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

PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic
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The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from a trail Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.
Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

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.
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.

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MORE INFORMATION

DTG’s expansion looms over trails at Rocky Top west of Yakima
Yakima County commission candidates asked about Rocky Top landfill issues during forum

Phil Ferolito