

## Elizel Reynoso

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**From:** Scott Cave <sccomm@sosmail.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 25, 2023 3:18 PM  
**To:** Hasan Tahat; Permits  
**Cc:** James C. Carmody; Carole Degrave; Nancy Lust  
**Subject:** RE: Cave add comments on DTG NSR Application  
**Attachments:** YHR Editorial, DTG should try harder to open trail access in Cowiche Canyon, Oct 13, 2023.docx; YH DTG's Rocky Top landfill west of Yakima could reopen in November, Oct 11, 2023.docx; YH Outdoor notes DTG closes more trails, Oct 4, 2023.docx; Waste Dive, DTG Recycle CEO Vaughn steps down, founder takes on new role, Aug 15, 2023.docx; Yakima Herald Hauling questions are latest concern about DTG operation at Rocky Top in Yakima, July 30, 2023.docx; YH, Underground fire at Rocky Top might be larger than believed, July 26, 2023.png; YHR YHD gives Rocky Top residents evacuation plan, July 2, 2023.docx; Yakima Herald, Yakima Health District denies permits for two private landfills, June 30, 2023.docx; YH Edit Landfill plan threatens a local treasure, Sept 14, 2022.docx; YH DTG and YHD to monitor forever chemicals at landfill in Yakima, June 12, 2023.docx; YH Public access still in doubt for Rocky Top trails, Apr 23, 2023.docx; YH DTG is building a solid waste empire, April 23, 2023.docx; Koday YH Saturday Soapbox, County, state regulators must enforce landfill rules. Apr 1, 2023.docx; YHR Opinion-Lack of oversight means problems grow thrive 2-24-23.docx; npr story, Underground fire, harmful fumes prompt cleanup plan for Yakima landfill, April 17, 2023.docx; Yakima Herald, Authorities monitoring underground fire inside DTG landfill at Rocky Top. Apr 6, 2023.docx; YH Public Hearing scheduled for contamination issues at Rocky Top landfill, west Yakima, March 10, 2023.docx; YH DTG closes 80 more acres at Rocky Top in Yakima, Feb 16, 2023.docx; YH Opinion Lack of oversight means problems agrow, thrive, Feb 24, 2023.docx; Recycling exec pays \$38M for newly built Medina estate records show - Puget Sound Business Journal.pdf; YHR Ecology, Yakima County tell Rocky Top landfill to clean up operations, stop nighttime work, Nov 10, 2022.docx; YHR Yakima Co Comm candidates asked about Rocky Top landfill during forum, Sept 17, 2022.docx; YHR Contamination controversy, Oct 22, 2022.docx; YHR DTG's expansion looms over trails at Rocky Top west of Yakima, Sept. 11, 2022.docx; Cate letter YHR DTGs getting rich by trashing our county, Oct 7, 2023.docx; YH Saturday Soapbox Lust DTG strategy has toxic long term consequences, Sept 23, 2023.docx; Herke YH letter, Setting the record straight in DTG coverage, Oct. 17, 2022.docx; DeGrave YH letter, DTG McKinney spew foul material, Sept 25, 2022.docx

YRCAA

Attached are the **referenced media coverage** of the DTG Rocky Top operations in the **additional comments** I submitted today, Comment #2.

Let me know if you can't download any of these attachments.

Sincerely,

Scott

**From:** Scott Cave <[sccomm@sosmail.us](mailto:sccomm@sosmail.us)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 25, 2023 2:53 PM  
**To:** 'Hasan Tahat' <[hasan@yrcaa.org](mailto:hasan@yrcaa.org)>; 'permits@yrcaa.org' <[permits@yrcaa.org](mailto:permits@yrcaa.org)>  
**Cc:** James C. Carmody <[Carmody@mftlaw.com](mailto:Carmody@mftlaw.com)>; Carole Degrave <[lusciouslupine@icloud.com](mailto:lusciouslupine@icloud.com)>; Nancy Lust <[nancy.fort@cascadianow.org](mailto:nancy.fort@cascadianow.org)>  
**Subject:** Cave add comments on DTG NSR Application

YRCAA

Attached are my additional comments on DTG's NSR application and the YRCAA permit and the Orange Co Utilities Dept. Solid Waste Division Odor Control Plan prepared by SCS Engineers.

Let me know if you have any problem downloading the document. I will provide the media record file separately.

Sincerely,

Scott Cave  
President, S.C. Communications  
(360) 789-2772

# Letter: DTG's getting rich by trashing our county

By Sara Cate

October 7, 2023



Inaccessible trails are seen beyond a fence at Rocky Top outside Yakima, Wash.,

Thursday, April 20, 2023.  
[Emree Weaver / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

To the editor — DTG continues to be disconnected from our community and has now shut down hiking and cycling at Rocky Top, including the dirt jumps

and pump tracks. Any trespassers will be fined.

Ron Anderson (no relation to the former county commissioner) purchased this land for a landfill. He allowed hiking and biking and left an easement so those activities could continue, yet sold the landfill to a company that has no connection to the community and whose goal is to make as large a profit as possible off the backs of one of the poorest counties in the state.

Trucking west side industrial trash to our county and trashing the land, property values and the roads with its heavy trucks. Thanks to the community watchdog group [Friends of Rocky Top](#) for exposing this corruption in our midst. They need your help and support.

Thanks also to the ongoing excellent investigative reporting of the Herald.

**SARA CATE**

Yakima

②  
YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

# Letter: DTG, McKinney spew foul materials

By Carole DeGrave

September 25, 2022



The Gus's Gully trail at Rocky Top is pictured closed Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.  
[Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

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

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YAKIMA HERALD REPUBLIC

# Letter: Setting the record straight in DTG coverage

Paul Herke

Oct 17, 2022



The Gus's Gully trail at Rocky Top is pictured closed Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.

Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

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

# Saturday Soapbox: County, state regulators must enforce landfill rules

By MARK  
KODAY



April 1,  
2023

The Gus's Gully trail at Rocky Top is pictured closed Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.

Evan Abell /  
Yakima Herald-  
Republic

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The Yakima County Health District is understaffed and underfunded.

That's what neighbors of the Canton and DTG landfills have learned when they question why these private landfills are allowed to operate in violation of county land use ordinances and permit conditions, and why there has been insufficient monitoring of the waste type and amounts dumped at these private landfills.

Currently, DTG is operating without an air operating permit, and Caton is mining in an area the county says Caton is not legally approved to mine. Caton experienced above-ground fires, and recently an underground fire was confirmed at the DTG landfill. Last fall, the state Department of Ecology declared the DTG landfill a Model Toxic Control

Act (MTCA) cleanup site when it confirmed the release of two hazardous substances. The landfill now requires years of investigation, cleanup and remediation.

Although regulators are required to inspect these landfills quarterly, and have conducted more inspections lately, there are still numerous opportunities daily for unacceptable material to enter the landfill.

I believe in fiscal responsibility and understand the limitations of government. Since what is being disposed matters, why not have a fee on all out-of-county waste that would be dedicated for the monitoring and inspection of loads and compliance enforcement?

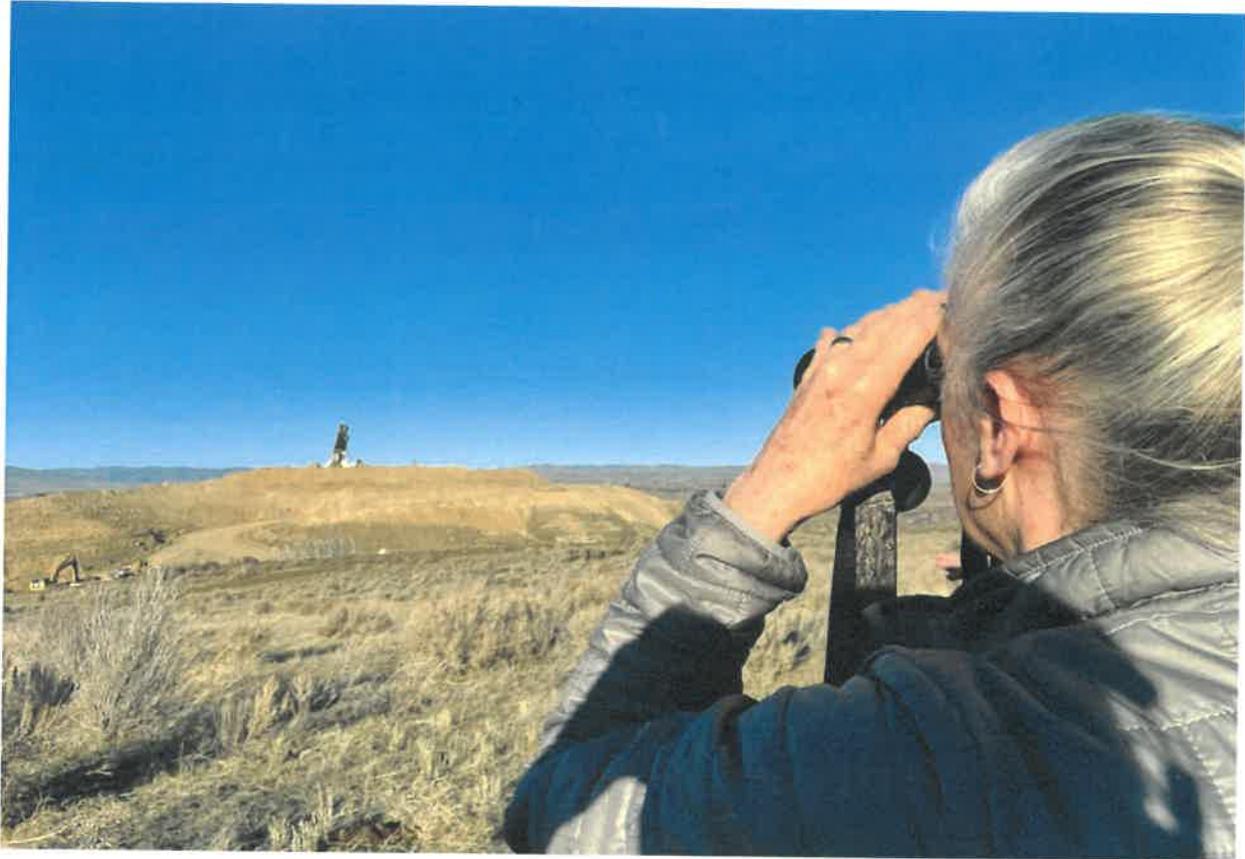
The Terrace Heights landfill is proposing an increase of \$6 per ton to dump garbage, which would raise the total cost of county residents to \$44 per ton. Kittitas County charges \$133 per ton and King County charges \$180.80 per ton. Why is a mere \$6 increase being considered at the same time our county tells us they have no money to properly monitor the health hazards we now face? I don't know what DTG charges per ton but since Yakima County has no fee on each ton of out-of-county waste from Puget Sound and Canada, it receives nothing from these privately owned facilities but toxic fires and pollution.

Increased and improved facility oversight is required, but limited by the health district's current budget. A graduated fee scale for out-of-county waste would 1.) incentivize the reduction of waste coming to these landfills and 2.) provide new revenue to support health district facility oversight.

This would be fiscally responsible as it would establish a third-party monitoring system of these facilities to reduce the chance of future landfill disasters and protect the health, property and groundwater of landfill neighbors.

The U.S. Army Yakima Training Center neighbors are already drinking bottled water due to known groundwater contamination. What will the reputation of our county's agricultural products become if more aquifers are poisoned?

Isn't it time county regulators worked together to enforce land-use violations and related permit conditions? And for county elected officials to exercise their authority and address these toxic landfills, in part by establishing a host fee on out-of-county waste to de-incentivize this toxic flow, and re-establish proper regulation and monitoring to ensure compliance at these private toxic facilities?



While hiking, Nancy Lust, with Friends of Rocky Top, watches a truck dump waste into a landfill in Yakima County. Lust lives near the landfill and has fought to learn more about what's getting disposed of near her home.

Northwest News Network

## Underground fire, harmful fumes prompt cleanup plan for Yakima landfill

**By Courtney Flatt**

On a rainy day in January, Nancy Lust was watching a truck unload at the Anderson Landfill, right near her home in Yakima.

“So, I get out of my car, and the stench was just overpowering,” Lust said.

She needed to get away from that smell, she said, and it was pouring. So she ducked into a porta potty. “And I noticed the air quality inside the porta potty was better than the air quality outside the porta potty. That was a defining moment for me,” Lust said.

Lust and her neighbors near Yakima's Rocky Creek Road have fought for years to learn more about what's going into the Anderson Landfill, also known as the DTG Landfill.

It's supposed to take construction materials. But neighbors say the facility accepts other trash, too – possibly causing fires and extra pollution.

Those concerns have drawn the attention of the Washington Department of Ecology.

“We're concerned about the air quality. We're concerned about the odors. And we're concerned about groundwater,” said Valerie Bound, a manager for the department's Toxics Cleanup Program in Central Washington, during an online public meeting last month.

Recent samples collected by the state have shown that the groundwater is not polluted. But officials are seeing evidence of airborne chemicals. Air samples from March found harmful gas emissions escaping from a crack in the landfill at unsafe levels.

Officials say those fumes are not reaching residential properties, but part of a nearby hiking trail has been closed.

“We're confident right now that there's not an immediate environmental threat for people living close by, so the biggest concern at this time is workers and anyone who happens to be passing close by on trails near the landfill,” said Emily Tasaka, a spokesperson for the Department of Ecology.

Tasaka said they're trying to figure out the source of certain chemicals within the waste – including benzene, a carcinogen. Once that happens, DTG Recycle – the company that owns the site – will submit a cleanup plan.

Meanwhile, the Yakima Health District has confirmed an underground fire at the landfill.

