



# 12 REASONS TO OPPOSE EXPANDING COFFIN BUTTE

## LEACHATE FROM COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL CONTAMINATES SURROUNDING SOIL AND GROUNDWATER

“Leachate” is garbage juice, created when rainwater percolates through the landfill. Leachate thus picks up whatever contaminants are in the garbage, which at Coffin Butte Landfill includes heavy metals, carcinogenic industrial solvents such as TCE (trichloroethylene), and the “forever chemicals” also known as PFAS. In 2021, 31 million gallons of leachate was pumped out of the landfill and trucked to wastewater treatment plants in Salem and Corvallis. Not all leachate is being pumped out of the landfill, however – the rest threatens local soil and groundwater.

## LEACHATE FROM COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL ENDS UP IN THE WILLAMETTE RIVER

Municipal water treatment plants are not designed to process leachate, so many toxics including PFAS pass through the plant and are discharged into the Willamette River. The 16 million gallons of leachate sent to the Corvallis plant in 2021, for example, was discharged upstream of the Adair Village, Sherwood, and Wilsonville drinking water intake.

## TERRIBLE LOCATION FOR A LANDFILL

A properly situated landfill would be in a dry climate, on clay soils, and away from human habitation. These practices reduce the amount of leachate a landfill produces, and mitigates the risk of groundwater contamination. Although the landfill can't be moved now, the risks posed by the landfill increase with its size.

## THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A FOOLPROOF LANDFILL

All landfills leak. Despite state and federal regulation, landfills leach harmful chemicals into groundwater and vent pollutants into the air. Once a landfill is placed, they must be maintained forever. Landfill operators are only legally responsible for maintenance 30 years after landfill closes. Efforts to reduce reliance on landfills by limiting waste and increasing composting and recycling are essential.

## COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL IS NOT OWNED OR OPERATED BY BENTON COUNTY

Valley Landfills Inc., a subsidiary of the national corporation Republic Services Inc., receives the revenue from the landfill. Benton County, however, holds the unlimited long-term risk and environmental liability for the Coffin Butte Landfill.

## 90% OF THE GARBAGE THAT GOES INTO COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL COMES FROM OUTSIDE BENTON COUNTY

Almost a million tons of garbage a year are trucked to the landfill from outside Benton County. Currently, the franchise agreement between the county and Valley Landfills Inc. does not limit how much garbage comes from outside Benton County.

## AIR POLLUTION IMPACTS PUBLIC HEALTH AROUND LANDFILLS

There are 30 different hazardous air pollutants produced by the landfill including particulate matter, heavy metals (ie mercury, lead), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and sulfides (the signature smell of landfill stink) totaling 14,500 pounds in 2021. Some of these pollutants settle on soil and vegetation or in water, causing further health concerns in addition to the burden of odors.

## **COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL USES TOXIC FLY ASH AS DAILY COVER.**

Covanta's Marion Waste Incinerator trucks toxic ash, containing heavy metals and dioxin, to Coffin Butte Landfill, which puts the ash on top of newly dumped garbage. The toxic ash thus enters the landfill's leachate and, if not properly applied, becomes airborne, adding to the air pollution of the Coffin Butte Landfill airshed.

## **COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL IS A "METHANE FACTORY" AND A LARGE SOURCE OF CLIMATE DAMAGE.**

Emerging data identifies landfills as the top source of methane, a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide, in Oregon. Although Coffin Butte Landfill has a power plant, it only burns a proportion of the methane coming off the landfill. The facility can potentially produce a maximum of 5.6 megawatts, a minuscule portion of the state's 16,000 megawatt generation capacity. The landfill's methane emissions have a climate impact equivalent of 9,000 gas-powered cars annually.

## **DENYING AN EXPANSION TO COFFIN BUTTE WILL NOT IMPACT GARBAGE SERVICES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS**

The public will still have garbage collection services, and Benton County will continue to receive a franchise fee. The landfill still has plenty of capacity – it is only about 60% full.

## **IF ANY EXPANSION IS APPROVED, COFFIN BUTTE LANDFILL WILL HAVE NO LIMIT ON HOW MUCH GARBAGE IT CAN TAKE IN**

In recent years Coffin Butte Landfill has expanded its reach, and currently imports 30% of all garbage generated in the state of Oregon into Benton County. Its total intake from all counties has been limited only by a cap imposed by the County. The franchise agreement between Valley Landfills Inc and Benton County removes the limit on total intake upon expanding the landfill.

## **THE LANDFILL HAS NOT BEEN A GOOD NEIGHBOR.**

The landfill operator has violated past conditions of its land use approvals, such as limits on noise and hours of operation, practices to protect groundwater and visual appearance, and exceeding its tonnage intake limit in 2018, 2019, and 2021 (data for 2022 is not yet available).

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Coffin Butte is a poorly situated landfill in a wet climate that exacerbates the harm caused by pollution. It's location nearby residents is not only an odor inconvenience, but also increases exposure to harmful air pollutants. The landfill is a permanent liability for county residents with limited laws to hold Valley Landfill Inc. responsible for long term impacts of the facility. Increasing the size of the landfill adds to the health and environmental adverse effects and risks residents already face.

Prepared by VNEQS for Beyond Toxics



**Valley Neighbors for Environmental Quality and Safety (VNEQS)**

Working to protect Benton County, Oregon from further expansions of the Coffin Butte Landfill

Copyright 2022 | Coffin Butte Facts | [valleyneighbors@coffinbuttefacts.org](mailto:valleyneighbors@coffinbuttefacts.org)

More Information: [www.coffinbuttefacts.org](http://www.coffinbuttefacts.org)

Questions: [valleyneighbors@coffinbuttefacts.org](mailto:valleyneighbors@coffinbuttefacts.org)

Mason Leavitt, Beyond Toxics: [mleavitt@beyondtoxics.org](mailto:mleavitt@beyondtoxics.org)

