigate the dump only upon complaint, but didn't make the complaint process readily available to the public, the group found.

The workgroup published the findings and recommendations in a 1,000-plus-page report, including the framework for **a cradle-to-grave material handling plan** meant to reduce waste across the region even before it's put on a truck and sent to the dump.

Concerns

Joel Geier, a hydro-geologist dismissed from the taskforce, was among those who presented concerns in April to a crowd in Adair Village.

Eugene-based environmental justice advocate Beyond Toxics at that meeting said Coffin Butte is **generating more methane than expected**. A 2022 report by the Environmental Protection Agency revealed the level of methane gas emissions at Coffin Butte is not only very concerning, but contradicts figures reported by the landfill operator.

Another environmental concern landfill critics air is that no part of the dump application process calls for testing groundwater to determine the extent of leakage from Coffin Butte, where massive plastic liners are supposed to stop trash-imbued runoff, called leachate, from flowing underground.

The landfill **ships leachate to Corvallis** for disposal in the city's wastewater treatment plant.

Capacity

The company has buried around the dump’s annual intake limit of 1.1 million tons of trash and spokespeople say Coffin Butte will reach capacity by 2026 — figures that local advocates dispute.



Coffin Butte accepts trash from dozens of counties, and the vast majority of what’s buried in Benton County comes from Marion and Yamhill counties and the Portland metropolitan area. About 11% — around 115,000 tons — came from Benton County in 2021, with another about 143,000 tons from Linn County.

Trash plans across a broad swath of the Pacific Northwest also name Coffin Butte as a backup dump, including in other states.

If you go

Coffin Butte Landfill will respond to questions and hear feedback from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, June 27, in the CH2M Hill Alumni Center at Oregon State University, 725 SW 26th St.

It will hold a second meeting from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Friday, June 28, in the Philomath City Council chambers at City Hall, 980 Applegate St.

Landfill operators will hold **a virtual meeting** from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 9, on BigMarker, a web-based seminar platform. Registration is available at the BigMarker website or at **coffinbutte@republicservices.com**.

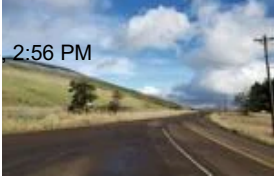
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