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DTG's Rocky Top landfill west of Yakima could reopen in November

PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic
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The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from a trail on Saturday, August 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash. This site uses cookies and related technology. By using the site you consent to our use of cookies. ✕
Evan Abell, Yakima Herald-Republic file [Privacy Policy](#)

DTG's Rocky Top landfill could be back in operation sometime in November if no new issues pop up, regulators say.

Located on the flanks of Cowiche Mountain, the private limited purpose landfill has been idle since June, when the Yakima Health District refused to renew its operating permit.

The health district also declined to renew the operating permit of another private LPL in Yakima County — Caton Landfill north of Naches. The health district said the company's fire suppression and prevention plan isn't sufficient. But Caton has filed an appeal to the denial and continues to operate despite the permit denial.

Limited purpose landfills primarily accept construction and demolition waste as well as other types of waste. They are not permitted to accept municipal waste.

DTG also operates a recycling center and a gravel mining operation at the site. The recycling center, known as a materials recovery facility, or MRF, operates under a different permit and remained in good standing, the health district had said.

Refusing to renew DTG's limited purpose landfill permit, the health district said the company had not acquired a permit from the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency or a sand and gravel permit from the state Department of Ecology.

But Ecology said DTG did have a sand and gravel permit all along, and that there must have been a misunderstanding by the health district.

"There was no lapse at the time the Yakima Health District suspended the landfill's permit, though there was a mix-up where Yakima Health thought DTG did not have this permit," said Ecology spokeswoman Emily Tasaka.

And the Yakima Clean Air Agency has granted preliminary approval of DTG's emission's permit.

Clean Air held a public hearing on the permit late last month and has extended the public comment period to Oct. 25. Public comments must be submitted in writing, according to a public notice.

Clean Air extended the public comment period to ensure all comments were addressed before finalizing a decision, said Shawn Magee, director of environmental health at the health district.

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"What I understand is it shouldn't affect the original timeline of them getting the clean air permit," Magee said.

The health district is the lead permitting agency for landfills in Yakima County, though other regulatory agencies are part of the permitting process.

Ecology said DTG updated its sand and gravel permit to cover 122 acres; previously it was 59 acres. DTG recently closed all access to Rocky Top trails, which long served a haven for mountain and other outdoor enthusiasts.

DTG did not respond to a call and emails seeking comment.

The company has come under public scrutiny since it purchased the landfill formerly known as the Anderson Landfill in late 2019.

Neighbors had complained of an increase in truck traffic, odor and dust emitting from the operation. Their concerns prompted regulators to take a close look, which led to the discovery of an underground fire at the landfill and soil contaminants. Ecology designated a portion of the landfill a cleanup site under the Model Toxics Control Act.

The fire is being monitored as well as air emissions and groundwater and there is no immediate threat to public health, Ecology said.

Caton Landfill



Caton Landfill is pictured Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, in Naches, Wash.
Evan Abell, Yakima Herald-Republic file

DTG wasn't the only limited purpose landfill denied a permit renewal at the end of June. Caton Landfill, north of Naches, also was denied but the company has appealed the matter and continues to operate despite the health district's decision.

In denying the permit, the health district said Caton's fire suppression and prevention plan was insufficient. The company had a series of fires at the landfill last winter that prompted a temporary shutdown.



A fire at the Caton Landfill near Naches taken around 7 a.m. on Dec. 11, 2022.
Contributed photo

But landfill manager Randy Caton is appealing the denial and refuses to cease operations. He says state law allows him to continue business during the appeal process.

The county stopped sending its trucks to Caton for waste disposal since the permit denial, but the city of Yakima continues to dispose of some waste there, Caton said.

“The county is mistaken when they have told their trucking company or the road division that we’re unlicensed,” he said. “The business is in full compliance with the law by staying open.”

As part of the appeals process, the matter has been sent to the the state Pollution Control Hearings Board, which has yet to set a hearing date.

Caton said he’s frustrated.

“The facts are we are working with regulators who aren’t trained in the solid waste field, which is unfortunate,” he said.

Not so, said Magee, with the health district.

Magee said staff at his office has to undergo training in landfill management.

“We do go through the same training that landfill operators do,” he said. “We look at the regulations every day and discuss it with Ecology.”

Magee said his office isn’t out to shut anyone down, but has to be sure regulations are being followed.

He said his office is working with both landfills to bring them into compliance.

At Caton, it’s the fire plan.

“We’re working with them on that to make it a robust plan,” Magee said.

But Caton said otherwise. He said he has a fire response and prevention plan that surpasses current standards.

“They said they won’t look at the documents while its in appeal,” Caton said.

Waste disposal

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DTG has been allowed to continue operating the recycling portion of its Yakima business. However, it’s not clear where any residual waste from the MRF might be going.

Residual waste is unrecyclable material sorted from loads. Caton said DTG has not been using its landfill.

And Yakima County’s public landfill, which focuses on municipal waste, will not accept loads from DTG, said landfill manager Karma Suchan.

“Won’t take anything from DTG because we cannot determine whether it’s from out of county,” she said.

Private landfills are allowed to dispose waste from outside the county. However, the company is not allowed to dispose residual waste from other MRFs outside the county at its Yakima landfill.

Magee said the health district has been monitoring to assure DTG isn’t disposing any waste at its Yakima landfill, but that the company could be shipping waste to another landfill outside of the county.

“If residuals are being loaded up in Yakima County and take out of Yakima County, we don’t have the authority to tell them they cannot do that,” he said.

Reach Phil Ferolito at pferolito@yakimaherald.com.

Phil Ferolito

Yakima County Government, Lower Valley Reporter

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