“There is opportunities for the fire to spread if there are those channels of combustible material,” said Stephanie Badillo-Sanchez, a spokesperson for the health district, adding that they haven't determined the exact cause.

The fire was still smoldering as of Thursday afternoon. Badillo-Sanchez said they're trying to put it out quickly.

In a statement, DTG Recycle CEO Tom Vaughn said they're working with state and local agencies on this.

“We are closely working with our consultants, the Yakima Health District, the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency, and the Washington Department of Ecology to

ensure the safety and well-being of our employees, the community, and the environment as we address the situation," Vaughn said.

Recently, another dumping ground in Yakima County had the same problem – another underground fire at the Caton Landfill in Naches, about 20 miles away.

"The neighbors here, we all kind of talk and they're like, 'I saw smoke.' And we're like, 'What?' So then we all started sounding the alarm," said Wendy Wickersham, who lives near the Caton facility. The smoke was putrid, "enough to take your breath away," Wickersham said.

Caton Landfill manager Randy Caton said he believes that fire has been extinguished, but they're working to confirm that with county regulators before resuming operations in the affected area of the facility.

Fire consultants hired by the landfill told Caton the waste was being inadequately compacted.

"We have changed our disposal methods, and we are now compacting it much better and then covering it very quickly so that there's no chance of oxygen getting in and starting fires," Caton said.

Neighbors of both landfills say there's not enough oversight at these facilities, and that improperly dumped waste is harming their communities.

Badillo-Sanchez said the Yakima Health District is troubled by the landfill fires.

"We are working on operational processes with each landfill and how to place waste and add proper soil coverage to the landfills to prevent any future fires," Badillo-Sanchez said.

But many people are tired of waiting.

"Yakima County is becoming a waste ground," said Scott Cave, with the advocacy group Friends of Rocky Top.

Cave points out that a lot of that waste is being trucked in from the west side of the state, near big cities like Tacoma and Seattle.

"We're receiving a lot of out-of-county material, and the reasons for that seem to be cheap disposal and a kind of lax regulatory environment," Cave said.

The group keeps track of what goes into the Anderson Landfill. Last year, they say 71% of the waste came from outside Yakima County – up from 54% in 2021.

DTG is developing its cleanup plan now, as the state Department of Ecology works on its own investigation. It's not clear when either of those will wrap up. [Copyright 2023 Northwest News Network]

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**RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE**

# Recycling exec pays \$38M for newly built Medina estate, records show



This five-bedroom Medina home, shown here when under construction several years ago, sold earlier this month for \$38 million, according to a deed that was recorded with King County.  
KING COUNTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE



By Marc Stiles  
Senior Reporter, Puget Sound Business Journal  
Feb 21, 2023



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Elcyser Syap is "recycle pays" spelled backwards, and based on the recent \$38 million home sale of waterfront estate in Medina, it sure does.

Elcyer Syap LLC is listed as the buyer of the home in the 1200 block of Evergreen Point Road. Online public records show the buyer is Dan Guimont, owner of Mill Creek-based DTG Recycle. He has not yet returned a call seeking comment.

This is biggest sale on the Northwest Multiple Listing Service in several years and the second sale of a Medina waterfront estate in less than a month sold. The first was a \$20 million sale of a glass-encased home about 2 miles to the north at the tip of the Medina peninsula.

Public records list Colonel F. Betz, trustee of the Medina Vineyard Trust, as the seller of the \$38 million home. Betz is a partner at the law firm of Perkins Coie.

Local real estate brokers were loath to say much on the record about the property.

As reported in Business Journal's Friday print edition, the seller is employed in the tech industry and bought the high-bank property in 2016 for just under \$6 million and tore down the existing home. (The story is [here](#); scroll down from the top.)

The palatial home he then had built was designed by Seattle-based Robert Maloney Architects and took six years to complete, with construction alone taking four years. The rest were spent getting the permits to do the actual work.

The result was his dream home of 15,470 square feet, complete with a tram to the water, a two-story great room, five bedrooms, seven bathrooms, a spectacular movie theater, a swimming pool with spa and an eight-car subterranean garage.

After all those years of getting permits, plans and the actual building, he and his family never moved into the mansion.

“A brand new turnkey waterfront property in Medina is rare, practically unheard of,” said one local broker familiar with the deal but not part of it.

“It’s the highest-quality build I’ve ever seen done in Washington,” said another broker.

*Business Journal columnist Patti Payne contributed to this report.*

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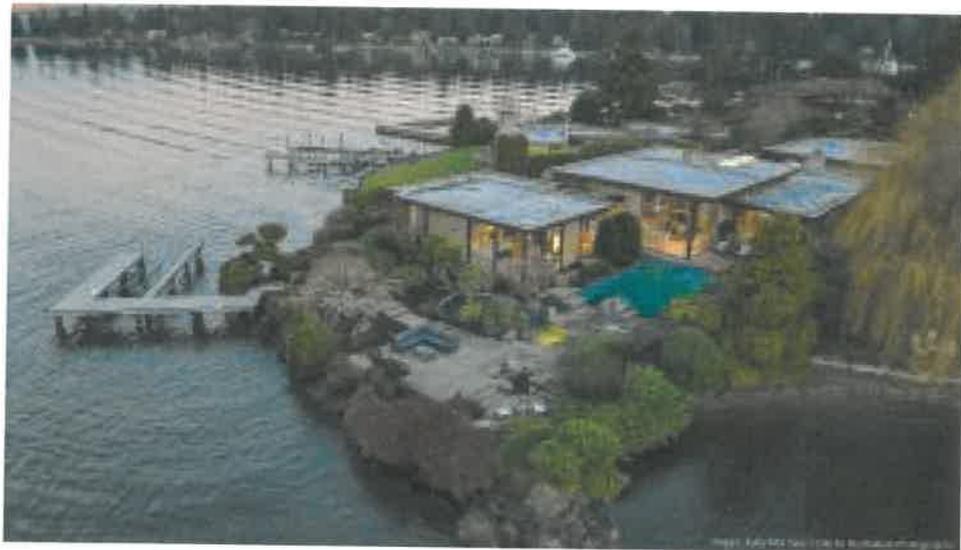
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**DIVE BRIEF**

# DTG Recycle CEO Vaughn steps down, founder takes on new role

The departure of longtime executive Tom Vaughn comes amid a period of acquisitions, layoffs and landfill investments for the Macquarie-backed company



Published Aug. 15, 2023  
Cole Rosengren Lead Editor

A DTG Recycle C&D facility Retrieved from Facebook on December 01, 2022



**Dive Brief:**

- Tom Vaughn recently stepped down as CEO of DTG Recycle, a Washington-based C&D recycling company.
- According to DTG, Vaughn left “to concentrate on his philanthropic environmental stewardship passions.” Vaughn had no further comment when reached Monday.

- An interim board management committee, chaired by longtime waste executive Kevin Walbridge, will now lead the company, according to private equity backer Macquarie. DTG founder Dan Guimont is now chief operating officer.

### **Dive Insight:**

DTG, which Guimont founded in 1999, has expanded rapidly in the broader Puget Sound area through multiple acquisitions and rounds of private equity investment. This latest development comes amid an eventful period for the company, which describes itself as a leading C&D recycler in the Pacific Northwest.

Last December, a Macquarie Asset Management fund acquired DTG and Clairvest Group exited a minority position in the company. Guimont then was named chief development officer, after previously serving as president, with he and Vaughn retaining ownership stakes in the company. At the time, DTG reported having more than 500 employees.

Then, in January, DTG acquired three companies — Clayton-Ward Co., KT Recycling & Container and United Recycling — which also expanded its footprint into Oregon. According to multiple sources, DTG has since laid off more than 200 people in various parts of the business to optimize operations following a period of rapid growth.

Layoffs also extended to the company's sole disposal location, the Anderson Landfill in Yakima, Washington, after the local health district denied the renewal of its operating permit for multiple reasons. The company is currently working with state and local regulators on compliance and to mitigate an ongoing subsurface fire at the location. Looking ahead, DTG also plans to add a liner at the unlined site and expand its footprint. Last month, a DTG representative said the company hoped to reopen the landfill by Q3 2024.

According to a 2020 profile in Construction & Demolition Recycling, DTG got its start when Guimont acquired a C&D recycling operation from Vaughn to complement his own hauling business. About a year after the deal, Guimont asked Vaughn to join DTG in a leadership role. During Vaughn's tenure, DTG completed numerous acquisitions and launched multiple recycling facilities.

"DTG thanks Tom for his loyal years of service and commitment to the environment while building the DTG brand and expanding markets for recyclable materials," said a company spokesperson via email.

This marks the latest in a series of leadership changes at Macquarie-backed waste companies during 2023. Illinois-based LRS recently announced a new CEO and CFO, following the departure of prior leaders in the spring. Last month, New Hampshire-based WIN Waste Innovations also reset its three top leadership roles.

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## Yakima Herald-Republic

# Hauling questions are latest concern about DTG operation at Rocky Top in Yakima

By PHIL FEROLITO

July 30, 2023



DTG Recycle landfill is pictured Friday, June 16, 2023, in Yakima, Wash. DTG Recycle has a material recovery facility and a limited-purpose landfill on the site. The Yakima Health District denied their permit renewal for the limited-purpose landfill and it expired at the end of June.  
Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

limited-purpose landfill at Rocky Top west of Yakima at the end of June, local health officials said the company's separate recycling facility at the site was in good standing.

But DTG Recycle has been at the center of controversy since it purchased the Anderson Landfill on Rocky Top in October 2019.

First, the Snohomish County-based company drew the [ire of neighbors](#) when it began landfill expansion work. Neighbors' repeated complaints about nighttime work, rock blasting and odor led to regulators probing the operation.

Late last fall, Ecology designated the landfill a [toxic cleanup site](#) after finding that it was emitting unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene into the atmosphere.

In February, DTG [shut down access](#) to popular mountain biking trails on its Rocky Top property when it altered expansion plans following neighborhood concerns.

An underground fire in a disposal cell that was closed in March 2022 is being monitored, along with air emissions and groundwater. Officials recently reviewed an [evacuation plan](#) in case of a chemical leak with neighbors. There is no immediate threat to public health right now, regulators said.

At the end of June, the Yakima Health District [refused to renew](#) the landfill's operating permit. Health district officials said DTG had not acquired a permit from the Yakima Clean Air Agency or a sand and gravel permit from the state Department of Ecology. The health district has said its aim is to work with the company to get it into compliance.

And this spring, Yakima's waste disposal division said DTG is required to pay a hauling tax on recycling bins it places at construction sites within city limits. So far, DTG has not paid the tax.

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When DTG Recycle lost its permit to operate a private

Company officials have repeatedly declined interviews with a Yakima Herald-Republic reporter, but they did provide a statement about DTG's operations.

“We take immense pride in our progress and the material saved from ending up in landfills. At DTG Recycle, we enforce the highest standards for material recovery criteria, ensuring that we continue to maximize the impact of our Material Recovery Facilities,” former Chief Innovation Officer John Martin said in the statement.

Martin requested that DTG be given a chance to respond to any allegations about its operations. When a reporter attempted to reach Martin by email, an automatic reply said he was no longer with DTG.

DTG's attorney, David Perez of Seattle, said he forwarded the reporter's questions to company officials, who did not respond by deadline.

## Blue bins

On March 21, the city of Yakima sent DTG a [non-compliance letter](#), informing the company of city policy regarding a tax assessment on garbage, refuse or debris hauled in the city.

Trace Bradburn, the city's manager of solid waste and recycling, said there's more than just recyclable material generated at construction sites and that DTG also should have a separate bin for unrecyclable waste at each construction site.

In a response letter April 15, DTG said it only hauls recyclable material from construction sites for recycling and that the city's code doesn't include recyclable materials.

The [response letter](#) said the city's code specifically identifies garbage, refuse and debris, but not recyclable materials.

“We are a common carrier hauling recyclables for material recovery and recycling, not a trash hauler,” DTG said in the response letter.

Bradburn said often non-recyclable waste is generated at construction sites in addition to recyclable material. He said typically a separate bin is placed at construction sites for collecting unrecyclable waste, such as plastic wrap from material packaging, some roofing material and food waste from workers.

There are only blue recycling bins at the construction sites where DTG is a hauler, he said.

“They say everything they haul is recyclable. How is that?” Bradburn asked. “There's got to be some trash.”



The city is now discussing whether to update its code to reflect all solid waste including recyclable materials, Bradburn said.

The front of DTG Recycle is pictured from Summitview Avenue  
Thursday, July

13, 2023, in Yakima, Wash.

[Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

## **MRF**

DTG's Rocky Top material recovery facility (MRF) — its recycling facility — is near the landfill's disposal area, the health district said.

There, locally generated material is separated into recyclable and non-recyclable material. Materials from DTG's other MRFs, largely located on the state's west side, also are often sorted at the Rocky Top MRF.

DTG's MRF is authorized under a separate permit with slightly different rules than its landfill. The landfill is allowed to accept waste from areas outside Yakima County and sort recyclable material from it.

There are no flow control laws in Yakima County that restrict private landfills from disposing out-of-county waste, said Shawn Magee, director of environmental health at the health district.

The company's Rocky Top MRF also is allowed to accept recyclable material from the company's other MRFs outside Yakima County but only for sorting. Any unrecyclable waste sorted from those loads cannot be disposed of at the Rocky Top landfill, Magee said.

“It's to prevent the opportunity for a company to violate another county's flow control rules,” he said. “We didn't want to leave the door open for a, quote-unquote, sham recycling operation.”

In 2021, DTG reported that it collected 748.1 tons of material at its Rocky Top MRF, with all of it generated in Yakima County. Of that, 682.7 tons were recycled and 65.4 tons were disposed of at DTG's landfill, which was allowed under its permit.

