

Limited Use Landfills in Yakima County

Proposed expansion to Rocky Top landfill draws ire of neighbors, prompts environmental probes

- [PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic](#)
- Sep 11, 2022

DTG Recycle says it's running out of room at its Rocky Top landfill west of Yakima and wants to move into a new adjacent disposal area to continue operations.

DTG bought the limited purpose landfill on the flanks of Cowiche Mountain in late 2019 from Ron Anderson for \$9.2 million, according to the Yakima County Assessor's Office. The Snohomish-based company has since added a recycling component to the operation and has increased the volume of material being disposed there. Anderson, the former owner, should not be confused with Yakima County Commissioner Ron Anderson.

But neighbors and trail users in the area worry about potential environmental impacts and disruption to recreation and quality of life any further expansion may bring.

Celisa Hopkins, executive director of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy, said the group has been in discussions with DTG.

"It's a natural area so people seeking out recreational activities on the trails are seeking out an undisturbed natural landscape," she said. "And I think it's a unique landscape where you have natural habitat and I think the conservancy wants to see that protected as much as possible."

Some neighbors fear the company has been unfolding its expansion plans under the regulatory radar, and they accuse permitting agencies of not doing their job. Neighbors have complained about fugitive dust and gassy odors emitting from the landfill as well as the dumping of unacceptable waste.

At least two residents said their homes were damaged by rock blasting conducted at the landfill, which also includes a gravel mining operation and petroleum contaminated soils site. The limited purpose landfill is permitted to accept construction waste and allowed to salvage or recycle concrete, asphalt, metal, plastic and wood waste.

Neighbors hired a consultant with a background in public affairs and lobbying to assist in researching the matter and assuring their voices are heard.

Their worries have caught the attention of regulatory authorities. Shawn Magee, director of environmental health at the Yakima Health District, said deeper environmental studies are needed before any further expansion is allowed.

“I would say there is some concern around the potential for groundwater contamination, and that is why we are looking at groundwater so closely,” he said. “We want to ensure that the public’s health is protected now and in the future.”

Groundwater isn’t the only concern; there’s air quality. Gases and excessive heat are emitting from a crack in the disposal area.

[DTG's expansion looms over trails at Rocky Top west of Yakima](#)

The company has been cooperative and has already made some investments to improve operations, said James Rivard, regional solid waste manager for the state Department of Ecology.

“I don’t know that there is an immediate concern as far as health, but there does appear to be some work the company needs to do to assure public health,” he said.

DTG officials declined to be interviewed for this story, but General Manager John Martin issued a statement in a text message saying: “The DTG Recycling facility in Yakima is a permanent solid waste facility operated within the boundaries of the permits.”

Air emissions

After neighbors reported seeing gases emitting from a crack in the landfill, DTG was required by the health district to have a preliminary study conducted.

Significant toxic air pollutants within the gas were found. Benzene and propene landfill gas concentrations in one location were 50 to 60 times higher than the EPA’s safe thresholds for municipal solid waste, according to a report from GeoEngineers.

Sulfur compounds also were found to be well above corresponding odor levels, the report said.

Magee said the gases could be from a chemical or underground smoldering fire.

“So, we don’t know exactly what’s causing it so we’re waiting for the results of (further) sampling,” he said. “So, it’s still under investigation.”

The company will be required to obtain a permit from the [Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency](#), but first the emissions need further study to find out what’s causing them, said interim Executive Director Hasan Tahat.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/proposed-expansion-to-rocky-top-landfill-draws-ire-of-neighbors-prompts-environmental-probes/article_099acc6a-3015-11ed-8aaa-e7642a0649cb.html

Letter: DTG, McKinney spew foul materials

- Carole DeGrave
- Sep 25, 2022

To the editor — I appreciate the YH-R's recent coverage regarding the threat posed by DTG's Rocky Top landfill to the health and welfare of surrounding neighbors and recreational lands.

DTG purchased the landfill in 2019 and has tripled annual disposal, with the majority being out-of-county waste. Regulators routinely find DTG out of compliance. Today it's a toxic nightmare, prompting the Department of Ecology to recommend "that placement of waste at the DTG LPL cease until such time as a liner can be designed and constructed to meet the requirements ..."

While neighbors and regulators ask "Why is the Rocky Top landfill belching toxins?" Yakima County Commissioner McKinney downplays concerns and tries to take credit in bringing the parties together on this issue. What a crock.

Concerned citizens filed over 100 complaints with government regulators and heard nothing from McKinney until neighbors requested a meeting with her, where she expressed more concern for DTG's reputation and profit margins than the toxic odors created here under her "leadership."

McKinney isn't listening and doesn't want to recognize the real threat to our community; instead she espouses support for the King County-based company that created a crisis at Yakima's recreational treasure.

