

I am a retired biologist. I taught environmental sciences at the college level for 30 years. It doesn't take that level of experience and training to understand that the Coffin Butte Landfill expansion is a potential environmental and economic disaster for the people of Benton Co., all for the sake of Republic stakeholders. My profession required me to read and study case histories of environmental disasters to prepare the content of the courses I taught, and I was involved in a forensic study of a landfill located in Cumberland Co., PA that contaminated groundwater due to leaks so I am no stranger to the issues the proposed project brings up. Honestly, I am tired of hearing tales of disasters that sound like the plot of a bad movie. We know that the potential for ground leaks and off gassing is real but when something happens VLI will claim no one could have predicted it, declare bankruptcy leaving behind an environmental mess and a hefty bill for clean-up. At very least, if this expansion project is pushed through there should be millions in guaranteed money set aside to assure cleanup and that people harmed are made whole. But, I digress, the current hearing is about monitoring; Mandatory comprehensive testing needs to be done to, hopefully, allow mitigating action to be implemented before the damage is done.

I live near the landfill and suspect that the odd smells I detect on certain mornings emanate from the landfill. We know that Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas but it and other chemicals wafting on the air currents from the landfill are a health hazard. It is not only apparent, but supported by data, that the landfill management is currently unable to mitigate the impact of off gassing from the landfill. It doesn't take much imagination to imagine the matter will only worsen if the landfill is expanded. Since Methane is a flammable gas there is also the danger of fire and even explosions. Should an explosive release of Methane the smoke and ash from the resulting fire will pollute large areas of land as well as the Willamette River. Effective monitoring of the situation is the minimal we can do to address the problems that the landfill presents to our County.

Sincerely,

Gregory S. Paulson, PhD

Professor Emeritus

Shippensburg University