In 2022, the company said 20,647.3 tons of material was brought to the Rocky Top MRF, with 7,680 tons coming from Yakima County. Of the total tonnage, 9,956.5 tons were recycled while 5,441.2 tons — equal to nearly 71% of what came from Yakima County — were disposed of at DTG's Rocky Top landfill, according to [annual reports](#) the company submits to the health district and Ecology.

The [annual reports](#) didn't say what was done with the remaining 5,249.6 tons or identify how much unrecyclable waste came from MRFs outside Yakima County.

DTG's Rocky Top landfill is a limited purpose landfill, meaning it's permitted to accept construction and demolition waste as well as other waste. It is not permitted to accept municipal waste, which is typical household garbage.

DTG purchased the landfill, adjacent gravel mine and petroleum-contaminated soils site from Ron Anderson for \$9.2 million. Anderson, the former owner, should not be confused with former Yakima County Commissioner Ron Anderson.

Disposal amounts dramatically increased at the landfill after DTG took ownership, according to annual reports.

In 2019, the year DTG purchased the operation, the landfill accepted 148,899 cubic yards of waste. In 2020, the amount increased to 170,200 cubic yards. But the following year, 2021, it more than doubled to 477,599 cubic yards. And in 2022, the landfill accepted 695,717 cubic yards of waste, [annual reports showed](#).

According to the reports, most of the waste disposed at the DTG Rocky Top landfill the past two years came from outside Yakima County, which is allowable under the landfill permit.

## **Questions**

Initially, the state Department of Ecology didn't support permitting DTG's Rocky Top MRF.

James Rivard, Ecology's central regional solid waste manager, wanted to know why DTG would want to bring material from its other MRFs on the state's west side to Rocky Top to sort and then ship back to the west side, where it would be closer to markets for recyclable material.

"This is potentially a waste of time, labor, resources, and financially doesn't make any sense, especially given that the market value for recyclable materials is marginal, poor, and nonexistent," Rivard said in a Dec. 31, 2020, letter to the health district.

The health district is the permitting authority over such operations, but Ecology offers technical assistance and other support.

Rivard raised several [questions in the letter](#), such as why DTG would need an MRF in

Yakima County when its landfill permit allowed for recycling. He also questioned how unrecyclable waste from other MRFs would be handled.

Pointing to the permit, Rivard said unrecyclable waste from MRFs from outside Yakima County could not be disposed of at DTG's Rocky Top landfill and Yakima County's publicly owned landfills do not accept out-of-county waste.

The company would be required to ship any unrecyclable waste back to where it was generated, Rivard said.

Rivard's letter cited several potential issues, including "ratepayers, consumers, municipalities, taxpayers and certified solid waste haulers potentially being deceived, charged more and or deprived of revenue."

"Boiled down, the results point to a potential for sham recycling activities, which I hope no one wants or has the intention of doing," he said in the letter.

Later, Ecology supported the MRF permit, Rivard said in an interview.

Rivard said his questions were never answered, though there are no regulations requiring a business to be financially viable to obtain an operating permit.

"I think there's a lot of question marks," he said. "I don't have all the answers. A lot of it really falls on (the health district)."

Magee, director of environmental health at the health district, said DTG's other MRFs accept large volumes of material and that the company believes it can do a better job separating recyclables here.

Magee said trucks delivering MRF material haul back unrecyclable waste to the communities where it was generated.

"It's kind of a constant conveyor belt," he said.

As far as economic viability, the health district doesn't take that into consideration.

"We evaluate and permit the facility itself, what they're bringing in, sorting and sending out," he said.

## **Tracking waste**

Magee said DTG provides annual disposal and recycling reports and the health district has access to hauling logs.

"We can review those logs any time we want," Magee said.

DTG is required to fill out and submit annual disposal and recycling reports for the health district and Ecology.

"We can request that and review it and make sure it makes sense," Magee said.

Regulators do not oversee or track daily reporting of waste, but rely on operators for accurate reports.

"We don't have staff that can be out there every day during their operation hours," Magee said. "We can only be out there so often."

Typically, regulators visit such operations once every three months, but they've been at DTG more often due to the underground fire, Magee said.

There have been incidents where unpermitted material has ended up in the landfill, [according to public records](#).

A Snohomish County [hearing examiner found](#) that DTG in March 2021 disposed of residual waste from its Woodinville facility at its Rocky Top landfill — a violation of Snohomish County's flow control laws.

Photographs showed the material consisted of carpet padding, couch cushions and plastic bags of solid waste, according to the hearing examiner's findings.

DTG argued that the load was recyclable material. But the load was brought to Rocky Top before DTG had acquired its MRF permit, the hearing examiner's decision said.

Then in July 2022, Ecology officials found mattresses and tires in the Rocky Top landfill, which are not permitted, Rivard said.

Once notified, the company had workers immediately pull the unpermitted waste from the landfill, he said.

At that time, the company was just learning how to run a landfill and that waste management improved after DTG hired a landfill manager, Rivard said.

In early 2022, DTG began seeking an alternative disposal area for residual waste from its MRF operation.

In a Feb. 7, 2022, email, DTG's Martin told Yakima County Solid Waste Manager Karma Suchan that DTG needed to bring 20 to 60 tons of non-recyclable material from its Rocky Top MRF to the county landfill daily.

Martin said DTG was seeking a contingency plan because it was running out of room in its current disposal cell and the health district wasn't allowing it to move into a new one.

Environmental concerns prompted the health district to pause DTG's expansion project as further studies took place in 2022, [Magee had said](#).

Suchan told DTG that Yakima County's publicly owned landfills do not accept waste from other counties. She also said projects in Yakima County do not generate a significant amount of construction and demolition waste.

Suchan encouraged DTG to check with Caton Landfill, a private limited-purpose landfill north of Naches.

In June, the health district also refused to renew Caton's operating permit, saying the company didn't provide a complete fire safety plan and was out of compliance with the clean air agency. [Caton has appealed](#) the denial and was continuing to operate as of Friday.

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com).

①

# YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

## Authorities monitoring underground fire inside DTG landfill at Rocky Top

By SANTIAGO OCHOA Yakima Herald-Republic

April 6, 2023



The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from one of the trails Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.  
Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

An underground fire has been detected inside a landfill at DTG Recycle on Rocky Top west of Yakima.

The Yakima Health District said the fire is inside a solid waste cell that has been closed for more than a year and has about 3 to 6 feet of soil cover.

DTG will be allowed to continue operations, as the fire is contained to one closed cell, a health district news release said.

The state and local agencies are monitoring air quality in the area.

"At this point, the recorded air quality readings do not indicate any hazardous levels of gases leaving the landfill," the release said.

DTG officials could not be immediately reached for comment. The health district said it is working with the state Department of Ecology, the Yakima Clean Air Authority and DTG to decide on what action to take next.

"Public safety and health are our priority, and we will be working to ensure steps are taken to address the fire," said Shawn Magee, director of environmental health at the Yakima Health District.

DTG operates a recycling center and limited-purpose landfill for construction waste at Rocky Top. The area nearby is popular with hikers and mountain bikers, though DTG has [closed off some public access](#) this year.

DTG purchased the property in 2019 and has [come under scrutiny](#) from neighbors and regulators as it has expanded its operations.

Santiago Ochoa's reporting for the Yakima Herald-Republic is possible with support from [Report for America](#) and community members through the [Yakima Valley Community Fund](#). For information on republishing, email [news@yakimaherald.com](mailto:news@yakimaherald.com).

# Yakima Health District denies permits for two private landfills

Caton Landfill is pictured Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, in Naches, Wash. [Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)



The Yakima Health District has denied permit renewals for two limited-purpose landfills at Rocky Top west of Yakima and near Naches.

The decision follows environmental concerns over the Caton Landfill near Naches and the DTG Recycle landfill at Rocky Top. Permits for both expire at the end of June.

While the details are different for each facility, the health district isn't renewing the permits because the operations are not in compliance with landfill requirements spelled out in state law, said Shawn Magee, the health district's director of environmental health.

"This is not meant to be a permanent shutdown," he said in an interview. "They are currently not in compliance, and we can't allow operation while they are in noncompliance. There are too many issues that need to be worked out and solutions found and implemented for the landfills to operate within the regulations."

In December, the health district temporarily suspended a permit for the Caton Landfill near Naches following a series of fires. Regulators are monitoring air quality, groundwater and an underground fire at the DTG landfill at Rocky Top.

Limited-purpose landfills are designed to take manufacturing and construction waste such as concrete, glass, stainless steel, aluminum, lime, dirt and rock, wood waste, ash and other items.

## Operations

The decision does not affect operations at DTG's material recovery facility at Rocky Top, which is permitted separately, Magee said.

In a statement to the Yakima Herald-Republic, the CEO of DTG Recycle, Tom Vaughn, said the company is committed to maintaining environmental compliance and has cooperated fully with all requests from the health district. The company acquired the facility at Rocky Top in 2019 and has invested in the landfill to "ensure and robust and responsible solid waste system."

"While we understand these decisions are complex, we are working diligently to provide the Health Department and Air Agency with any required information. Our objective is to work hand in hand with these regulatory bodies to ensure all environmental and health standards are not just met but exceeded," he said.

"We greatly appreciate the patience and understanding of our customers during this period. We assure you that we are doing everything possible to resolve the matter promptly and responsibly."

The Caton Landfill just has a permit for a limited-purpose landfill. A call and an email to company representatives were not immediately returned.

## **Working on issues**

Magee said the health district has been working with the two landfills for a long time to address issues.

“There were goals set for these facilities and notifications given and simply put, they’re at their deadline. That’s why we took the action we did,” Magee said during a board of health meeting Wednesday.

He added that the denial of the permits was not an easy decision and he hopes continuing to work with the facilities will allow them to resume operations.

“I want to stress we don’t make these decisions lightly,” Magee said. “We’re still planning on working with them collaboratively and working on getting their permitting documents in order and getting operations updated and assist where we can in some of the other permits they need to obtain to gain compliance.”

Magee said most of the waste being taken in by the two facilities comes from outside the county. For the small amount that comes from inside the county, Magee said the district is working to direct materials to the county-operated Terrace Heights and Cheyne landfills. While there are still some details to work out, he said the health district wants to make sure there was still a place to take local waste.

“We have coordinated with Yakima County to, in the interim, be able to accept some of those wastes from in-county waste producers,” Magee said. “Obviously those out-of-county will have to find other resources but we do have our in-county waste streams. We have resources for that.”

## **Recent concerns**

Fires were reported at the Caton Landfill at 1500 Naches-Wenas Road in December. The health district temporarily suspended Caton Landfill’s permit until the source of the fires was determined and a plan for how to prevent future fires was drafted. Officials also have raised questions about gravel mining at the site.

Residents near DTG's operations at Rocky Top have been concerned about truck traffic, odor, air quality, nighttime work and rock blasting. The health district is working with DTG, Ecology and the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency to put out an underground fire at the landfill.

*Joanna Markell contributed reporting.*

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YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

# DTG and Yakima Health District to monitor forever chemicals at landfill in Yakima

By SANTIAGO OCHOA Yakima Herald-Republic

June 12, 2023



DTG construction activity is seen beyond a fence line closing off trails at Rocky Top outside Yakima, Wash., Thursday, April 20, 2023. Emree Weaver / Yakima Herald-Republic

Yakima Health District and

DTG will start monitoring the company's landfill west of Yakima for forever chemicals.

In late 2003, as part of the U.S. Army's installation restoration program, just over 1,000 tons of soil contaminated by gasoline and oil from the Yakima Training Center were disposed of at the Anderson landfill in Yakima. DTG purchased the site in 2019.

The Army's installation restoration program addresses contamination on Army land and provides a groundwork for decontamination efforts to make the land usable. For years, the Army used shallow, unlined fire training pits in firefighting exercises. The pits were doused in flammable materials such as old gasoline and ignited. Firefighters would then use a PFAS-rich firefighting foam to put it out.

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a family of chemicals. Some chemicals within the group are toxic to humans in minute quantities and have the ability to persist in human bodies, and the environment, for years.

In the early 2000s, the Army found groundwater at the Yakima Training Center was contaminated with petroleum-related compounds, and cleanup efforts began. After determining the fire training pits were too contaminated for on-site decontamination, the Army opted to dig up the pits and dispose of 743 cubic yards of soil at the Anderson landfill.

In January 2023, the Washington State Department of Ecology [sent a letter](#) to the Yakima Health District after learning about the contamination risk the soil posed. It suggested the health district start monitoring the area in the former Anderson landfill where the soil was disposed for PFAS.

## **New guidance**

When the soil was moved to the landfill in 2003, the effects of PFAS were not fully understood by the Army and Ecology, which oversaw the disposal of the soil. The contents of the fire pits were dumped in a part of the landfill designed for treating and containing petroleum-contaminated soils. This site is unlined with no barrier between the contents and the ground beneath it.

More information has come out in recent years about the forever chemicals and the best way to address them.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency's [2020 interim guidance on the destruction and disposal of PFAS](#), unlined landfills cannot properly prevent PFAS from entering groundwater, as the chemicals can mix with water passing down through the landfill and into the ground.

The EPA said modern lined landfills can mitigate PFAS contamination but that hazardous waste landfills with more extensive protections like double liner systems with leachate and leak detection are best equipped to contain the chemicals.

In 2021, the EPA began taking steps to regulate the disposal of PFAS under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Regulations are expected to be put in place within the next year and will allow for nationwide disposal standards.

In its interim disposal guidance, the EPA noted that since PFAS are still not regulated under the RCRA, "existing unlined landfills could contain PFAS that are easily emitted into the environment. Depending on their mobility, PFAS compounds could impact groundwater if disposed of in an unlined landfill."

