

Testimony by Frazier Blaylock

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

March 12, 2019

Good afternoon, my name is Frazier Blaylock and I represent Covanta, the operator of the waste-to-energy facility (WTE) that has provided safe, effective trash disposal and the generation of clean, renewable energy in Marion County since 1987.

I am here today to express support for SB 451, which will clarify the intent of the legislature in 2016 when waste-to-energy was defined as a renewable energy source eligible to sell Renewable Energy Credits into Oregon's Renewable Portfolio. Last fall, the Department of Energy identified a conflicting section in the RPS statute that called our eligibility into question. The intent of the law is clear, but SB 451 makes the necessary technical fix to resolve the unintended conflict. Representatives from the Department of Energy are here today in support of this clarification.

The one waste-to-energy plant in Oregon, located in Brooks, processes up to 550 tons-per-day of solid waste, generating up to 13 megawatts of renewable energy – enough power for 9,000 homes.

WTE is a clean, renewable, efficient, and economical form of energy production and post-recycled waste disposal that diverts waste from landfills while producing renewable energy to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels to generate electricity. These facilities recover valuable energy from

trash after efforts to “reduce, reuse, and recycle” have been implemented by households and local governments.

The Brooks waste-to-energy plant meets the two basic criteria for establishing what a renewable energy resource is—its fuel source (trash) is *sustainable* and *indigenous*. The consideration of waste-to-energy as a renewable source of energy is well established: WTE facilities are defined as renewable in 31 states, the District of Columbia, and by the federal government for the past thirty years.

The process of converting waste into energy is a key part of an integrated materials management plan that focuses on waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery of energy. The U.S. EPA has said that WTE facilities produce electricity “with less environmental impact than almost any other source of electricity.”

All downstream waste management processes have emissions and environmental impacts, including recycling, composting, energy recovery, and landfilling. But following the waste management hierarchy helps us minimize these impacts to the extent possible, and WTE provides a preferable alternative to landfilling.

As the State contemplates its approach to regulating greenhouse gases, it is important to note the many governmental and nongovernmental organizations that have formally recognized WTE for its role in reducing world-wide GHG emissions. Even taking into account stack emissions of anthropogenic CO₂, WTE facilities, like the one in Marion County, are internationally recognized sources of GHG mitigation, including by the U.S. EPA, European Union, California, IPCC, NREL, the World Economic Forum, and carbon offset markets.

WTE GHG reductions are quantified using a life cycle assessment (LCA) approach that includes GHG reductions from avoided methane emissions from landfills, WTE electrical generation that offsets or displaces fossil-fuel based electrical generation, and the recovery of metals for recycling. Life cycle emission analysis show that WTE facilities actually reduce the amount of greenhouse gases expressed as CO₂ equivalents (GHGs or CO₂e) for every ton of municipal solid waste (MSW) diverted from landfilling.

In a letter to this Committee dated February 26, the group Salem 350 states, “The recent report of the IPCC has made it abundantly clear that we stand at a critical juncture. We have only twelve years in which to take aggressive action to stem the emission of CO₂ into the atmosphere or face runaway climate change.” The IPCC itself has recognized WTE as a “key GHG mitigation technology.” This benefit largely results from the avoidance of landfill methane, a potent GHG that is 84X as strong as CO₂ over 20 years, a relevant timeframe given Salem 350’s salient point about the near-term need to take aggressive action in reducing GHG emissions. In fact, tackling short-term climate pollutants, like methane, is key to addressing climate change. Landfills are the 3rd largest source of anthropogenic methane, domestically and globally.

Finally, in addition to the extensive environmental benefits WTE, the revenues, employment, and labor earnings derived from managing waste, producing energy, and recycling metals are significant direct economic benefits. The Union employees at the Brooks facility are technically skilled, well-trained and are compensated at a high average wage. As a result, WTE facilities provide stable, long-term, well-paying jobs, while simultaneously infusing dollars into local economies through the purchase of local goods and services.

For the reasons stated, Covanta urges the committee to clarify the ability of the Brooks facility to sell Renewable Energy Credits into the RPS by approving SB 451. Thank you for your consideration of these remarks.