



## AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** March 19, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of various approaches to the disposal of solid waste after the future closure of Knott Landfill

**BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

In 2019, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved the Deschutes County Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) that outlined several key issues related to managing solid waste in the County for the next 20 years and beyond. A primary recommendation of the SWMP was the siting, permitting, and building of a new in-County landfill to replace Knott Landfill when it reaches its capacity.

In April 2022, the BOCC appointed the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) that consisted of representatives of each of the four (4) municipal jurisdictions, both franchise haulers, as well as five (5) citizens-at-large, and a representative of the environmental community. The role of the SWAC was to review and recommend the criteria and process to be used to evaluate prospective sites and to apply the criteria in the assessment and selection of a finalist location to recommend to the BOCC for consideration. The SWAC, working with Department of Solid Waste staff and Parametrix, the consulting firm awarded the contract to assist in the site assessment process, developed the Site Selection Criteria (SSC) Technical Memorandum for the siting of a new solid waste management facility. The BOCC held a work session with staff to discuss and amend the document, and they approved the SSC in June of 2022.

The site selection process reviewed over 200 areas of interest in the County, then reviewed thirty-one (31) through the Broad Screening Evaluation process. This was followed by the Focus Screening Evaluation of twelve (12) potential sites in the County. During this phase the SSC was amended by the BOCC at SWAC's recommendation to include the Federal Aviation Administration's advisory memorandum that expanded the airport exclusionary zone from 10,000 feet from the Bend and Redmond airports runways to a five (5) mile exclusionary zone from the airport property boundary to minimize the potential for airplane bird strikes. The SWAC recommended two (2) sites in the eastern portion of the County for Final Site Evaluation. The SWAC received the initial summary report for review in February 2024, a full draft report and technical memos for review in March, and a final draft report at their April meeting, at which the SWAC came to a unanimous recommendation of the Moon Pit site for BOCC consideration.

The Committee also recommended that the Board of County Commissioners:

- Work with stakeholders to develop and implement a robust and comprehensive mitigation strategy that reflects community values to minimize impacts to area wildlife and recreation
- Prioritize waste prevention and recovery and move as quickly as possible to implement those strategies to reduce the overall costs and greenhouse gas emissions of the new landfill

At its meeting on July 10, 2024 the BOCC accepted the recommendation of the SWAC and instructed county staff to enter into negotiations with Moon Pit LLC, the owner of the Moon Pit site, for the development of a Purchase and Sale Agreement that would come back to the BOCC for consideration and approval. The Commissioners directed staff to conduct an appraisal of the property and to secure appropriate water rights as part of the agreement.

After eight months of discussions, county staff and representatives of Moon Pit LLC and the operator of the Moon Pit site, Hooker Creek, LLC have not been able to reach agreement on certain core issues of a potential transaction including, but not limited to site investigations, access to records for the county's due diligence, price for the property and for a portion of Hooker Creek's water rights, and timing of closing of a purchase and sale agreement. In an executive session to discuss the status of land purchase negotiations held on February 24, 2025, the BOCC instructed staff to inform Moon Pit and Hooker Creek that we were at impasse and that the County was going to move on to explore other options for the future disposal of solid waste for Deschutes County.

#### **FUTURE DISPOSAL OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

1. Reconvene the SWAC to consider a couple of alternative options:
  - a. Have the SWAC review the second finalist site, referred to as the Roth East site, to determine if it would recommend that site for BOCC consideration. The Roth East site had specific benefits such as a lower purchase price, lower development costs, and better soil for excavation and operations. However, the Roth East site has significant environmental concerns with Core Sage Grouse Habitat that are now adjacent to the property with the revised state maps, along with winter range designations for other species. The Roth East site currently only has domestic water rights which would not meet the needs of a landfill operation, and there has been local and environmental community opposition to the potential development of a new landfill in the area.
  - b. Work with Parametrix, the County's consultant on the Landfill Siting project, to review and revise the Site Selection Criteria Technical Memorandum, which was reviewed and recommended by the SWAC for BOCC approval, which occurred in June of 2022. The criteria could be revised to consider small parcels with shorter landfilling capacity as measured in years. Staff assesses this approach would require a reset on the process timeline for up to another 1-2 years.
2. Staff can explore the option of disposal of Deschutes County's waste at out-of-county landfills elsewhere in Oregon and in Washington State. As part of the Solid Waste Management Plan the Solid Waste department continues to monitor other

alternative disposal options for the County. A copy of the 2024 review is provided as part of the packet.

Staff will address these options as part of a discussion regarding next steps in the BOCC's consideration of how to manage the county's waste into the future.

**OTHER FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

For the two finalist sites that had been considered by the SWAC, the estimated cost for the development in the County ranged between approximately \$40-65 million.

Currently the County is recovering approximately 28% of the overall waste stream through various recycling and composting collections and drop-off programs. The SWMP as adopted by the BOCC, as well as the State of Oregon, have set a 45% recovery rate goal by 2025. In consideration of those goals and the SWAC recommendation Solid Waste Department staff have been exploring options to expand existing and developing new facilities for the processing additional waste streams. Based upon a consultant study conducted by JR Miller and Associates, the potential costs for development of those facilities would range between \$40-60 million. If determined to be feasible and cost effective, staff estimates these facilities could be operating by 2028.

Additionally, SWMP identified the need to expand and upgrade the Southwest Transfer Station in a manner similar to the Negus Transfer Station. This is estimated to cost approximately \$20-25 million. The estimated project completion date is planned for 2028-2029.

**BUDGET IMPACTS:**

The Solid Waste Department has included approximately \$1.5 million remaining for the next stages of the procurement and permitting process under our current contract with Parametrix.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Tim Brownell, Director of Solid Waste  
Stephanie Marshall, Sr. Assistant Legal Counsel