

Havasu 4 Wheelers fight illegal desert dumping

By BRANDON MESSICK Today's News-Herald

February 14, 2017



Submitted photos courtesy of Bruce Speirs

Havasu 4 Wheelers members, from left, Mark Corder, Gary Wiskus and Mike Yahrmarkt discover the burned remains of an automobile in the Havasu desert.

There are old graveyards amid the rolling dunes and jagged cliffs beyond Lake Havasu City. The skeletal remains of old appliances, vehicles and trailers rest in the desert sand, forgotten.

The Havasu 4 Wheelers club is working alongside the Bureau of Land Management and off-road nonprofit organization “Tread Lightly” to secure these remains and give them a proper burial – at the local landfill. About 70 club members ventured into the desert north of Havasu last week, where they collected about 9,500 pounds of trash.



The bullet-riddled remains of automobiles lie in the open desert north of Havasu, a favorite unofficial spot for local marksmen to target-practice.

“This is a recurring problem,” said Bruce Speirs, who has been a club member for 10 years. “We’ve found Jet Skis out there, boats, RVs, trailers...if it can be wheeled out into the desert and dumped, people will do it. It’s unfortunate.”

The club’s “Desert Clean-up” is an annual event, bringing dozens of four-wheel-drive vehicles to the desert surrounding Havasu for the purpose of recovering some of the waste left by Havasu residents and visitors, often on BLM land.

Club members set about their task at about dawn on Feb. 7, where they recovered discarded furniture, TV sets, appliances and vehicles. Republic Waste Management, of Havasu, helped the Havasu 4 Wheelers by donating a pair of 40 cubic-yard roll-off trash containers for use in the cleanup.

Last week’s trash cleanup took place north of Bison Boulevard, which is a popular, unofficial shooting area for Havasu locals. “Some people dump their trash there, or they bring things that would make fun targets, like washing machines. Every year we go out, and it’s the same old thing,” Speirs said.

The club’s members were assisted last week by Mohave County Deputy Kevin Hartmann, Mohave County ERACE, Republic Waste Services and About Time Portable Toilets.

“I joined the Havasu 4 Wheelers about 10 years ago,” Speirs said. “The club has grown in size, and the effort has grown as well. We do this every year as a way of giving back to the desert areas that we all use and enjoy.”

For the next several weeks, Speirs said, the club will be removing the remains of automobiles from the desert surrounding Havasu, in coordination with Havasu's regional BLM office.

According to BLM spokesman Lee Tucker, the agency maintained communications with the Havasu 4 Wheelers for several months leading up to last week's cleanup, and coordinates with similar organizations throughout the Southwest.

"Unfortunately, this is a bigger problem than we'd like," Tucker said. "Debris and trash on public land is a problem, and we work closely with our partners to keep it clean. We enjoy being able to partner with groups who enjoy our public land. We rely heavily on these groups, and we're extremely grateful for the help they provide."

The Havasu 4 Wheelers hold meetings on the fourth Thursday of every month. For more information about the Havasu 4 Wheelers and upcoming activities, visit www.havasu4wheelers.org.