



Wednesday, February 15, 2006

## Volunteers haul out 5 tons on trash from illegal dumpsite

By Bruce Colbert BB/CC News

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Volunteers from the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership along with local citizens and the Mayer Fire Department recently removed five tons of debris from an illegal dumpsite along the Big Bug Creek near Mayer.

Cliff Titus, owner of Gate Openers LTD, used his 80 horsepower Case tractor to pull out a mobilehome that mysteriously appeared in the creek this past May.

BB/CCN Photo/Bruce Colbert Cliff Titus, above, points to where community volunteers and members of the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership removed more than five tons of illegally dumped trash from the Big Bug Creek and a tributary recently. The spot, located on BLM land off Copper Road below Smokestack Mountain in Mayer, is a popular campsite for homeless and transient people complete with a multi-story tree house shown in photo.

"It took a lot of gall to haul that back here and dump it in the middle of the night," Titus said shaking his head.

The illegal dumpsite, off Copper Road behind a trailer park at the base of Smokestack Mountain in Mayer, is on Bureau of Land Management land.

"I'd like to see it turned into a county or town park," said Mary Hoadley, UAFWP president. "It's a beautiful location, right outside of town, and I just know it would be a great place for people in Mayer, or anywhere, to come and enjoy the Big Bug and the scenery."

Mary Skordinsky, BLM recreation planner, agrees. "I'd love to see it turned into a park. There are a lot of steps to take to make it one, but I think it's a great idea."

More than a dozen volunteers helped during the three-day cleanup starting Jan. 20. Hoadley said in addition to the mobilehome, the group hauled away three tons of garbage, a half-ton of cans, and an abandoned automobile out of the Big Bug Creek and a tributary.

"We surprised ourselves with how much we got out of there," Hoadley said. "We got a lot of support from the Mayer Fire Department.

"Cliff (Titus) and Gary Bell pulled the mobilehome out of there, dismantled it and hauled it away. And we kept loading up pickup trucks full of trash and hauling them away, one after another."

Titus said refrigerators, freezers and car tires littered the area in and around the creek.

"People don't realize how dangerous it is to toss a refrigerator or freezer out in the woods like this," he said. "You get kids playing around and they shut one of them in as a joke, or whatever, and the rest take off, and now you've got some little kid locked in a refrigerator and no one can hear him yelling, and he's too small to kick the door open."

Titus also is concerned about the chance of a wildfire starting at the location. Campfire rings and a multi-story tree house built with materials from the dumped mobilehome, is evidence that people use the spot as a homestead.

Illegal dumping at the site has gone on for years, said Hoadley, and this is not the first, nor the last cleanup the UAFWP will conduct there. A backhoe and improvised stone barricade now block the turnoff into the illegal dumpsite.

But Titus says based on past experience, it is just a matter of time before dumping resumes again at the site without some preventative measures.

"It's a never ending process," Titus said. "We clean it up, and the dumping starts all over again.

"It's a shame. I think it would make a beautiful town park."

For information about future cleanup dates or the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership, call 632-6212.

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