### **At DTG**

Ecology recommended the health district amend its sampling and analysis plan of the landfill to include PFAS within the next year. It also recommended soil grid sampling and the installation of monitoring wells near the petroleum-contaminated soils site at DTG.

DTG's petroleum-contaminated soils site has not received approval from the health district to accept new soils or remove soils off-site. The health district has given DTG until July 24 to decide whether to finish remediating all soil currently at the site and shut it down, or keep the site open and install more robust stormwater control.

"Regardless of the decision to continue operating or not, DTG will have to implement monitoring wells and sampling procedures for both petroleum and PFAS contaminants," Stephanie Badillo-Sanchez, a spokesperson for the health district, said in an email.

"Specifications to these requirements have not been submitted or approved as their deadline has not passed."

Emily Tasaka, a spokesperson for Ecology, said the agency is investigating the landfill under an agreement with DTG. Ecology has heard concerns from multiple residents in the area about odors and vapor plumes. Sampling data from Ecology has found unsafe levels of chemicals like benzene and volatile organic compounds responsible for the plumes, Tasaka said in an email to the Yakima Herald-Republic.

John Martin, chief innovation officer at DTG, said in an email to the Yakima Herald-Republic that DTG revised the site's sampling and analysis plan for groundwater in May to include PFAS in accordance with guidance from the health district and Ecology. The site already tests for total petroleum hydrocarbons in groundwater.

He said DTG is working with the health district to determine the future of its petroleum-contaminated soils site. Martin confirmed the site is not accepting petroleum-contaminated soils.

Under the state's Model Toxics Control Act, the health district has regulatory authority to enforce the monitoring efforts suggested by Ecology.

Santiago Ochoa's reporting for the Yakima Herald-Republic is possible with support from Report for America and community members through the Yakima Valley Community Fund. For information on republishing, email [news@yakimaherald.com](mailto:news@yakimaherald.com).



### Santiago Ochoa

RFA/Health Care Access Reporter

Santiago Ochoa is a bilingual journalist covering health care access at the Yakima Herald-Republic in Yakima, Washington. Before joining the Herald, Ochoa reported for Flint Beat in Flint, Michigan, covering the city's Latino population—health care, education, community building and more, and winning top honors in the Michigan Press Association's feature category. He served as photographer and later editor for his college newspaper, The Michigan Times.

When he's not working, Ochoa enjoys cross-country trips on his motorcycle, going to the movies, reading and skiing.

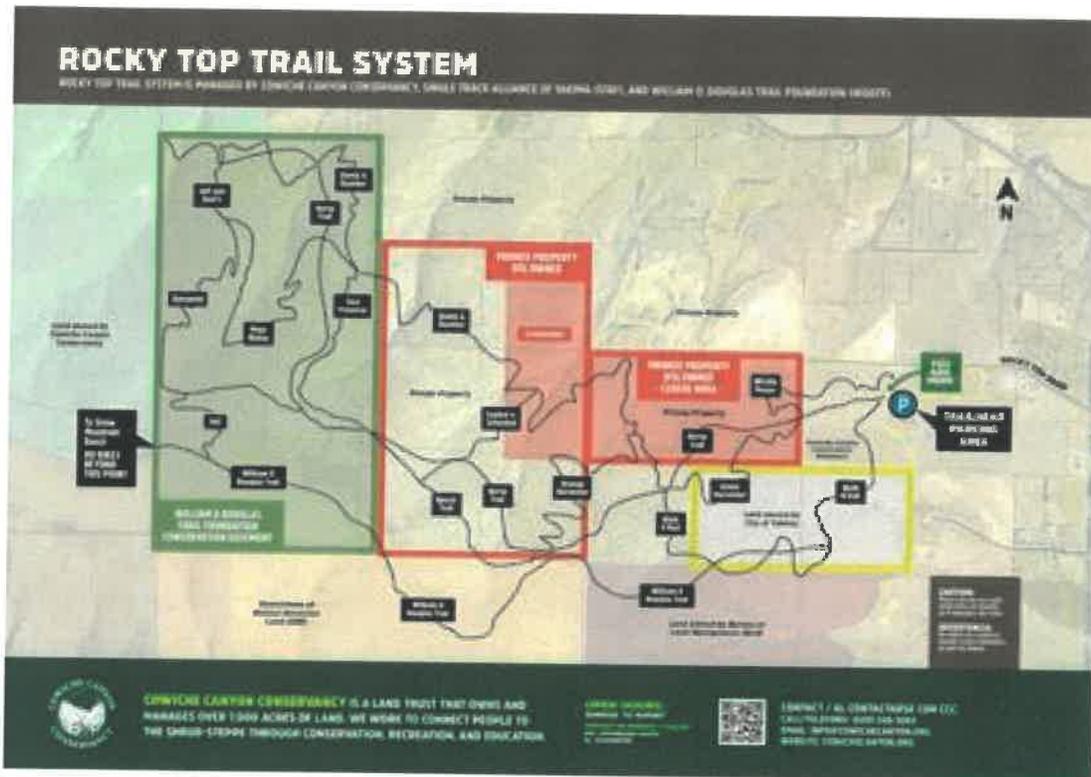
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# DTG closes 80 more acres at Rocky Top in Yakima

By LUKE THOMPSON  
Yakima Herald-Republic

February 16, 2023

This map shows what is open and closed at Rocky Top in Yakima as of Feb. 16, 2023.  
Cowiche Canyon Conservancy



DTG Recycle

permanently closed another 80 acres of its land at Rocky Top in Yakima, the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy announced Thursday.

The owners of the limited use landfill [shut down access to trails on an 80-acre parcel](#) of the Rocky Top system two weeks ago, significantly reducing public access. DTG changed its plans and expanded operations southwest instead of west, where trails wouldn't have been affected.

DTG operates a recycling center and limited-purpose landfill for construction waste at Rocky Top. The area also is popular with hikers and mountain bikers.

DTG purchased the property in 2019 and has [come under scrutiny](#) from neighbors and regulators as it has expanded its operations.

The latest closure affects a large portion of Dumb & Dumber trail as well as a much smaller portion of Orange Harvester, two trails already cut off from the east by the initial closure. Access to the eastern end of another trail, Tooled-n-Schooled, will also be eliminated by the new closure.

County commissioner Amanda McKinney, who represents the area that includes Rocky Top and its neighbors, said she would encourage all parties to come back to the table and find a compromise to restore access. However, she acknowledged the county can't control what happens on DTG's private property.

"This is disappointing and it's why I wanted to encourage dialogue a year ago," McKinney said. "I want to see all our businesses be successful while following all our laws and I also want to see our residents enjoy our (outdoor) space."

Although currently closed due to mud, the Walk N Roll trail remains accessible. It offers the only access from the trailhead belonging to the conservancy, thanks to an easement granted by the landfill's previous owner.

Rocky Top's westernmost trails can still be reached via the William O. Douglas Trail. It typically stays closed until April 1 due to mud and erosion concerns.

DTG previously said it plans to work with the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation "to maintain safe access to this historic trail" around the landfill.

*YH-R reporter Phil Ferolito contributed to this story.*

# YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

## DTG is building a solid waste empire, and some say it's coming at Yakima County's expense

By **PHIL FEROLITO**  
**Yakima Herald-Republic**

April 23, 2023

DTG construction activity is seen beyond a fence line closing off trails at Rocky Top outside Yakima, Wash., Thursday, April 20, 2023.  
Emree Weaver / Yakima Herald-Republic



**DTG Recycle** —

which operates a landfill on Rocky Top west of Yakima — has been building an empire in the solid waste industry.

The Snohomish County-based company bought the Anderson Landfill on Rocky Top in October 2019 and quickly increased the volume of construction waste being disposed there. Then it purchased several more solid waste collection facilities on the state's west side.

A DTG investor in December sold its equity in the company to an Australia-based investor for \$53.2 million. And in February, DTG's founder and former president, Daniel Timothy Guimont, purchased a \$38 million waterfront mansion in the exclusive Seattle suburb of Medina.

The company recently [closed 160 acres](#) it owns around the Rocky Top landfill that is home to several trails used by hikers and mountain bikers to make way for possible future landfill expansions.

[Neighbors upset](#) over the increased operations on Rocky Top say DTG is making big profits at the expense of Yakima County's environment by disposing of huge amounts of waste from outside the area.

“Neighbors are not happy that so much of this waste has come from outside of Yakima County and Canada,” said Nancy Lust, who lives near the landfill.

[DTG](#) officials declined to be interviewed for this story but did issue a statement through their public relations firm, SPD&G Advertising and Public Relations in Yakima.

“DTG works within the framework of applicable regulations and works cooperatively with Yakima Health and the Department of Ecology to ensure human health and the environment are protected,” the statement said.

Neighbors disagree. Their barrage of complaints about increased truck traffic, odor, nighttime work and rock blasting since DTG acquired the landfill led to regulators taking a closer look at operations and finding several environmental concerns, including an underground fire in a disposal cell.

Last fall, the state Department of Ecology deemed the landfill [a toxic cleanup site](#).

The Yakima Health District has regulatory authority over landfill operations with technical support from Ecology.

Scott Cave, a consultant hired by neighbors, wonders whether regulators are providing adequate oversight and questions at least \$4,000 in campaign contributions from Guimont, his wife and two others with the same address to Yakima County Commissioner Amanda McKinney in 2022.

The contributions were reported on the state's Public Disclosure Commission [website](#). DTG's landfill is within her commission district.

McKinney says businesses often make campaign contributions and such contributions do not influence regulations.

“I have always carried myself and will continue to carry myself to be fair and follow the law,” she said. “That’s always what I’ve expressed when we get updates from the health district.”



Inaccessible trails are seen beyond a fence at Rocky Top outside Yakima, Wash., Thursday, April 20, 2023.

[Emree Weaver / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

## **Waste disposal**

The limited purpose landfill at Rocky Top is permitted to accept only demolition and construction waste, though it also has permits to operate a recycling sorting facility and an adjacent gravel mine.

In 2021, DTG accepted 456,442 cubic yards of construction and demolition waste alone at its Yakima landfill, with more than half of it — 245,160 cubic yards — coming from outside Yakima County.

Of that, 164,400 cubic yards came from Canada, 76,320 cubic yards came from Snohomish County and 4,440 cubic yards from Pierce County, according to an annual report submitted to the state Department of Ecology.

In 2022, the amount of construction and demolition waste increased to 688,108 cubic yards, with a majority of it — 499,335 cubic yards — coming from areas outside Yakima County. DTG accepted 168,616 cubic yards from King County and 330,719 cubic yards from Pierce County, the annual report said.

There are no laws or county ordinances prohibiting private landfills from accepting waste from other areas.

Cave said material accepted at such facilities is supposed to be sent to other facilities that manufacture it back into usable products.

He accuses DTG of disposing of it at the Rocky Top landfill.

“The question is the regulations, the land requirements,” he said. “Are they up to date to what we’re dealing with here? I don’t think so.”

Cave has received numerous records through public disclosure requests filed with state and local authorities about DTG's landfill. There's little information about what the company recycles, he said.

"That's the dirty secret in all this," he said. "What is the follow-up to see if they really did it? I just don't see data for recovery. I see data for disposal."

The reports to Ecology did say DTG recycled concrete, asphalt and land clearing debris.

Wallboard waste from new construction is typically sent to companies that repurpose it into new wallboard or fertilizer for crops. Wallboard is made of gypsum, a calcium sulfate product that helps soil in the growing process.

## **Acquisitions**

DTG founder Guimont partnered with Toronto-based Clairvest Group in January 2020, just months after acquiring the landfill on Rocky Top, according to a DTG news release.

During the partnership, DTG had acquired 10 subsidiaries, most of them material recovery facilities in the Puget Sound area.

In December 2022, DTG announced that Clairvest had sold its equity interests in DTG to Australia-based Macquarie Asset Management, garnering \$53.2 million in proceeds, the release said.

In February, Guimont purchased his mansion in Medina. According to King County property transfer records, a North Dakota company named ELCYCER SYAP (Recycle Pays spelled backwards) purchased the mansion. The company's address in a sales document lists the company's address as the same as a Woodinville home owned by Guimont.

DTG now owns 15 subsidiaries, including the Rocky Top landfill and a recycling facility in Salem, Ore.

"Our initial vision in partnering with Clairvest was to become the largest (non-municipal solid waste) and recycling company in the greater Seattle region, and we have achieved what we set out to do," Guimont said in the release announcing the sale.



FILE — The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from one of the trails Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.  
[Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic, file](#)

## Environment

### Environmental concerns

The Yakima Health District and Ecology continue to monitor and investigate landfill operations on Rocky Top.

In October, Ecology deemed the landfill a toxic cleanup site after finding unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene being emitted into the atmosphere. These are sourced from petroleum hydrocarbons, Ecology said.

Under previous ownership, the landfill included a petroleum-contaminated soils site, where contaminated soils from filling stations and the like could be brought to decompose.

DTG officials had said the company would work with regulators on a cleanup plan.

Further air monitoring showed no immediate threat to public health, Ecology recently said.

The agencies also are looking at groundwater. A natural rock lining separating the surface from the aquifer beneath, the Vantage Interbed, had been fractured due to excavating.

Groundwater monitoring [showed no contamination](#) in area drinking water at this time, Ecology recently said.

Waste disposal has been moved to the south of that area under a temporary conditional use permit, said Shawn Magee, director of environmental health at the health district.

DTG is required to install a protective liner to keep waste from groundwater in a new cell before using it, Magee said.

The new cell is expected to be complete by late summer or early fall, he said.

The company is also required to move all the waste in the currently active cell to the new lined cell once it's complete, Magee said.

DTG also must install more groundwater monitoring wells, he said.

The groundwater table is closer to the surface than what was thought when landfill permits were renewed by the previous owner in early 2000, Magee said.

