

***APPROVED* MEETING MINUTES**
Disposal Site Advisory Committee (DSAC)
September 11, 2024

Benton County DSAC Chair Ken Eklund called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. The meeting was open to the public virtually via a published Zoom link.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ken Eklund, *Chair*
Chuck Gilbert
Jennifer Field
Brent Pawlowski
Matthew Ruetters
Rachel Purcell
Jeffrey Morrell
Ian MacNab, *Republic Services Representative*

STAFF

Petra Schuetz, *Interim Director*
Bailey Payne, *Solid Waste Program
Coordinator*

GUESTS

Brent Learch, *Republic Services*
Julie Jackson, *Republic Services*
Bret Davis, *Republic Services*
Kate Harris, *Community member*
Kevin Kenaga, *Community member*

EXCUSED: David Hackleman

Chair Eklund expressed concern on the public notice of the DSAC meetings. He requested that staff work with the interim public information officer to provide email notices to the public at large to encourage participation. He also restructured the agenda sequence to provide an opportunity for Ms. Harris to address fire concerns at the landfill and the impacts that a wildfire from outside of the landfill could have on the landfill.

Overview of Previous Republic Assurances and Actual Monitoring Systems

Community member, Kate Harris, opened the discussion by referring to a KLCC article published approximately one month ago, which mentioned assurances from Republic Services regarding robust monitoring and emergency management systems in place at Coffin Butte Landfill. Harris expressed concern that, despite these assurances, in real-life situations such as a recent fire, external observers (such as motorists) were the first to notice fires, which suggests a failure of the early monitoring systems.

Harris quoted an SES Engineering Risk Assessment, noting that operators believed the flare may have caused a fire by igniting nearby grass. As a precaution, Republic Services created a gravel-covered buffer between the flare and grassy areas, which was believed to prevent further fire incidents. However, the fire in the summer of 2024 proved otherwise. Harris reiterated that Republic had provided multiple assurances that their fire prevention systems were adequate, but real-world incidents suggest these systems are failing.

Request for Third-Party Assessment: Harris suggested the need for a third-party, independent risk assessment (not funded by Republic) to provide an unbiased view of the existing risks at the landfill.

History of Wildfires: Harris also noted a discrepancy in the report, which stated that no history of wildfires existed near the landfill. However, there was a wildfire in July 2023, just west of the landfill, disproving this claim.

Republic Services reported that there is a robust monitoring and emergency management systems for employee, community, and environmental protection in the event of fires.

Concerns Over Wildfire Risk in Relation to Landfill Expansion: Letter from Bob Kipper
(Community Member)

Concern regarding Republic's expansion plans for Coffin Butte Landfill, especially regarding fires crossing Coffin Butte Road. Highlighted the increasing wildfire risk due to climate change and wind events, which could lead to embers affecting nearby properties and Adair Village.

Fire Covering and Operational Safety at the Landfill

Landfill material is sometimes covered with tarps, not dirt. Community concerns were raised over fire risks associated with this practice. Republic emphasized their commitment to safety protocols, including reduced working face areas, availability of water, and rapid response times. They disagreed with the assertion that fire risks are increasing.

1999 Landfill Fire Discussion

A large fire occurred in 1999 at the landfill, possibly due to a hot load. The fire was significant and reportedly gained national attention. Republic clarified that operations at the landfill have significantly changed since then, and current safety measures make a similar event less likely.

Recent Tipper Fire Incident

A recent fire near the tippers involved hydraulic lines and occurred due to compacted trash igniting. Republic personnel believed they had extinguished the fire, but it reignited under the tipper, damaging equipment. The nearby fire department and Republic responded quickly, and fire damage was contained.

Community Concerns Regarding Fire Risks

Community members are concerned about the increasing risk of wildfires and have taken steps for fuel reduction and other precautionary measures.

Inquiry into whether Republic has updated their safety protocols in response to climate change and increased fire risks. Republic has not made specific updates addressing climate change but follows standard protocols, including keeping buffer areas mowed and maintaining safety standards.

Republic confirmed the use of hot work permits during welding or cutting activities and mentioned ongoing improvements to safety protocols, but they do not currently apply these permits to the end-of-day operations. There was an open discussion on whether additional end-of-day safety measures could be implemented.

MacNab pointed out that a fire started outside the landfill could pose a risk but felt that this issue applied to timberland and other areas of Western Oregon, not just landfills. Emphasis on educational outreach to prevent the public from disposing of hazardous materials that could lead to fires in solid waste facilities.

The working face, where garbage is exposed, has been significantly reduced over the years (from several acres to less than one acre), and they use protocols such as having water and dirt on-site for fire suppression.

