

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/car-shredder-landfill-deq-public-meeting-pacific-steel/article_a42b88f4-84fc-11ee-a1f7-b37a73c019ce.html

ALERT EDITOR'S PICK

LAND USE

Meeting on proposed car shredder landfill planned for Tuesday

Tom Lutey

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This car shredder in Mayfield, Idaho, near Boise, is similar to the one Pacific Steel and Recycling operates in Lockwood.

BILLINGS GAZETTE

Tom Lutey



A private landfill for shredded car waste, which would be located a few miles east of the Billings Heights, will get a public meeting the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.



A sign displays a message in opposition to Pacific Steel and Recycling's proposed landfill at Highway 87 and Shepherd Action Road.

LARRY MAYER, BILLINGS GAZETTE

The landfill, proposed by Pacific Steel and Recycling, would collect the residue from the business' regional car shredding operation northeast of Lockwood. Pacific estimates that it generates 25,000 tons of the shredded auto waste annually. The Lockwood shredder processes cars mostly from Montana, but also from out of state. Currently that waste goes to the Billings Regional Landfill, but Pacific says it wants the option to mine the waste in the future.



A sign shows the location of Pacific Steel and Recycling's projected landfill at Highway 87 and Shepherd Action Road.

LARRY MAYER, BILLINGS GAZETTE

“Our goal and mission is, as the technology gets better and we have the capacity to do so, to remine that area of materials,” said Kirby Farner, Pacific’s health, safety, environmental and transportation director. “Otherwise, the waste will be lost forever in the Billings Regional Landfill.”

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The nine-state recycling business bought 320 acres at the intersection of U.S. Highway 87 and Shepherd Acton Road. Kirby said the landfill would take up about 25 acres of the land. Pacific's permit application shows a final waste boundary of about 90 acres and indicates it would take the business 122 years to fill it.

Neighbors hope to dissuade Montana's Department of Environmental Quality from permitting the project. They argue another landfill in Yellowstone County doesn't make sense. The Billings Regional Landfill is designed to serve five counties and easily accommodate the waste from Pacific Steel and Recycling.

"I talked to Kyle Forman at the Billings Landfill. That landfill will not be full until 2050 if we continue going the way we are. He said there's no problem with (Pacific) dumping out there," said Kit Charter Nielson, who neighbors the proposed Pacific Steel Landfill site. "Why can't (Pacific Steel) talk to the landfill and get a spot out there for a repository. Out there, it's all lined, it's all monitored and then they could go right out there and pick it up when they think they want to get it. Wouldn't that be a lot better thing to do?"

Slicing and dicing

New landfills have been rare in Montana since the 1990s when the state decided that it had too many landfills, several of which were environmental hazards. The Legislature passed new laws for regulating landfills, after which the number of Montana landfills was cut by nearly two thirds.

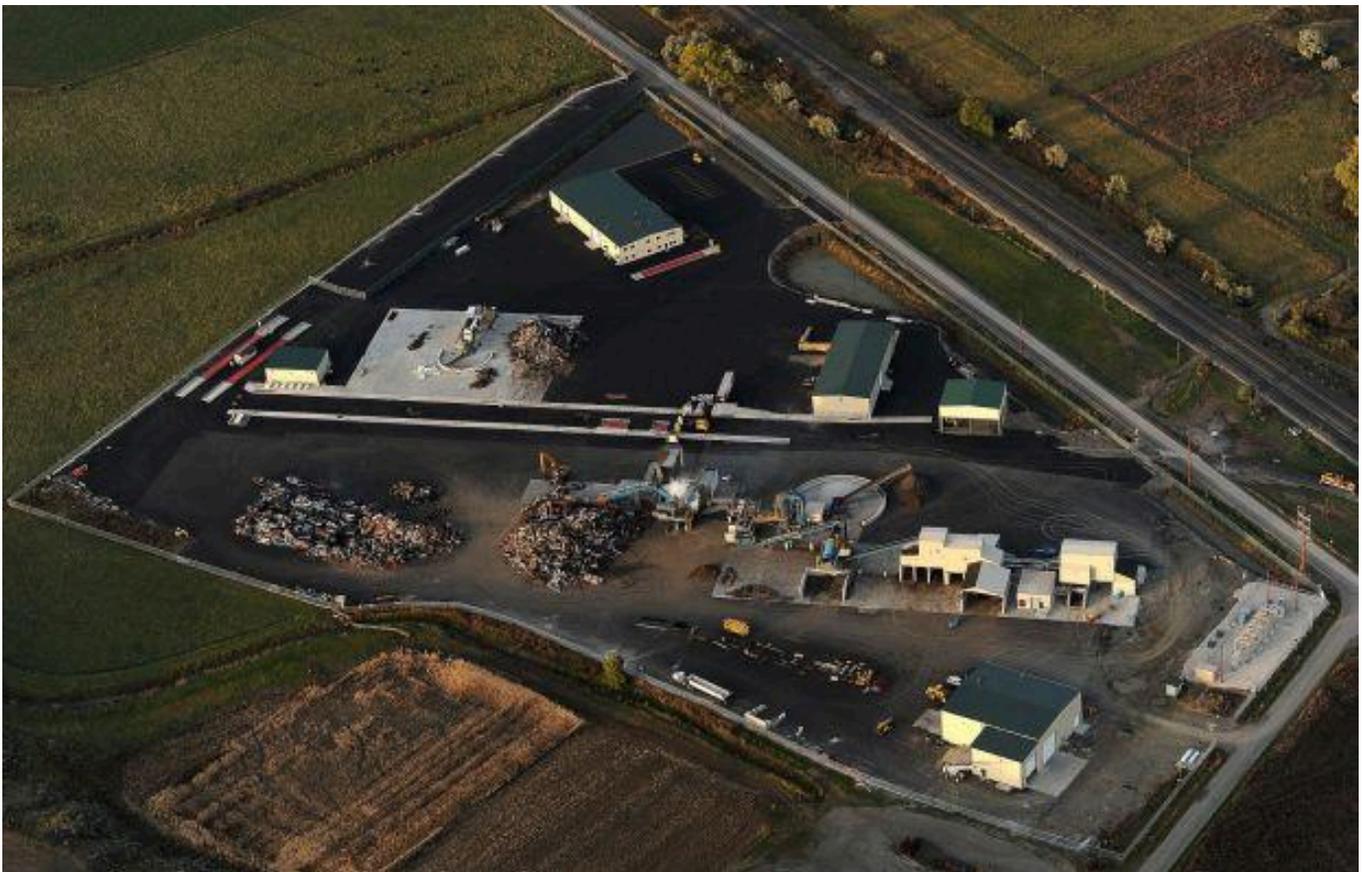
Montana had 87 landfills in 1979 and 59 two years after the Montana Legislature began tightening regulations. By 2011, the number of landfills across the state was 29. This week, DEQ indicated that the number of permitted landfills has held at 29 for more than decade.