The health district and Ecology also are investigating the landfill for PFAS, a group of man-made chemicals used in a vast number of consumer and industrial products.

The Yakima Training Center once used fire retardant composed of PFAS, and brought soil possibly contaminated with it to the landfill when it was operating the petroleum-contaminated soils site, Magee said.

The health district is working with Ecology to add PFAS to groundwater and surface testing, he said.

“It’s a whole new wrinkle to this whole situation, so we are working with Ecology on that currently,” he said. “I can only assume that sample testing is going to get better very rapidly.”

Regulators are still assessing the cause, suppression and impact of an underground [fire](#) in the northern boundary of a disposal cell that was closed in March 2022, Magee said.

The fire isn’t producing emissions threatening public health at this time, he said. A landfill fire expert may be brought in to help, Magee said.

DTG’s landfill permit expires in June, at which time it must renew it to continue operating, he said.

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com).



### Phil Ferolito

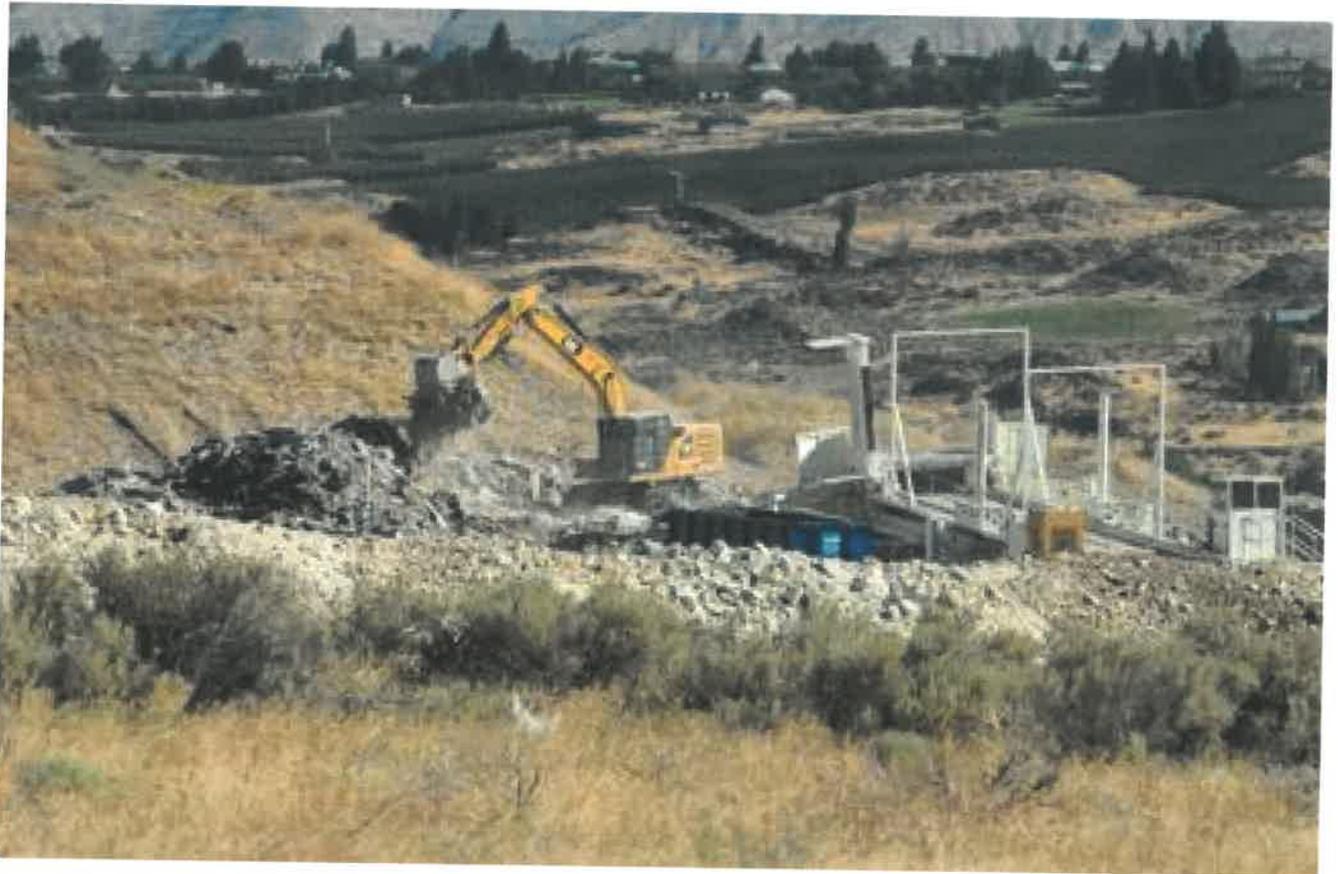
Yakima County Government, Lower Valley Reporter

Hi, I’m Phil Ferolito, longtime reporter with the Yakima Herald-Republic, where I have gained an array of experience from covering small city governments and school districts to big-picture issues concerning county government, crime and the Yakama Nation, a federally recognized tribe with important historical and cultural ties to the land. I began with the Herald-Republic in Oct. 2000 as a copy editor, designing pages, writing headlines and proof-reading stories. Over the years I have covered four Lower Valley municipalities, Granger, Toppenish, Wapato and Harrah, and the Yakama Nation. My goal always has been to shine a light in dark places and bring readers closer to concerning issues, important people, and other events in our

community.

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



PHIL FEROLITO Yakima Herald-Republic

October 11, 2023

*The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from a trail on Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, WA  
Evan Abell, Yakima Herald-Republic file*

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.

"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**

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.

# Landfill plan threatens a local treasure

## DTG'S ROCKY TOP EXPANSION

YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC EDITORIAL BOARD

September 14, 2022

At first glance, DTG Recycle's proposal to expand its Rocky Top landfill seems ill-advised at best.

The mere fact that a noisy, smelly landfill is allowed to exist near one of Yakima's favorite recreational sites — the trail system of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy — already speaks poorly for local planning.

But giving serious consideration to expanding a use that has caused increasing consternation among neighboring homeowners and that could threaten groundwater and air quality in the area? It flies in the face of common sense.

Sure, everybody needs recycling and landfill services. As the county grows, so does the pile of junk we create by discarding all our trash. We get that.

*Yakima Herald-Republic file The Uplands Trailhead at Cowiche Canyon.*



And DTG has made a lot of friends in this area with its recycling programs and efforts to contribute to the community. The company has also made a few enemies — including many of its nearest neighbors, who've complained about noise, dust, stench and other irritations that they say have disrupted their abilities to enjoy their own homes.

It might be even worse than that, though.

Before DTG's plans can go forward, they'll have to answer some hard questions from the Yakima Health District, the state Department of Ecology and the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency. Among other things, those questions will involve possible groundwater contamination near the landfill and toxic air emissions that reportedly far exceed health standards.

When it's all said and done, DTG's operations might very well be safely within the bounds of all applicable environmental and planning rules. Who knows? But stop and take a longer view for a minute. Look at what this proposal is putting at risk.

Anyone who's ever spent a glorious day exploring the 30 miles of well-maintained trails that thread through the 5,000 acres of Cowiche Canyon's shrubsteppe lands can appreciate what a treasure we have.

The conservancy's executive director, Celisa Hopkins, told the YH-R that her group has been in discussions with DTG. Presumably, they're hoping to find ways to coexist peacefully.

"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."

We couldn't agree more. But why does Hopkins' group have to defend the canyon to begin with? Why should it be under threat at all? Nobody would support putting an auto-salvage yard across the street from The Capitol Theatre or a livestock feed lot next door to St. Joseph Catholic Church. Even if it met every single health and environmental regulation, would we honestly want a sawmill in the middle of Chesterley Park? The canyon is one of the best things about Yakima — it's our Central Park. A place where we can experience the peace and healing of nature for an afternoon without packing up a bunch of gear and driving for two hours.

If anyplace around here should be sacred, it's that canyon.

So while we commend DTG personnel for all they're doing on behalf of recycling and trash disposal, we'd strongly urge local officials to take a hard look at what's going on up at Rocky Top.

Expanding a landfill that probably shouldn't ever have been approved in the first place could ruin something that can't be fixed.

- Yakima Herald-Republic editorials reflect the collective opinion of the newspaper's local editorial board

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# Opinion: Lack of oversight means problems grow, thrive



Yakima Herald-  
Republic Editorial  
Board

February  
24, 2023

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

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The notion took hold sometime around the Reagan era in the 1980s: “The Government” is bad and it must be reduced as much as possible at every turn.

Regulations, rules, oversight in general — all bad. Let businesses work it out without interference from the dark forces of federal, state, county or city officials. After all, who knows more about any industry than the very people who run those industries?

So two generations of politicians have been chewing away at any rules drawn up to protect the environment — water, air, soil and so forth — against businesses that might be tempted to put profits over the public good.

And now, welcome to the future.

Ask the folks in East Palestine, Ohio, how the Trump administration’s decision to do away with an Obama-era rule regarding train brakes has worked out. Ask them if they wish we still had the federal regulations that could’ve prevented a Norfolk Southern freight train from derailing and contaminating a 1-mile area around the wreck site, which spewed toxic chemicals for days earlier this month.

Closer to home, ask the folks who live near Rocky Top if it might help to have closer oversight of DTG Recycle’s landfill, which seems to get noisier [and less neighborly](#) as it expands operations. Or check with Naches-area folks who live anywhere near the Caton Landfill, which, if we’re lucky, might not be [on fire](#) for the moment.

Oddly, many of these “smaller government” politicians argue passionately that we must give law enforcement agencies every dime we can spare for the sake of protecting our communities. Enforcing traffic rules and chasing down criminals is a top priority, but preventing businesses from fouling our environment and threatening our children’s health? Somehow, that’s different.

The two local landfills are by no means the only commercial sources of community complaints and potential health hazards. Other businesses cut corners, get away with it and in small ways degrade our lives, too. And as distinctly different as the DTG and Caton landfills are, they have one key thing in common:

Evidently, they don’t need to worry much about oversight or consequences.

No less than three government agencies have some sort of say in permitting and monitoring local landfills — the Yakima County Planning Department, the Yakima Health District and the state Department of Ecology.

Yet none showed much sign of stepping forward until neighbors were up in arms because of dust, after-hours racket or flames.

Why? We suspect it's partly because none of those agencies wanted to get entangled in a messy fight that could end up in court — [as the Caton Landfill case has](#) after county officials concluded the landfill was operating beyond the scope of its permits. And we suspect none of them wanted to be the bad guy. Nobody wanted anyone to think "The Government" was interfering in a local business.

It's also because those agencies lack the manpower to do much in the way of effective code enforcement. They wait until complaints pile up before they do much actual regulating. Instead of being out in the field, scouting for potential problems, it's all they can do to keep up with reading and reviewing permit applications, site maps and so forth.

The end result of all this is that companies like DTG, Caton and others know they face few, if any, consequences if their operations break any rules. Who's going to notice, let alone try to stop them?

It's another unsurprising result of years of deregulation fever.

Do government bureaucracies overstep sometimes? Sure they do. So do unscrupulous police officers — but that doesn't mean we should defund everybody and do away with all the rules.

Forty-plus years of anti-government baying seems to have successfully turned much of the public against all regulatory agencies, so it's probably pointless to suggest that county and state officials should get adequate resources to do their jobs.

But it's not unreasonable to expect those officials — shorthanded and underfunded as they might be — to improve interagency cooperation and clearly convey to businesses what the rules are.

It also seems reasonable to expect them to have the courage to stand up for the environment and for local health, which is what their agencies are supposed to be protecting.

Yakima Herald-Republic editorials reflect the collective opinion of the newspaper's local editorial board.

# Outdoor notes: DTG closes more trails at Rocky Top

**Yakima  
Herald-  
Republic**



**October 4, 2023**

DTG construction activity is seen beyond a fence line closing off trails at Rocky Top outside Yakima, Wash., on Thursday, April 20, 2023.

Emree Weaver, Yakima Herald-Republic file

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DTG announced last week the public will no longer be welcome on its property, effectively closing virtually all trail access at Rocky Top.

The company sent a cease and desist notice to the Single Track Alliance of Yakima, which created and managed most of the Rocky Top trail system. In a statement shared with the Yakima Herald-Republic, DTG's chief legal officer, Kirsten Koester, told STAY public access could no longer be allowed without an explicit agreement and permits allowing proper land use.

Along with most of STAY's trails, the closure cuts off all legal trail access to the William O. Douglas trail from the Earl Anderson trailhead. The only trail that remains open is Wholly Moses, a short loop that begins near the parking lot and goes up near the edge of DTG's property.

# YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

## Public access still in doubt for Rocky Top trails

By LUKE THOMPSON Yakima Herald-Republic

April 23, 2023



FILE — Jacinto Nunez rides his bike on one of the Rocky Top trails Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash. Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic. file

The future of access to Rocky Top's trails remains uncertain three months after

DTG Recycle unexpectedly closed 160 acres of its privately owned land that bikers, hikers and horseback riders had enjoyed for more than a decade.

All the stakeholders, including DTG in previous statements and [its news release announcing the closure](#), expressed a desire to maintain trail access. But so far, [no solutions have been reached](#) to restore the lost connections cutting off the vast majority of the popular trail system created by Single Track Alliance of Yakima.

DTG continued to allow public access when it acquired the property in late 2019, but a news release from the company in February said "neighbor complaints" prompted it to [expand operations](#) to the south instead of the west. The southward expansion toward the trails led to the closures, it said.

[Cowiche Canyon Conservancy](#) Executive Director Celisa Hopkins said the nonprofit is working with the city to find a way to reconnect Wholly Moses and the Horse Trail from the main trailhead, which is located on a conservation easement owned by CCC. From there, only the Walk N Roll trail heading south onto a land parcel owned by the city doesn't lead to the area closed by DTG.