CAROLE DeGRAVE Yakima

https://www.yakimaherald.com/opinion/letter-dtg-mckinney-spew-foul-materials/article_d0a3ad52-3adf-11ed-b5a5-cf1289200d11.html

Letter: DTG operations call for closer scrutiny

- Julie Allen
- Sep 30, 2022

To the editor — I am so pleased for the Yakima Herald-Republic's coverage of the irresponsible and unhealthy DTG landfill.

Living out in the Highland area, I wonder, did DTG think that their huge expansion, noise, late night activity, dumping of refuse and God knows what else, was not going to be noticed?

Did government officials call this a boon for business in Yakima, rather than a possible health catastrophe, dumping unknown substances with fumes that literally sickened 55 orchard workers and some nearby residents?

Did a local official really visit DTG before going to meet with the concerned neighbors? Does DTG care about the potential for well water contamination or damage to nearby homes from their blasting? Do they think that whether driving their huge loads from the west side of the state along 40th and Summitview avenues or going up a Naches Heights grade and driving a back way will not be noticed?

Thank you to all the local citizens who have worked diligently for years to bring this potential hazard to the attention of we who enjoy our beautiful Valley. At election time, please vote for candidates who support the health of our Valley.

JULIE ALLEN Yakima

https://www.yakimaherald.com/opinion/letter-dtg-operations-call-for-closer-scrutiny/article_4a91290a-3e9b-11ed-86e2-6ffd534168c9.html

Ecology says landfill on Rocky Top west of Yakima is contaminated and needs cleaned up

- [PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic](#)
- Oct 22, 2022

The state Department of Ecology has deemed a landfill on Rocky Top west of Yakima as contaminated requiring cleanup.

DTG Recycle is emitting unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene into the atmosphere, Ecology said in a Sept. 28 letter to the company.

“These chemicals are sourced from petroleum hydrocarbons which are also classified as hazardous substances,” the letter said.

[Ecology's letter to DTG Recycle](#)

DTG officials say the company has been operating in compliance with its limited landfill permit since acquiring the landfill in October 2019.

“We are doing everything we’re supposed to be doing per our permit,” said landfill manager Aaron Enebrad.

DTG’s legal team is preparing a response to the findings and will work with Ecology to resolve the matter, Enebrad said.

Ecology spokeswoman Emily Tasaka said DTG has yet to formally respond but has until Oct. 28 to do so.

She said air sampling done inside the landfill’s waste indicated the presence of petroleum.

[Proposed expansion to Rocky Top landfill draws ire of neighbors, prompts environmental probes](#)

“What the testing doesn’t show is how it got there,” she said. “Our investigation may be able to provide some answers, but it is also possible we won’t be able to fully answer that question.”

A technical memo with further discussion about sampling at the site can be found on Ecology’s [website](#).

Ecology will work with DTG to devise a cleanup plan, Tasaka said.

“Until that’s done, we won’t know what cleanup will entail, but DTG will be responsible for it,” she said.

DTG has been at odds with neighbors since acquiring the company previously known as Anderson Rock and Demolition Pit.

[Neighbors have complained](#) of smell, dust and more trucks at the site since it went under new ownership. Neighbors also complained about rock blasting the company was conducting in an expansion plan.

The [Rocky Top area](#) is home to several trails and natural habitat under the umbrella of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy.

The complaints prompted the Yakima Health District and Ecology to take a closer look at the operation. They found a crack in the fill area where excessive heat and gases appeared to be emitting from.

Expansion plans halted while environmental studies were being conducted.

Under previous ownership, the site was home to a gravel mine, limited purpose landfill that only accepted construction waste and a petroleum-contaminated soils site, where contaminated soils from filling stations and the like could be brought to decompose.

DTG still manages the petroleum- contaminated soils site but stopped accepting new contaminated soil. The company only accepts construction waste and operates a recycling center on the site.

DTG has complied with recommendations made by regulators to address neighbors' complaints, Enebrad said.

“Anything they have asked us, we’ve been going over and beyond,” he said.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/ecology-says-landfill-on-rocky-top-west-of-yakima-is-contaminated-and-needs-cleaned-up/article_61aa7234-50d1-11ed-b443-57da1b129013.html

Letter: Setting the record straight in DTG coverage

- Paul Herke
- Oct 17, 2022

To the editor — I would like to thank the Yakima Herald-Republic for their recent coverage of problems associated with the DTG landfill, but I want to correct the record about something in Luke Thompson's article on Sept. 11. He stated that in fall of 2021 I reported "more than 55 pickers and others experienced headaches and nausea from fumes." While around 55 people smelled the odor and didn't like it, only three pickers experienced headaches and nausea so intensely they had to stop working. Hopefully now, this error won't get repeated.

