

Benton County taking the garbage

Coming home to our county from north, south, east or west, we see signs that read “Benton County: At your service.”

We take pride in our county, especially for our shared goals of sustainability. We work together to reduce waste and to preserve our shared environment.

But garbage haulers entering our county take a different message from those signs. Did you know that, of all the tons of garbage dumped annually at the Coffin Butte Landfill near Adair Village, less than 12% comes from Benton County?

In 2020, Marion, Washington, and Linn counties accounted for more than half of the waste dumped here, with Lincoln County adding another 10% to the pile. That’s more than half a million tons of garbage per year, but that’s barely half of it. Where did the rest come from? As far away as Clark County, Washington!

Republic Services, the Arizona-based company that operates the landfill, would like us all to make room in Benton County for still more garbage. They’ve filed an application to radically expand the disposal area right across the top of Coffin Butte Road — a vital emergency route for hundreds of rural residents. Discussions by our county’s Solid Waste Advisory Council reveal that taking more waste from the Portland metro area is part of the calculation.

Do we really want to become the destination for more garbage haulers, from an ever-widening area? I’d say no. Otherwise, we might as well change those signs to say, “Benton County: At your disposal.”

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