Walk N Roll connects to the historic William O. Douglas Trail, which also won't be affected by DTG's closures. It runs through land owned by the Bureau of Land Management and another parcel owned by Washington's Department of Natural Resources before reaching a conservation easement owned by the trail foundation.

Go far enough east and the TNT trail connects the William O. Douglas trail to several Rocky Top routes located on the foundation's easement.

STAY Vice President Will Hollingbery hopes to establish more connections, and Ray Paoella of the [William O. Douglas Trail Foundation](#) told the Yakima Herald-Republic in February "there's a strong possibility that we can do that so that the public will continue to have full access to the general area."



Even if Hollingbery can add to the trails he's created and adjusted since starting work at Rocky Top in 2011, he's concerned about the air quality near the landfill.

This CCC map shows what is open and closed at Rocky Top in Yakima as of Feb. 16, 2023.

Reach Luke Thompson at [luthompson@yakimaherald.com](mailto:luthompson@yakimaherald.com).

MORE INFORMATION: [DTG is building a solid waste empire, and some say it's coming at Yakima County's expense](#)

Luke Thompson

I'm Luke Thompson, a reporter in my seventh year at the YH-R following stints at seven publications in the preceding seven years. My primary focus is covering the many great prep sports stories in the Yakima Valley, as well as the sports at Yakima Valley College and Central Washington University. I also cover Pippins baseball and Outdoors features. After spending my childhood in Kansas followed by college at the University of Missouri and jobs at various papers in the South/Midwest, I've tried to make up for all those years without mountains by spending a lot of time in the Cascades skiing, hiking, camping, or just exploring on my own or with my wife and our dog.

# Public hearing scheduled for contamination issues at Rocky Top landfill in west Yakima

By PHIL FEROLITO

March 10, 2023



The landfill at Rocky Top is pictured Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.  
Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

Next week residents and other interested parties will have a chance to weigh in on environmental concerns at a landfill on Rocky Top.

The state Department of Ecology will have a [public hearing online](#) at 4 p.m. Wednesday, March 15, about contamination issues at DTG Recycle, a limited purpose landfill in west Yakima.

An order outlining the concerns and required cleanup can be reviewed [online](#). Comments on the order will be accepted online until March 30.

Ecology identified the landfill as [a cleanup site](#) after finding it was emitting unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene in the atmosphere in October 2022.

DTG officials said they agreed to work with Ecology on a cleanup plan in compliance with the Model Toxic Control Act.

The discovery came after [neighbors voiced concerns](#) about increased dust and odors emitting from the operation. Neighbors also complained about after-hours work and truck traffic.

The operation consists of a limited-purpose landfill, a petroleum-contaminated soils site and a sorting station for recyclable materials.

DTG acquired the landfill and gravel mine in 2019. It added the recycling operation and was embarking on a plan to expand its landfill as the environmental concerns arose.

The contaminants could be coming from the petroleum contaminated site, Ecology officials have said. DTG has not been accepting new petroleum-contaminated soil, Ecology officials said.

Ecology also learned of a crack in a natural rock lining known as the Vantage Interbed in the fill area that possibly could be leading to groundwater contamination.

The Zoom link for the meeting is <https://bit.ly/AndersonLandfill>.

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com).

# Saturday Soapbox: DTG strategy has toxic long-term consequences

By NANCY LUST Special to the Yakima Herald-Republic

September 23, 2023



DTG Recycle landfill is pictured Friday, June 16, 2023, in Yakima, Wash. DTG Recycle has a material recovery facility and a limited-purpose landfill on the site. The Yakima Health District denied their permit renewal for the limited-purpose landfill and it expired at the end of June.

Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

*“Today is a great day! DTG did what*

*we are most known for, we grew! And along with us growing, our employees have new opportunities, our customers have new service lines and our vendors will grow some more also! So when you see DTG, know that we are “Dedicated to Grow” ... and we will not stop, because there is no end to this plan ...”*

**— Dan Guimont, Founder DTG, in a LinkedIn post after purchasing Bobby Wolford Trucking, April 8, 2022.**

When DTG bought the Anderson landfill in 2019, they claimed to be “planet obsessed.” Instead, DTG’s operations generated hundreds of complaints, prompting regulators to investigate and request landfill gas sampling and groundwater testing.

By July 2022, benzene and naphthalene had been detected in concentrations exceeding outdoor air quality standards under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). Now, this unlined landfill is on fire.

While DTG's strategy generated short-term wealth and aided its sale to Macquarie last fall, it also created consequences for Rocky Top neighbors and trail-users through contaminated air and, potentially, groundwater.

In response, Friends of Rocky Top (FORT), a grassroots organization working to protect Rocky Top from further destruction, was formed.

Links to the state Department of Ecology's MTCA cleanup page, Yakima County's emergency response system for notification in case of toxic gas releases (Alert-Yakima), and key documents and media coverage of DTG are available on FORT's website: <https://www.cascadianow.org/friends-of-rocky-top>.

If you live within 1.5 miles of DTG's landfill, sign up for Alert Yakima.

If you're interested in receiving a weekly landfill fire situation report, email [victoria.reyes@co.yakima.wa.us](mailto:victoria.reyes@co.yakima.wa.us).

If you are concerned about DTG's actions and future plans, contact your county commissioner and planning staff.

If you value clean air, water, and shrub-steppe habitat on Rocky Top, support FORT.

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# Underground fire at Rocky Top might be larger than believed

PHIL FEROLITO - YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

An underground fire at DTG Recycle landfill on Rocky Top west of Yakima could be larger than initially suspected, the Yakima Health District said.

The underground fire is burning in a closed disposal cell of the limited-purpose landfill, which largely accepted construction and demolition waste. The health district and the state Department of Ecology discovered the underground fire in March.

In a July 18 letter to DTG officials, the Yakima Health District said thermal imaging showed the fire's expanse was possibly farther north and south of what was initially determined.

The letter also outlines a timeline for mitigation efforts to be met. In the letter, the health district said DTG had not addressed or sufficiently addressed concerns from the health district, the state Department of Ecology and Yakima Clean Air Agency.

In June, the health district refused to renew DTG's landfill operating permit because it had not obtained a permit from the clean air agency, as well as other reasons.

DTG officials declined to comment for this story.

Thermal imaging discovered settlement and cracks in areas beyond where the fire is now being investigated, suggesting that it is larger than initially thought, the letter said.

## Putting out the fire

The health district has outlined the following deadlines DTG must meet in its fire mitigation efforts: By Aug. 1, DTG must submit to regulators a timeline and completion date of the fire remediation plan.

By Aug. 15, DTG must submit a written plan to investigate the entire cell for fire activity, conduct regular surveys of settlement and submit a monitoring schedule.

As of Tuesday, the company was required to document the use of or absence of air scrubbers or any other devices to mitigate hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide that may be emitting from the cell and report gas probe data twice a week to the health district, Ecology and Clean Air.

DTG also is required to submit a complete fire remediation plan to regulators at least seven days before beginning soil cover work and notify regulators three days prior to conducting soil cover work.

In discussions with residents earlier this month, health officials said the plan was to smother the fire with a 3-foot layer of soil.

The landfill is sometimes called the Anderson landfill after former owner Ron Anderson, who is not to be confused with former Yakima County Commissioner Ron Anderson.

In 2022, sampling conducted by the state Department of Ecology detected hazardous chemicals — unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene — in the atmosphere at the landfill. This led Ecology to give the site a Model Toxics Control Act designation, which requires toxic cleanup. During follow-up testing in March, regulators found the underground fire.

Daily tests over the last few months have not detected hazardous levels of the three chemicals, health officials said.

Health officials met with neighbors near the landfill earlier this month to go over an emergency evacuation plan should a mass release of hazardous chemicals occur.

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

**PHIL FEROLITO**

**Saturday, October 22, 2022**



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.

[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.

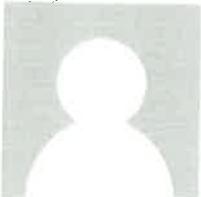
“Anything they have asked us, we’ve been going over and beyond,” he said.



Phil Ferolito

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com)

## **(2) comments**



The Yakima Health District during quarterly inspections have found this landfill out of compliance multiple times since DTG purchase it. The toxic pollutants spewing here confirm suspect disposal.

Add Reply

**thesuperfinch12086** Oct 22, 2022 8:48pm

Great, ground water already polluted from decades of ag pollution. Now petroleum leeching. No wonder so many neighbors have cancer.



### **DTG's expansion looms over trails at Rocky Top west of Yakima**

Cowiche Canyon Conservancy's Rocky Top trails provide a unique experience in the Yakima Valley. Frequent hikers and mountain bikers have seen it change considerably since DTG Recycle took over the nearby landfill.

- [Yakima County commission candidates asked about Rocky Top landfill issues during forum](#)

YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC FEATURED SPOTLIGHT

# DTG's expansion looms over trails at Rocky Top west of Yakima

**LUKE THOMPSON** Reach Luke Thompson at [luthompson@yakimaherald.com](mailto:luthompson@yakimaherald.com). **September 11, 2022**



Jacinto Nunez rides his bike on one of the Rocky Top trails Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash. [Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

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Cowiche Canyon Conservancy's Rocky Top trails provide a unique combination of wildflowers, shrub steppe, single track

trails graded for mountain biking, and expansive views of the Yakima Valley.

Frequent hikers and mountain bikers have seen that special environment change considerably since DTG Recycle took over the nearby landfill and bought a significant portion of the surrounding property three years ago. Rising mounds of dirt and new roads offer reminders of increased traffic, while trail closures, trash and unwelcome odors raise concerns about the future of the beloved trails.

“There’ve been a lot of impacts, unfortunately, mostly just in terms of encroachment on the trail system here, and I realize it’s their land,” Dan Richmond said after a Saturday morning mountain biking session last month. “It’s really unfortunate and I think I’d probably mind it less if they worked with trail development.”

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

Residents who live near DTG raised similar concerns regarding a lack of communication and last February formed Friends of Rocky Top, a group created with the goal of holding DTG and facility regulators accountable. Since 2020, neighbors have sent in hundreds of complaints to the Yakima Health District and the state's Department of Ecology regarding a wide range of concerns, with trash and odor as the most common topics.

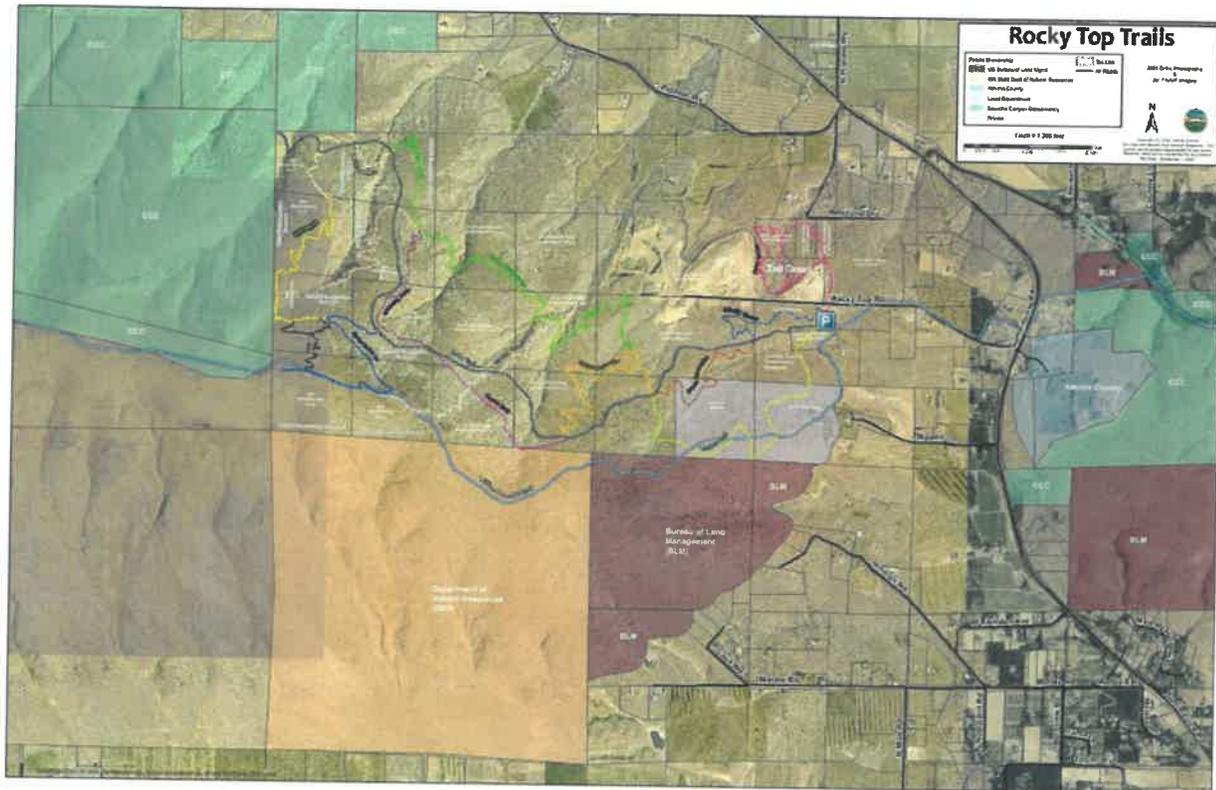
CCC Executive Director Celisa Hopkins said she's heard from plenty of trail users as well, many of whom wonder what's going to happen to the system of more than 15 miles located primarily on DTG's land. Hopkins said she's regularly in contact with DTG. While she declined to go into the specific details of those conversations, she said the goal is to preserve the trails while respecting the need for public safety around construction.