Commissioners asked to undo 28% rate increase for NorthWestern Energy

Additionally, the 2005 Legislature required that every five years DEQ produce an **integrated waste management plan**. The last plan was published five years ago.

The waste management plans are supposed to be built around reducing sources of waste, reusing materials, recycling, composting, and landfilling as a last resort. The current plan doesn't indicate whether intentions to recycle in the future, as Pacific suggests it would do with its shredder waste if the technology materializes, is considered recycling.

Farner said Pacific Steel intends to recycle the shredder waste, because that's its business, to extract everything valuable from a junk vehicle. The technology to extract the profitable elements of non-metal automobile shredder residue, also called ASR, just doesn't exist yet.



An aerial view shows the 23-acre Pacific Steel & Recycling plant with Montana's first car shredder that opened this month in Lockwood.

LARRY MAYER, BILLINGS GAZETTE

“When you recycle a car, we’re able to recycle about 75% to 80% right now,” Farner said. “And then there’s a residual waste component that is comprised of plastic, foam, glass, rubber, and metallic fines. And it’s amazing how technology is changing every five to 10 years. It is very realistic to go back and remine that area, that small 25-acre area to recover more material as markets present themselves, that we would otherwise never be able to do at the bottom of the Billings Regional Landfill.”

Anellise Deters, who runs cattle near the proposed landfill site and is concerned about groundwater contamination, questions whether the technology will ever arrive to mine the fines of auto shredder waste. There’s cadmium, barium, lead, and benzene in ASR, according to Pacific Steel’s permit application, which raises concerns for a mother with children.

“ASR is considered hazardous in Europe, which I know is different, but they’ve already determined this material is hazardous” Deters said.

The material is grungy gray waste referred to as “fluff” by the industry. ASR resembles blown insulation.

Tester touts employee-owned businesses at car shredding stop

The truck traffic between Pacific’s Lockwood car shredder and the landfill — somewhere between four and 10 trips a day is another concern. A new bridge connecting Lockwood to Billings Heights will make the route between the shredder and landfill a straight shot for Pacific, though there’s a school on the way and some homeowners who Deters said weren’t aware of the development until she knocked on doors.

Charter Nielson said she worries about slow turning trucks hauling waste creating a hazard by turning left at the landfill site. U.S. Highway 87 is the road to Roundup. The posted speed limit is 70 mph, but Charter Nielson said few people drive that slow. His sister in-law, Jeanne Charter, was killed trying to make a left turn on Highway 87 in 2013. The family must use flaggers to slow traffic when bringing cattle trucks onto the highway.

📄 Industrial lobbyists say Montana environmental laws too burdensome

The public meeting for the proposed landfill is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. on Nov. 21 in the Shepherd High School gym. It is the Department of Environmental Quality's meeting, but Farner said that Pacific Steel and Recycling plans to make a presentation about its project.

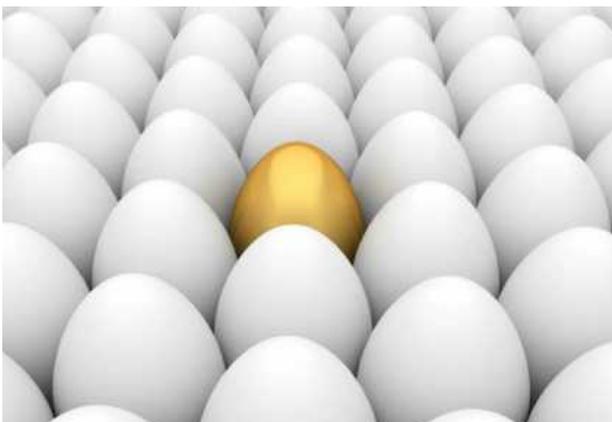
Initially, DEQ provided a brief 10-day period for the public to comment on Pacific Steel and Recycling's landfill plan — this despite government correspondence to Pacific indicating the public would get a month to respond. Farner said the 10-day period wasn't something Pacific asked for.

▶ MEPA hearing held in Helena

The short 10-day period angered neighbors, who argued that they couldn't review the business's 813-page application in the time allowed. DEQ then granted **a 30-day comment period, which will end Nov. 30.**

There are now dueling Facebook pages supporting and opposing the landfill.

■ Around The Web



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