

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
County of Luna

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Media Release

A partnership between Keep Luna County Beautiful and the Bureau of Land Management is working to cleanup illegal dump sites throughout the county.

Joe Padilla, coordinator for KLCB, said Luna County has received a \$25,000 grant to support cleanup efforts around the area. The funds will be used for education, equipment, signage and enforcement, all meant to decrease the amount of local illegal dumping. The BLM, a federal agency, provides workers who coordinate with county Codes Enforcement to identify and cleanup illegal dump sites.

“We tried to do this in Dona Ana County on state and federal land,” Padilla, who worked for Dona Ana County before moving to Luna County, explained. “We piloted an illegal dumping project with BLM and that turned out to be a big thing.”

Because of his experience in neighboring Dona Ana County, he reached out to the BLM after taking over the KLCB program and simply asked if a similar effort could be made in Luna County. About two-thirds of the land in Luna County is public, much of which is overseen by the BLM.

“I am happy we were able to secure this funding. At times it is sad to think we have to seek funding to clean up after careless actions,” District No. 2 Commissioner Linda Smrkovsky said. “We are fortunate the community bands together to assist with cleanups.”

Community members come together several times a year under the banner of KLCB to assist in cleaning throughout the city and county.

“It comes from everywhere, there’s no specific culprit,” Padilla said. “I think it’s a lack of education, because we have free sites everywhere, like the city and county transfer stations.”

The city of Deming operates a transfer station on Highway 549, and the county operates two smaller facilities on Highway 26 near the Cookes Peak Volunteer Fire Department and on Sunshine Road, just west of Columbus Highway. All three facilities are open to the public and free of charge. Further puzzling to Padilla is that many times, illegal dump sites are in remote areas with difficult access.

“It takes much more effort to get out to some of these isolated areas than it would to simply visit a transfer station operated by the city or county,” he added.

Padilla believes some locals may have misconceptions about the public transfer stations, such as having loads measured and being charged for dumping. He stressed that the public facilities are free of charge to dump most household trash.

“Please contact us if you need help accessing the many options for legally disposing of trash in our county,” Jessica Etcheverry, director of the county’s Community and Economic Development department, said. “There is no excuse for illegally dumping trash, so let’s work together to keep our county beautiful.”

Technology is also being used in the region to fight illegal dumping. A New Mexico State University student developed the “NoThrow App”, an application for Apple and Android cell phones designed to report illegal dump sites. With the app, the user can take a photo of a dump site, and have it uploaded to Dona Ana County and the BLM geographic information systems. Each photo is attached to a

set of global positioning coordinates, which are used to create maps and reports for county codes enforcement departments, which includes Luna County's.

"I hope everybody can download and use the app," Padilla said. "If you are outdoors a lot, you are an ideal partner in this effort, but anyone can use the app to report trash dumping."

For more information about the program, contact him at (575) 543-6625.

PHOTO CAPTION

Workers with the Bureau of Land Management are shown cleaning an illegal dump site. Residents can download the NoThrow App to report illegal dump sites for cleaning.

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