

Wednesday March 24th 9:30AM PST
King County Mobility and Environment Committee



Honorable Council Members,

My name is Philipp Schmidt-Pathmann and have been living in the City of Newcastle for 26 years. As of October 2020, I am the Managing Director of the Institute for Energy and Resource Management or leRM. leRM is a newly founded 501c3. I lead a team of scientific experts & specialists from Government Entities, Universities, Institutes, Independents etc.

From a scientific perspective, we are very concerned about the lack of information and completeness of data in the 2020 Strategic climate action plan regarding the management of waste. The key issue is that the operation of a landfill accepting waste with a Total Organic Carbon of more than 3% will result in the potentially significant production of gases and leachate. Focus area 5 starting page 131, not only minimizes the actual impact but speaks of being carbon natural by 2030. The current approach of extending the landfill is counterproductive.

Based on the 2019 NASA/NOAA project that studied methane emissions across California there could be 100,000s of tons of CO₂ that are unaccounted for. The findings were as follows: 1) landfills are the largest point sources of methane with over 40% vs oil & gas at 26% and the dairy industry also at 26%. This was a surprise to many as landfills were assumed to be able to capture most of their methane and 2) landfills had in parts significantly underreported their methane emissions.

The findings further support the conclusions already reached nearly two decades ago in Europe reading GHG emissions from landfills. One of the reasons why Europe enacted a law that all EU countries have to phase out landfilling of still reactive waste. Considering that the King County Cedar Hills methane emissions are based on mostly theoretical calculations, Cedar Hills could very well be emitting 100,000s of unaccounted tons of CO₂ equivalents as well. The amount of methane capture at Cedar Hills needs to be scientifically verified.

The current plan to expand the Cedar Hills Landfill will further threaten the K.C. Climate Action Plan and likely make the goals unachievable. A landfill expansion will also hinder avoidance, recycling and recovery efforts adding to the CO₂ dilemma.

The actual shift away from landfilling must be initiated this year with the goal of zero waste of CO₂ and leachate producing waste to landfill by 2030. In our experience this can be achieved in 5-6 years.

Thank you on behalf of our team and the citizens of King County,
Philipp Schmidt-Pathmann

*leRM provides **reliable** research for the purpose of finding and implementing sustainable solutions to societies energy and **resource** management challenges. At leRM we seek the **continuous** development and use of technologies **and practices** that will enable us to **significantly reduce** the human impacts on the natural environment. leRM connects scientific research with business and policy solutions in order to serve the best interests of the public in moving toward a sustainable economic future.*