



Bureau of Land Management



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NEWS

Press Release: 2001-08
For Release: January 26, 2001

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Pages: 3
Photos: 35mm available

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Public Dumping: Everyone's Problem

Litter along the nation's roadways has always been an eyesore which detracts from the beauty of our western landscapes and from the cleanliness of our communities. Trash is not only unsightly, but may also contain animal and human feces, drug paraphernalia and other undesirable components.

In many places, including rural Nevada, one might say that litter has been taken one step further, to public dumping. Just as in the case of litter bugs, it is hard to catch the small number of culprits responsible for creating public dump sites. Offenders caught illegally dumping trash face penalties of up to one year in prison and/or a \$100,000 fine.

Communities are also burdened with high costs associated with public dumping. Garbage and household trash such as used tires, appliances and waste oil, dumped on private, BLM-administered or other public lands, require taxpayers to foot the bill for clean-up efforts and disposal. For example, recent clean-ups of illegal dumps have locally totaled an estimated \$29,000 to taxpayers to clean up the long-standing Taylor Canyon dump northwest of Elko, and over \$300 plus the labor of an area Honor Camp crew for cleanup of scattered trash on BLM

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lands southwest of Elko along Bullion Road. These costs are currently covered by federal tax . dollars which are part of the BLM's annual appropriation

Items, such as those mentioned above, can also be hazardous and damaging to wildlife, groundwater supplies and sensitive vegetation. Outdoor recreation has heightened environmental awareness of public lands and the desire to maintain clean and healthy natural areas. The public is encouraged to use landfills, dumpsters or other established facilities available locally for disposal of waste. The public can also help by reporting illegal dumping to local officials.

It is amazing what a positive difference a few people can make. Recently, three Carlin High School students organized a two-day community clean-up project to clear illegal dump sites in the Carlin area. Dump trucks were loaded with discarded appliances, furniture, stoves, washers, garbage and other miscellaneous items, and hauled away to appropriate disposal facilities over the two-day effort. The Carlin community strongly supported the work through donations of time and energy, equipment, refreshments and plans to pursue "No Dumping" signs.

BLM employees have recently initiated the following efforts to clean up dumpsites:

- Carlin area: Large items, such as pieces of automobiles, and other litter, filled two truck loads and were taken to appropriate disposal sites.
- June, 2000, three BLM employees and a prison crew, cleaned up five tons of trash on public and private lands.
- January, 2001, 7 BLM staff removed a bed, 2 washing machines, 12 tires (disposed of at Les Schwab Tire Center free of charge), and other miscellaneous litter from Mary's Wash, west of Carlin.

A group of neighbors, students and community businesses can always make a difference. So can one responsible individual. Keeping the environment clean and healthy takes very little time if everyone does his or her part. The results and benefits are immeasurable.

For questions concerning proper disposal of household trash, please contact your local public works and/or sewage and composting facilities. If they cannot answer your questions, referrals will be made to appropriate locations.