In December 2021, DTG paid Freestone Environmental Services to conduct a study of landfill gases which found benzene and propene concentrations at one location that were 40-50 times higher than the EPA's default concentrations for municipal solid waste. Concentrations for a limited purpose landfill like DTG's should be even lower.

Obviously, these toxic air pollutants are concerning to me, and I am expecting the state and local regulators to work with DTG to determine the source of these odors and prevent such gases from being a problem in the future.

PAUL HERKE Yakima

https://www.yakimaherald.com/opinion/letter-setting-the-record-straight-in-dtg-coverage/article_a9463812-4cad-11ed-8e33-7f46a5e45f62.html

Fires at Caton Landfill north of Naches prompt Yakima Health District to suspend its operating permit

- PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic
- Dec 13, 2022

The Yakima Health District has suspended Caton Landfill's operating permit following a series of fires at the facility.

The health district said in a statement late Monday that the permit would remain suspended until a clear source of the fires is identified.

The landfill is north of Naches at 1500 Naches-Wenas Road.

[A series of fires](#) have occurred at the landfill since Nov. 2, the health district said. Another large fire surfaced on Sunday.

Landfill General Manager Roger Caton on Monday said the fire had been fully contained and that it was sparked by small chunks of wood disposed at the limited purpose landfill.

Limited purpose landfills are only allowed to accept construction waste.

Caton said crews covered the fire with 3,000 yards of soil Sunday.

Caton said the landfill has seen an increase in smaller chunks of wood being disposed at the facility. Small chunks of wood break down faster, heat up and ignite, he said.

The landfill is working with the state Department of Ecology and the health district to devise a plan to deter future fires, he said.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/fires-at-caton-landfill-north-of-naches-prompt-yakima-health-district-to-suspend-its-operating/article_e6abe63a-7b23-11ed-a9cb-237b264b5b1f.html

Yakima Health District sets up air sensors, brings in experts to look at fires at Caton Landfill

- KATE SMITH Yakima Herald-Republic
- Dec 22, 2022

The Yakima Health District is collecting information from air sensors and fire consultants to determine the causes and potential public health effects of recent fires at the Caton Landfill near Naches.

The health district [suspended the landfill's operating permit](#) Dec. 12 following a series of fires at the facility, including [a large fire that surfaced Dec. 11](#).

Air sampling sensors placed at the landfill and nearby residential and business areas are being used to ensure there are no public health concerns related to the smoke, the health district said in [a news release](#) Thursday.

The health district said the sensors collect data on substances being released in the smoke and the distance the smoke is traveling.

The health district anticipates having results next week to inform the public, the release said.

Fire consultants assessed the site this week to determine the cause of recent fires, the release said.

The consultants will prepare a workplan describing the source and cause of the fires, a remedy to prevent future fires and a written response plan for any fires at the facility in the future, according to the release.

The response is a joint effort by the health department; Washington State Department of Ecology Central Region Office; Washington State Department of Ecology Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Program; Environmental Protection Agency; and Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority, according to the release.

Caton Landfill is a limited purpose landfill north of Naches at 1500 Naches-Wenas Road. Limited purpose landfills are allowed to accept only construction waste.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/yakima-health-district-sets-up-air-sensors-brings-in-experts-to-look-at-fires-at/article_958f1d36-8234-11ed-ae5d-23b2d09ffdb1.html

Caton Landfill north of Naches remains shut down, continues working with regulators to assure safety

- [PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic](#)
- Jan 7, 2023

Caton Landfill near Naches remains shut down, but the facility is working with regulators to determine the cause of recent fires there and that there's no threat to public health.

The Yakima Health District [suspended the landfill's operation permit](#) on Dec. 13, after a series of fires began flaring up in November. The suspension remains in place until the cause of the fires is determined.

Regulators [installed air quality monitors](#) at the landfill and adjacent areas near residents and businesses. Readings have not showed any threat to public health, the Health District said.

On Thursday, landfill operators submitted a fire management plan to the Health District, said spokeswoman Stephanie Badillo-Sanchez.

The plan needs to identify the source of the fire as well as prevention and response plans.

Badillo-Sanchez said it's not clear when the landfill will be allowed to resume operations.

The landfill is at 1500 Naches-Wenas Road. The limited-purpose landfill is authorized to only accept construction waste.

Landfill manager Randy Caton said he's working with regulators to solve the issue.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/caton-landfill-north-of-naches-remains-shut-down-continues-working-with-regulators-to-assure-safety/article_e0763dde-8df1-11ed-8737-4f96406c414e.html

Caton Landfill north of Naches back in operation after permit reinstated

- [PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic](#)
- Jan 31, 2023

Caton Landfill north of Naches is back in operation after being shut down for more than a month over fire concerns.

