

# Yuma (AZ)Sun

## Funds secured for dunes trash pickup

[BY WILLIAM ROLLER, SUN STAFF WRITER](#)

January 15, 2009 - 3:10PM

Dumpsters at the Imperial Sand Dunes will remain and trash collection service will continue until the close of the season May 30.

Imperial County Board of Supervisors Chairman Wally Leimgruber said \$150,000 has been secured to pay for continued trash pickup for the next four months.

Because of a decline in visitors, there was a funding shortfall the U.S. Bureau of Land Management had to deal with. So in September, the BLM planned to discontinue trash service on Feb. 1, Leimgruber said.

Passes purchased from the BLM by dune visitors fund emergency services, law enforcement as well as sanitation facilities in the Buttercup and Glamis dunes, he said.

The funding to continue trash collection past February comes from the Green Sticker fee, a California registration for off-highway vehicles that must be renewed annually.

"We cobbled together a sufficient amount from the Green Sticker fund," Leimgruber said.

The primary use of Green Sticker fees is to enhance OHV usage and is aimed at education of off-road riders of their responsibilities. It is also for archaeological identification of acceptable trails to avoid desecration of Native American cultural resources, Leimgruber noted.

Since there were fewer season passes sold, the Off Highway Department in Sacramento approved the use of the Green Sticker fees.

The Imperial Supervisors board is now negotiating with trash collection contractors to see if they would be willing to lower their fees, Leimgruber said. Also, since all trash that can be must be recycled in California, it is a potential cash resource and an inducement for the contractors to lower the cost of their service, he added.

With another major holiday - Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Day - approaching, the dunes will attract 200,000 visitors, more than the population of the county, Leimgruber noted.

Although he recognized dune users are responsible environmentalists, the county's concern is that many will stop at fast-food restaurants to unburden themselves of trash.

The supervisors would not want to subject Dumpsters at restaurants, convenience stores or gas stations to being overloaded with dune users' refuse, he said.

The American Sand Association encourages all sand dune users to "pack it home." But ASA cautioned in a news release that Dumpsters may not be available at the dunes next season.

They recommend dune users keep trash in secure containers and if possible to store it inside their motor home or trailer but not to leave it at the campsite. Littering is illegal in the dunes. A trash-free campsite shows dune users care about the environment and they are responsible citizens of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreational Area, the release said.

"We want to encourage continued visitation of the dunes and we're looking carefully at all costs and sources of revenue," Leimgruber said.

The board of supervisors has discussed the possibility of recommending to the BLM that it needs to raise fees, but that would be a last resort. Meanwhile, the board continues to explore ways to continue trash service when the next season begins in October, he said.

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William Roller can be reached at [wroller@yumasun.com](mailto:wroller@yumasun.com) or 539-6858.