"Our mission as an organization is to protect shrub steppe, and this trail system is an important community asset," Hopkins said. "So the conversations with them are around what can we protect that's still intact at the trail system and how can we work with them in that way?"

DTG did not respond to multiple requests for comment, other than to say it is operating within its permits.

## **Land ownership**

A wide variety of entities share ownership and management responsibilities at Rocky Top, where the Single Track Alliance of Yakima began building its trail system in 2011.



STAY maintains the trails for CCC, which holds a conservation easement near the parking lot on some of the land through which the main Horse Trail runs. STAY built the Walk N Roll trail in the southeast section with permission from the city of Yakima on 39 acres it owns south of the CCC's easement, and further west, the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation also holds a conservation easement.

But most of the Rocky Top trails reside on land DTG purchased from Ron Anderson in January 2020, when the company bought his limited purpose landfill, which is allowed to salvage or recycle concrete, asphalt, metal, plastic and wood waste. It was Anderson who gave STAY permission to build its trails, giving them plenty of freedom and mostly staying out of the way. Anderson should not be confused with Yakima County Commissioner Ron Anderson.

That all began to change in September 2020, when DTG closed the Gus's Gully trail, followed by a partial closure of the popular Wholly Moses trail a few months later. STAY President Pat Huwe and Vice President Will Hollingbery said the most impactful closure came recently on the upper portion of the Ha Ha Ha Ha trail, a key connector on the hill near the William O. Douglas Trail.

County Commissioner Amanda McKinney represents the district, supports the CCC financially and considers herself a Rocky Top trail user. She said that in conversations with her over the last year, DTG has expressed a strong commitment to allowing trails on its property for the foreseeable future.

“Not only that, but when I met with them, they said that as they expand operations over time that they want to also extend the trail opportunities,” McKinney said. “They also indicated to me that when they are finally approved to formally cap each cell, that they would look to the conservancy for guidance and advice on what native plants that they would like to see planted.”

FORT consultant Scott Cave shared email correspondence from Ecology, the Yakima Health District and DTG showing the company, which announced its intent to “[operate the largest Material Recovery Facility in the region](#)” in 2019, can’t move on to its next cell until it meets certain requirements to address various regulation concerns. Hopkins and Hollingbery said it’s unclear how that cell would affect trails.

Hollingbery said DTG told him the trails wouldn’t be harmed for another 40 years, so it came as a surprise when they cut off access to Wholly Moses for a second time, forcing him to build a quick reroute. Huwe said they intend to fix the trail again this fall to restore it to its original length in a more sustainable spot.

“We’ve never really run into a situation out there when we have to go around an obstacle that the trail doesn’t get better a second time,” Huwe said. “The new one will be enjoyable.”



The Gus's Gully trail at Rocky Top is pictured closed Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.  
[Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

## Neighbor complaints

While many of DTG’s neighbors also share concerns about Rocky Top, they’re more focused on whether

the company is following regulations and on potential health hazards they've observed on their own properties.

Carole DeGrave, the longtime owner of a house at the top of Pioneer Way with property next to DTG, grew concerned when she saw work ramp up considerably in early 2020. That April she hired Cave, a consultant with more than 30 years of experience in Eastern Washington working with local governments and the solid waste industry regarding groundwater.

Along with constant noise, DeGrave started to notice sewage-like odors when she went outside, compelling her to keep a daily log to rate the intensity of the smell that would sometimes give her headaches. Records show other neighbors made similar complaints to the state's Department of Ecology with Randy Abhold — the neighbor closest to the landfill's pit — describing it as “smelling bleach and paint thinner all at once.”

In October 2021, Paul Herke, who owns 320 acres with an orchard next to DTG, reported that more than 55 pickers and others experienced headaches and nausea from fumes. He said it lasted for about two days, primarily in the morning, and although the smell would often be around, it never reached that same intensity.

“Sometimes it smells sort of rancid,” Herke said. “Definitely not like a mold. More like a foul decay.”

He and other neighbors experienced issues with litter, especially in summer 2021, which spread out onto the nearby Rocky Top trails as well. Cave and local resident Nancy Lust gave emails to the Yakima Herald-Republic showing repeated requests from Ecology and the YHD for DTG to fix its trash problems.

Eventually, the company hired someone to regularly pick up litter and also put up a fence to prevent trash from blowing off its property. Lust and Hopkins said those efforts proved successful.

DeGrave said the odors also haven't been as bad this summer, mostly thanks to efforts to cover and tamp down toxic plumes from the landfill. Along with Cave and others, she remains concerned those chemicals may be creating problems elsewhere.



People ride bikes on trails at Rocky Top Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.

[Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic](#)

## Uncertain future

McKinney said complaints from neighbors led her to speak to everyone involved in the hopes of improving communication, and Ecology's James Rivard facilitated a meeting with representatives from FORT, DTG and the YHD in June.

Lust believes that effort to build trust brought about some progress, and she's cautiously optimistic about DTG's new local manager. But FORT still has a lot of unanswered questions as DTG works with regulators in an effort to ensure compliance.

"Honestly, I'm unsure about this company because part of me wants to believe that they are working towards making the environment a better place and really trying to recycle and do what's right," Lust said. "Then part of me just feels like 'I don't always believe what you say.'"

McKinney's encouraged by the recent conversations between groups, and she's confident DTG provides a net positive for Yakima. She advises all parties to talk more with each other, believing they'll find they share many common goals.

Hollingbery spent countless hours building trails at Rocky Top and elsewhere, always keenly aware they wouldn't last forever. Still, he wants them to last as long as possible, and Huwe said they'll keep rebuilding trails and respecting private property restrictions.

Huwe also praised DTG for its help in keeping alive the dirt pump track located next to the closed Gus's Gully trail. DTG pays the water rights and Huwe's hoping STAY can deepen the relationship between the two entities to keep the trails in good condition.

Jacinto Nunez, an avid mountain biker since he moved to Yakima 2 1/2 years ago, said it's been sad to see all the changes and what feels like more to come at Rocky Top. The views aren't quite what they used to be thanks to DTG's expansion, but he still appreciates the chance to go out anytime he can.

"I've been to the other (trails in Yakima) but by far I like this one, not just for the workout but just the hill itself," Nunez said. "I come from the Tri-Cities and we had Badger Mountain over there, but Rocky Top has that same feeling for me. It's a pretty special place."

2A

Yakima Herald-Republic

## Ecology, Yakima County tell Rocky Top landfill to clean up operations, stop nighttime work

By PHIL FEROLITO

November 10, 2022



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

The company operating a landfill on Rocky Top west of Yakima has been told by two regulatory agencies to clean up its act or face enforcement actions.

The state Department of Ecology says the landfill — [DTG Recycle](#) — is emitting toxic gases

into the atmosphere and must conduct cleanup work.

And Yakima County's planning department says the company has been operating outside normal business hours in violation of its permit and has failed to install a vegetation buffer on the north side of its gravel mining area.

DTG's landfill manager, Aaron Enebrad, said he would not be ready to comment on the matter until Monday.

In a response letter to Ecology, DTG said it was willing to work with regulators to address the problems "DTG is committed to working with Ecology and other agencies to address all issues via the appropriate regulatory mechanism," the Oct. 26 letter said.

DTG acquired the former Anderson Rock and Demolition Pit in October 2019. The operation is on the flanks of Cowiche Mountain and includes a limited-purpose landfill, gravel mine and petroleum contaminated soils site.

The company has embarked on [expansion efforts](#) that have drawn the ire of nearby residents who have repeatedly complained of dust and odor from the site since it came under new ownership.

Residents also have complained about increasing traffic at the landfill and evening operations. The complaints led to the regulators paying closer attention to the operation, which prompted air and groundwater studies.

In late September, Ecology [notified DTG](#) that its landfill was emitting unsafe amounts of benzene and naphthalene into the atmosphere. The company was given 30 days to respond.

Ecology sent DTG a Nov. 2 letter affirming the toxic releases and requesting that it be cleaned up.

“Ecology has determined that it is in the public interest for remedial actions to take place at this site,” the letter said.

Cleanup must be done in compliance with the Model Toxics Control Act, the letter said.

The issues with the landfill are outlined on Ecology’s [website](#).

If it doesn’t act, the company would face an administrative cleanup order, fines of up to \$25,000 a day and liability for up to three times the costs incurred by the state, the letter said.

On Nov. 1, Yakima County Planning Official Tommy Carroll sent DTG a letter warning the company to stop operating outside its permitted hours and to install a vegetation buffer near one of its gravel pits as required in a 2003 mining permit.



The landfill at Rocky Top is pictured Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.

*Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic*

Carroll’s letter included a photo of trucks with their lights on at the site after dark. He said the photo was taken about 9:30 p.m. and that hours of operations are to end at 6 p.m., according to the operating permit.

“The neighbors have expressed concerns that dumping is occurring after established operating hours, when agency

oversight of the facility is non-existent,” Carroll said the letter.

DTG also is required to install a vegetation buffer five years before expanding its mining operations, according to a 2003 mining permit, the letter said.

Carroll requested DTG install the buffer during suitable weather and to forward proof of the work done to the county, the letter said.

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com).

# Yakima Herald-Republic Editorial Board

## Opinion: DTG should try harder to open trail access in Cowiche Canyon

October 13, 2023



Leia, a chocolate Labrador, mourns the closure of part of the lower Rocky Top trail system on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023, after DTG Recycle expanded operations in Yakima, Wash. Magnus Fulton of West Valley High School / Unleashed

It's hard to imagine how a business could do a worse job with public relations than Snohomish County-based DTG Recycle has in the four years it's been in town.

After taking over the former Anderson Landfill on Rocky Top, DTG has [tangled with local regulators](#), alienated most of its neighbors and [frustrated outdoor recreationists](#).

[Neighbors have complained](#) bitterly of noise, smells, smoke and dust for several years now, and county officials even discovered an underground fire that's evidently still burning at the site. The fire, county officials assure, isn't threatening anyone.

Still, the limited purpose landfill has been idle since June, when the Yakima Health District denied the company an operating permit. Work continues, however, at DTG's sand and gravel operation — which has expanded from 59 acres to 122.

The expansion has led DTG to close off access to some beloved trails that hikers and bicyclists have enjoyed for years.

That's a sad setback for the whole community.

The trails and open spaces in Cowiche Canyon and Rocky Top are Yakima's equivalent to New York's Central Park. Where else can you take in sweeping views of shrub-steppe ridges razoring across a deep blue sky, stop to cool your tired feet in a refreshing stream and still make it back home within 15 minutes?

Limiting admittance to that oasis diminishes everyone's quality of life around here.

Representatives of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy, the William O. Douglas Trail Foundation and Single Track Alliance of Yakima are still hoping DTG will agree to allow greater recreational access, but negotiations seem to be all uphill.

Considering all the toes they've stepped on in the past four years, though, you'd think DTG would be eager to do whatever they could to mend some fences — or more accurately, perhaps take a few of them down.

Cowiche Canyon Conservancy's executive director, Celia Hopkins, remains hopeful.

“We are actively working right now to reconnect CCC's conservation easement to the city of Yakima property that contains both the William O. Douglas Trail and Walk N Roll Trail,” Hopkins told the YH-R's Luke Thompson. “CCC is committed to having a multi-use trail system at Rocky Top and will continue to work with the city of Yakima and private landowners to maintain as much of a trail system as is possible up there.”

It seems reasonable to expect that from a company whose [mission statement](#) includes this phrase: “The way we treat people matters. They deserve our best.”

For the sake of earning Yakima's respect and trust, we hope DTG starts working harder to live up to those words. We hope they'll find ways to be better neighbors and accommodate Rocky Top recreationists.

Then again, public relations haven't exactly been DTG's strong suit so far.

# Opinion: Lack of oversight means problems grow, thrive

Yakima Herald-Republic Editorial Board  
Feb 24, 2023



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

The notion took hold sometime around the Reagan era in the 1980s: “The Government” is bad and it must be reduced as much as possible at every turn.

Regulations, rules, oversight in general — all bad. Let businesses work it out without interference from the dark forces of federal, state, county or city officials. After all, who knows more about any industry than the very people who run those industries?

So two generations of politicians have been chewing away at any rules drawn up to protect the environment — water, air, soil and so forth — against businesses that might be tempted to put profits over the public good.

And now, welcome to the future.

Ask the folks in East Palestine, Ohio, how the Trump administration’s decision to do away with an Obama-era rule regarding train brakes has worked out. Ask them if they wish we still had the federal regulations that could’ve prevented a Norfolk Southern freight train from derailing and contaminating a 1-mile area around the wreck site, which spewed toxic chemicals for days earlier this month.

Closer to home, ask the folks who live near Rocky Top if it might help to have closer oversight of DTG Recycle's landfill, which seems to get noisier and less neighborly as it expands operations. Or check with Naches-area folks who live anywhere near the Caton Landfill, which, if we're lucky, might not be on fire for the moment.

Oddly, many of these "smaller government" politicians argue passionately that we must give law enforcement agencies every dime we can spare for the sake of protecting our communities. Enforcing traffic rules and chasing down criminals is a top priority, but preventing businesses from fouling our environment and threatening our children's health? Somehow, that's different.

The two local landfills are by no means the only commercial sources of community complaints and potential health hazards. Other businesses cut corners, get away with it and in small ways degrade our lives, too. And as distinctly different as the DTG and Caton landfills are, they have one key thing in common:

Evidently, they don't need to worry much about oversight or consequences.

No less than three government agencies have some sort of say in permitting and monitoring local landfills — the Yakima County Planning Department, the Yakima Health District and the state Department of Ecology.