The Yakima Health District [suspended](#) the limited-purpose landfill's operating permit Dec. 12, after [fires in the disposal](#) area kept flaring up. The landfill is at 1500 Naches-Wenas Road.

Air monitors were installed at the landfill to assure there were no threats to public health.

On Tuesday the landfill's operating permit was reinstated, according to a health district news release.

The landfill's workplan was approved by the health district, the Yakima Clean Air Agency and the state Department of Ecology, the release said.

“The workplan includes a list of action levels that direct the landfills operational capabilities, a gas and air quality monitoring plan, a fire management and suppression plan, and a fill plan for accepting new waste materials,” the release said.

The fires began in November. The health district required the landfill to determine the source of the fire, and to devise a fire prevention and suppression before it could resume operations.

Limited purpose landfills are only allowed to accept construction waste.

The health district said it will work closely with the landfill to assure its action plan is in place and executed, the release said.

That includes ensuring that fire activity is decreasing and there are no emissions of hazardous compounds or gases, the release said.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/caton-landfill-north-of-naches-back-in-operation-after-permit-reinstated/article_8794d540-a19c-11ed-aa8c-672a0266fabe.html

DTG will close public access to 80 acres and most Rocky Top trails

- LUKE THOMPSON Yakima Herald-Republic
- February 2, 2023

DTG Recycle will shut down public access to 80 acres of the land it owns at Rocky Top, effectively closing off most of a [popular Yakima trail system](#).

DTG operates a recycling center and limited-purpose landfill for construction waste at Rocky Top. The previous owner of the rock and demolition pit allowed hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders to use the land for recreation.

Cowiche Canyon Conservancy will maintain its easement for access to the Rocky Top trailhead, and CCC Executive Director Celisa Hopkins said the "Walk N Roll" trail will still be accessible. The parking lot by the trailhead will remain open.

A news release from DTG noted it plans to work with the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation "to maintain safe access to this historic trail" around the landfill.

Concerns about expansion

DTG continued to allow public access when it acquired the property in late 2019, but a news release from the company Wednesday blamed "neighbor complaints" for the change of plans. The company said at the time recreation was allowed, it was believed that area would "not be active for decades," and DTG intended to follow the original development plans.

As DTG expanded its operations, the neighborhood group Friends of Rocky Top, along with consultant Scott Cave, raised concerns about trash, air quality and potential groundwater contamination at the site, which in turn drew attention from regulatory agencies.

"Stop being out of compliance and we can stop complaining," Cave said. "People don't want to spend their days having to track the operations of this facility."

The Yakima Health District, Washington Department of Ecology and the Yakima Clean Air Agency [responded by halting DTG's expansion](#) and giving DTG a list of requirements to ensure compliance.

So far DTG's taken some steps, such as adding a monitoring well, hiring a landfill manager and picking up trash on the trails managed by the Single Track Alliance of Yakima, a nonprofit group dedicated to maintaining trails for all.

DTG initially planned to move into a new area to the west of its current operations where it had already started gravel mining and blasting. But regulatory requirements and the identification of a 1,000-foot setback from a neighbor's home that was previously unrecognized by DTG halted that progress. In its release, DTG said that forced the company to move its operations to the south, causing conflict with trails.

"Because DTG was already forced to prematurely move into the Southern Fill Area, development will continue moving south and west of the Southern Fill Area, making it unsafe for recreational users to be in an area under active development," the release said.

Nancy Lust of the Friends of Rocky Top said it would have been possible for DTG to abide by the setback and still move its development to the west, where trails wouldn't be affected. Instead, DTG said the complaints forced it to move waste into the south and led to continued development south and west of the current "Southern Fill Area."

"DTG doesn't like being accountable and sometimes they can overreact," Lust said. "I think this is their attempt to make it harder for concerned citizens and neighbors to be able to take pictures of what they're doing in their operation because we need those pictures when we file complaints."

Trail access

Single Track Alliance of Yakima Vice President Will Hollingbery said he hopes to work with the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation to establish new connections to the Rocky Top trails not located within the closure.

Hollingbery added he's heard of no plans to shut down the nearby dirt jumps, but the closure cuts off all connections to other trails within the system.

"From my perspective as the trail builder, I think the whole place is shut down until we make some connections for the lower trails," Hollingbery said of the trail system he started work on in 2011.

Both Hopkins and Hollingbery said DTG gave them no warning before announcing its permanent closure.

The trails have been temporarily closed due to mud since Jan. 9.

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/dtg-will-close-public-access-to-80-acres-and-most-rocky-top-trails/article_a2f437a8-a297-11ed-8a9e-b74b19078c3d.html

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By **LUKE THOMPSON Yakima Herald-Republic**,

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