Morrell raised concerns about a poorly managed Douglas Fir stand near the landfill, which poses a fire risk. Republic Services noted that they would look into thinning the stand as previously recommended. There was a debate on the relevance of forested areas and other properties near the landfill in the context of fire prevention planning. Some committee members questioned if fire risk in non-landfill areas should be considered within the landfill's fire management scope. It was agreed that understanding the broader scope of land management, including forested and farmland areas, is necessary for comprehensive fire prevention planning.

There was discussion about the format of the report to the Board of Commissioners. Some members proposed issuing recommendations after gathering more information, while others suggested a simpler, itemized summary of the topics discussed.

It was decided to delay further action on this report until David Hackleman could contribute additional perspectives.

Public Comment:

Kevin Kenaga expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of public notification about the meeting. He mentioned that he had to personally reach out to the chair to learn about the meeting date. Kevin emphasized that the lack of communication undermines the committee's ability to fulfill its mission of fostering community dialogue and engagement. Kevin expressed concern over possible misinformation about the materials used in the landfill, particularly a statement that the polyethylene liner was not plastic. This was clarified by Republic Services staff as a misunderstanding, confirming that high-density polyethylene is indeed plastic.

DSAC Meeting Access and Attendance:

DSAC members discussed the need to stick to the agenda and keeping the meeting on track.

There was discussion on the low public attendance at these meetings, attributed to the lack of public awareness rather than lack of interest. Suggestions were made to explore alternative ways of notifying the public, such as collaborating with local media or leveraging platforms like Reddit.

The discussion highlighted the confusion on the county website regarding different pages for DSAC meetings, which were inconsistent or outdated. There was agreement that this needed to be addressed to ensure the public can easily access up-to-date information.

Ecklund expressed long-standing systemic problems in how the DSAC and related activities are communicated, with cancellations and changes to meeting schedules without adequate notice. In conclusion, the meeting underscored the need for better communication strategies from Benton County to ensure the public can engage with DSAC meetings and stay informed about key decisions affecting the community.

There was a suggestion to improve public outreach by establishing a hotline and email address for community concerns and feedback. The idea is to make it easier for the community to report issues and ensure that their concerns are captured and addressed.

Community Concerns Annual Report: The discussion starts with a mention of the format for the 2021 Community Concerns Annual Report, which will be reviewed and approved in an upcoming meeting. It's noted that the format used for prior reports will be followed.

Monitoring and Reports:

Surface Emissions Monitoring: The conversation covered the specifics of methane monitoring, including the use of aerial and remote sensing technologies.

The discussion highlights discrepancies between EPA findings and Republic Services' reports. Questions are raised about the methods used and the effectiveness of ongoing monitoring.

Emission Measurements: There was a discussion about the number of actionable items (i.e., methane concentrations exceeding limits) found by different monitoring methods and the challenges in interpreting these results. The discussion includes a presentation of methane measurement data, showing graphical representations of actionable findings versus overall measurements. There's a focus on the technical aspects of how data is collected, including the frequency of readings and the methodology for identifying and addressing exceedances.

There is an acknowledgment of the need to balance technical details with public understanding, ensuring transparency in how methane emissions are reported and managed.

Landfill Monitoring:

Discussions focused on the methodology and effectiveness of methane monitoring at landfills, including the number of readings and the monitoring period. Questions were raised about the sampling techniques, the duration of monitoring, and the challenges of working in different landfill areas. The conversation touched on the variability of methane emissions based on landfill age and activity, and the strategies used for managing excess methane.

Future Agenda Items:

Ecklund proposed offering the DSAC's services to the Benton County Environment and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (ENRAC) for reviewing the expansion proposal.

A discussion on whether the committee should look into setting up a hotline for community concerns.

The need for a summary of the surface monitoring process and how it aligns with EPA regulations was noted.

Next Steps:

The committee is expected to review the 2021 report and provide feedback.

Await David's presence to discuss fire risk management strategies in more detail

Further clarify the scope of fire prevention efforts related to adjacent properties and whether they fall under the landfill's responsibility.

Investigate the possibility of conducting an independent third-party risk assessment.

Explore whether additional precautions are needed to address climate change-related fire risks.

Consider thinning the Douglas Fir stand near the landfill.

Outstanding Questions:

How many fires have occurred at the landfill in recent years, and what are the next steps for fire safety improvements?

Action Items and Reporting:

Action items were considered, including the creation of a report for the Board of Commissioners to outline findings and follow-up actions regarding fire risks at the landfill.

OSU's involvement was questioned, particularly whether the university is undertaking any major initiatives to mitigate fire risk in the area.

Next Meeting: The committee plans to reconvene on Thursday, September 19, 2024 to continue discussions and address the remaining agenda items.

Morrell made a motion to **ADJOURN**, Purcell **SECONDED**.

Adjourned at 8:07 pm