Yet none showed much sign of stepping forward until neighbors were up in arms because of dust, after-hours racket or flames. Why? We suspect it's partly because none of those agencies wanted to get entangled in a messy fight that could end up in court — as the Caton Landfill case has after county officials concluded the landfill was operating beyond the scope of its permits. And we suspect none of them wanted to be the bad guy. Nobody wanted anyone to think "The Government" was interfering in a local business.

It's also because those agencies lack the manpower to do much in the way of effective code enforcement. They wait until complaints pile up before they do much actual regulating. Instead of being out in the field, scouting for potential problems, it's all they can do to keep up with reading and reviewing permit applications, site maps and so forth.

The end result of all this is that companies like DTG, Caton and others know they face few, if any, consequences if their operations break any rules. Who's going to notice, let alone try to stop them?

It's another unsurprising result of years of deregulation fever.

Do government bureaucracies overstep sometimes? Sure they do. So do unscrupulous police officers — but that doesn't mean we should defund everybody and do away with all the rules.

Forty-plus years of anti-government baying seems to have successfully turned much of the public against all regulatory agencies, so it's probably pointless to suggest that county and state officials should get adequate resources to do their jobs. But it's not unreasonable to expect those officials — shorthanded and underfunded as they might be — to improve interagency cooperation and clearly convey to businesses what the rules are.

It also seems reasonable to expect them to have the courage to stand up for the environment and for local health, which is what their agencies are supposed to be protecting.

Yakima Herald-Republic editorials reflect the collective opinion of the newspaper's local editorial board.

**YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC FEATURED SPOTLIGHT**

# Yakima County commission candidates asked about Rocky Top landfill issues during forum

**PHIL FEROLITO**

**September 17, 2022**



A truck puts water on the road to the landfill at Rocky Top Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash., Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic



Angie Girard makes signs in support of Christine Blasey Ford during Judge Brett Kavanaugh's Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Thursday, Sept. 27, 2018, in Yakima, Wash.

• Evan Abell / Yakima Herald-Republic

## Candidates for the Board of Yakima County

Commissioners gathered Thursday at the Terrace Heights Civic Center to

respond to a series of questions from the Yakima Republican Women's Club, which hosted the forum.

Candidates were asked their position on the usual topics: Crime prevention, water issues and water rights, the county's operating budget, and the state Growth Management Act.

But one issue emerged that wasn't included in the forum's initial program: [The landfill at Rocky Top](#) on the flanks of Cowiche Mountain just west of Yakima.

There, a limited purpose landfill owned and operated by DTG Recycle has made [recent facility expansions](#) that have drawn the ire of residents and caught the attention of regulators. The landfill property overlaps the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy, which oversees many trails and natural habitat in the area.

There are six candidates spread across three commissioner races heading into the November general election. In District 1, Republican businessman [Kyle Curtis](#) faces former Yakima City Council member Dulce Gutierrez, a Democrat. In District 2, incumbent [Amanda McKinney](#), a Republican, is challenged by write-in candidate Angie Girard, a Democrat. And in District 3, Incumbent LaDon Linde faces retired Army command sergeant major Steve Saunders, both Republicans.

Gutierrez was the only candidate who didn't attend Thursday's forum.

All candidates in attendance agreed that combating increasing crime is a top priority, that the budget needs to be closely watched, water rights need to be protected within reason and that the Growth Management Act — which governs rural development — could use some updating and retooling, though their perspectives on solutions varied.

But the most pointed discussion was that of Rocky Top, which is within McKinney's district.

Neighbors complain of dust, odor and other problems they say are caused by the landfill's increase in business and fear what their future expansion plans may mean for the environment.

McKinney told the crowd of about 50 people that the business is properly permitted and has a right to operate, though neighbors may not like it.

“Nobody wants to have a landfill in their backyard but we need landfills and that landfill is already approved,” she said. “And you could speak to the planning department and they will tell you there could be a lot of other things (located there) that neighbors wouldn’t want there.”

McKinney said there needs to be a balance between assuring the landfill abides by regulations while also protecting the rights of neighbors and preserving the conservancy.

She said she helped organize a meeting with all parties including neighbors after learning they were not communicating with one another.

“What I can say is they’re talking now and that is what they need to do,” she said.

Curtis, who serves on the county’s planning commission, questioned why the county wasn’t assessing a tax for waste disposed from companies outside the county.

There’s been complaints about DTG accepting waste from other counties on the west side of the state.

“I would say what has sparked my interest is why is our county attracting large corporations to come and bring their trash into our county?” Curtis questioned.

He said the county should be charging an additional tax for loads from outside the county.

“I think there might be an opportunity in a win-win to address the concerns the community is addressing but also bring in a new revenue source for the county and to potentially help (fund) roads and whatnot,” Curtis said.

Girard agreed that there needs to be lots of communication and collaboration between all parties. She also agreed with Curtis.

“There should be an out-of-county dump fee because they are attracting a lot of dump from outside the county and it’s a way to raise revenue and pay for some of the issues going on in that area,” she said.

Saunders likened the issue to a complaint he received from a caller about the odor caused by dairies.

The caller said he just moved there last year.

“I was like, ‘Well, it’s kind of like if you buy a house underneath an airport or next to an airport, there’s going to be airplanes,’ ” Saunders said. “To me, this is the same type of issue.”

Saunders said people should consider the area before moving there.

“Once again, know where you’re buying,” he said. “Don’t buy next to a landfill.”

Linde, a former dairyman, echoed McKinney’s sentiments on getting all parties together and talking before shifting his response to complaints surrounding dairies.

He said the dairy industry has an opportunity to work with a private company that wants to use a digester convert cow manure into a renewable energy.

“So I’m really optimistic that this might be a real solution in that area,” he said.

Reach Phil Ferolito at [pferolito@yakimaherald.com](mailto:pferolito@yakimaherald.com).



Amanda McKinney  
Courtesy photo

LaDon Linde

Amanda Ray / Yakima Herald-Republic file



Steve Saunders  
Courtesy photo

## Land parcels owned by DTG Recycle

DTG Recycle plans a southward expansion of its disposal area on property it owns in Yakima County because the current site is nearing capacity.

DTG plans a southward expansion of its dumping site on property it owns because the current site is nearing capacity.

© [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors

**Cowiche Canyon**

**West Trailhead**

**DTG Recycle**

**West Valley**

**Summitview Rd.**

**Yakima**

**Rocky Top Trailhead**

2000 feet

N

Yakima County

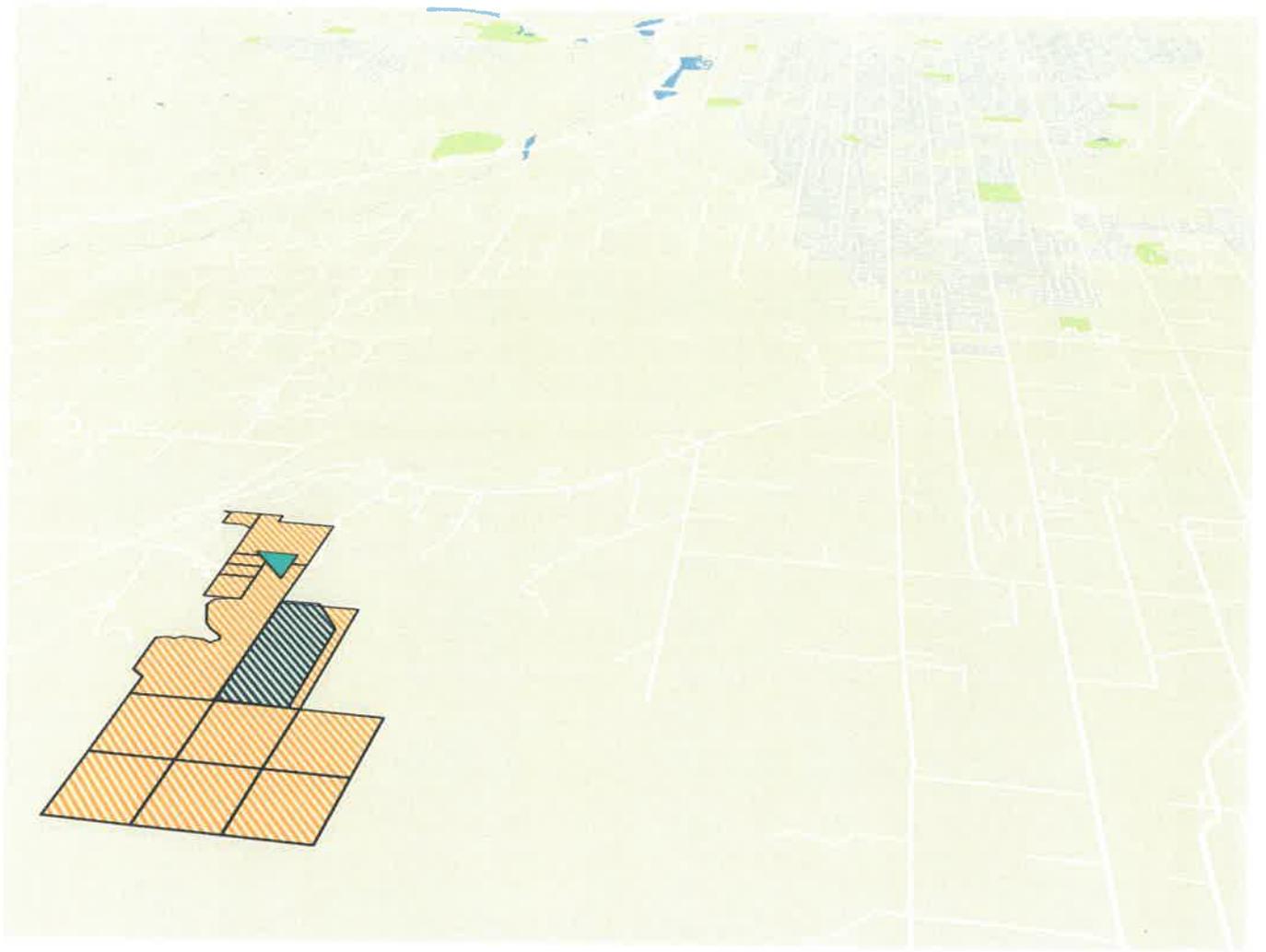
Yakima County

Land parcels owned by DTG Recycle

Planned LPL expansion area

PCS remediation area

Map: Jason Lilly / Yakima Herald-Republic Created with [Datawrapper](#)



# Yakima Health District presents Rocky Top residents with evacuation plan in case of a chemical leak at DTG



By SANTIAGO OCHOA Yakima Herald-Republic

The landfill at Rocky Top can be seen from a trail on Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, in Yakima, Wash.

Evan Abell, Yakima Herald-Republic file

The Yakima Health District presented neighbors of DTG Recycle’s landfill near Rocky Top with an emergency evacuation plan Thursday should firefighting efforts at the landfill go awry and release hazardous chemicals into the

air.

In 2022, sampling conducted by the state Department of Ecology detected hazardous chemicals leaking out of the landfill and into the air. This led Ecology to give the site a Model Toxics Control Act designation, which would allow for decontamination efforts to start in the area. During follow-up testing in March, Ecology and the health district discovered an underground fire inside a closed cell in the landfill.

On top of monitoring the fire, the health district continues to test for benzene, hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide in the air near the landfill. Daily tests over the last few months have not detected hazardous levels of the three chemicals. Groundwater tests in the area have also shown no signs of contamination.

During an informational meeting Thursday for residents living near Rocky Top, the health district explained the method being used to put out the fire.

Representatives from the health district, Ecology and Yakima Valley Emergency Management also presented an emergency evacuation plan for residents.

With guidance from two landfill fire consultants, one hired by DTG and the other by the health district, officials adopted a soil cover grading plan to put out the fire. A 3-foot-thick layer of soil is being placed over the affected area to limit the amount of oxygen entering the landfill and feeding the fire.

Andy Wilson, the health district’s emergency response coordinator, said there is no estimate for when the fire will be extinguished.

Variables like the size of the fire and the materials inside the landfill vary greatly between landfill fires so making an estimate is hard, said Ryan Ibach, the health district's chief operating officer.

Most likely, the fire will take months, if not longer, to be completely put out.

Health district officials said other methods of extinguishing the fire posed too great a risk to area residents, workers putting out the fire, and the environment.

They said trying to excavate the landfill could fan the fire by exposing it to the open air — at the same time, increasing the risk of hazardous chemicals leaking into the air in greater volume. Since the pit is unlined, using water to put out the fire would result in the water passing through the waste inside the cell and soaking into the ground below it.

Health district officials said daily testing at the site will continue.

Officials decided on a three-level evacuation plan. Should a mass release of hazardous chemicals occur, residents living within a three-quarter-mile radius of the landfill would be evacuated first. If the plume of chemicals reached farther out, residents living within a one-mile radius would evacuate next, followed by residents living within one-and-a-half miles.

Upon detecting dangerous levels of chemicals in the air, affected residents would receive an evacuation notice on their phones through Alert Yakima. If they have nowhere to stay, DTG would provide free lodging at a hotel in Yakima. Residents would also receive \$69 daily for food.

Residents with livestock were instructed to reach out to Yakima Valley Emergency Management in case of an evacuation. The organization has a team of volunteers ready to evacuate livestock and an agreement with the Yakima County Fairgrounds to house the animals.

The health district [recently denied DTG's operation permit](#) for its limited-purpose landfill along with Caton Landfill near Naches after citing environmental concerns.

Residents living near Rocky Top can sign up to receive emergency notifications by visiting [yakimacounty.us/alertyakima](http://yakimacounty.us/alertyakima). The health district will continue providing routine updates on the DTG landfill on its [website](#).

Santiago Ochoa's reporting for the Yakima Herald-Republic is possible with support from [Report for America](#) and community members through the [Yakima Valley Community Fund](#). For information on republishing, email [news@yakimaherald.com](mailto:news@yakimaherald.com).