

Yuma Sun

BLM to stop collecting trash at sand dunes

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BY JAMES GILBERT, SUN STAFF WRITER

Visitors to the Imperial Sand Dunes are being encouraged to pack up their trash and take it with them when they leave.

According to the Bureau of Land Management's Web site, it has introduced a new slogan this season: "Pack It Home," because trash collection service at the dunes will be ending in January as a cost-cutting measure.

BLM district manager Steve Borchard is quoted on the agency's Web page as having said, with costs rising and available funding declining, trash collection "simply became a luxury we could no longer afford for our visitors."

"We want to provide a safe, quality recreation experience. So we're asking our visitors to take home their trash so our available funding can be used elsewhere in the dunes."

No one from the the BLM office in El Centro was available for comment on this article on Friday. The Sun also tried to contact American Sand Association spokesman Michael Sommer, but he did not return a call placed to his office.

To provide time for visitors "to get the word" about the change, Dumpsters will be available when the season opens Oct. 15 but will be phased out no later than the end of January.

"We need that transition time to educate visitors about the change and gain their cooperation. We're already gratified to see key user groups getting the information out, as the more education we can all do, the easier it will be to gain understanding and compliance," Borchard is quoted on the agency's Web page.

Dumpsters currently located at Gecko Road, Glamis, Dunebuggy Flats, Buttercup, Midway Wells and near the Plank Road will be closed after the January deadline.

Daniel Patterson, Southwest director and ecologist for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, said he considers any trash created by visitors to be their personal responsibility.

Since trash has been a huge problem in the past, Patterson suggested BLM

take a zero-tolerance approach to enforcing the new policy.

"Take your trash out with you and dispose of it properly back home and recycle what you can of it. It is just the right thing to do."

Patterson did add, however, that at least one a study of public lands throughout the nation has indicated that places where trash collection service was offered, more trash was generated than at public lands where visitors were responsible for their own garbage.

According to BLM, money for the Dumpsters and the trash collection service is paid through recreation fees visitors are charged.

The 2007-2008 season brought rising fuel costs and dwindling fee revenues. These two factors combined to price this service out of range, according to the agency's Web site.

Patterson added that the money BLM saves by no longer collecting trash can be put into law enforcement and preservation efforts.

"Rangers have more important things to do than go around picking up your trash."

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COMMENTS as of 10/9/08

Nice now our BLM lands will look just like Mexico!!! Viva Jimmy Carter! Do you really think those MORONS from Cali will take anything back to their republic with them? Soon the dunes will look like New Delhi!! aka San Luis....or Algodones

Soon to be the worlds largest landfill.

Good idea. Save money on dumpsters then spend ten times the amount saved to pick up all the trash that will be blowing all over the dunes.....Brilliant.

Blm wants to stop that so they can bring in more of the gestapo cops who just like pushing people around. The bad guys are not even in the same area they get the cop update prior to comin out. The cops then look for normal good people who might not have all the proper items on board like a green sticker...yes I got stopped for that and my buggy is street legal my bad. A lot of time and money later I have one but I'm still weary of BLM.