



## Spring Cleanup on the Ironton District

***The Ironton Ranger District on the Wayne NF has cleaned up 32 dumps so far in 2007, collecting approximately 20 tons of garbage.***



One of the many dumps on the Ironton Ranger District before Spring Cleanup.

"We haven't cleaned up this much trash around here since 1968," recalls Forest Technician Ed McFann, who is proud of the job the Forest Service is doing cleaning up the area, "if we get the trash out, maybe you can see the woods and the wildflowers again. We have a lot of trash in Lawrence County and it feels really good to see we are making a difference".

McFann is not alone in being pleased at the amount of trash being hauled out of the woods, the good feeling of making a real difference on their district is shared by everyone on the district. Ecosystem Technician Eddie Park worked with

McFann to locate and prioritize dumps for cleanup. Many of them were in streams and drainages; most included hazardous materials.

Chad Fitton, Assistant Ranger for Natural Resources, said Park took the lead in lining out the logistics of what needed to be done. "He coordinated with the two USFS Prison Crew Leaders Sean Gwin and Glenn Finley who worked with inmates from the Federal Corrections Institute in Ashland, Kentucky and made sure vehicles and roll-off dumpsters were available," said Fitton. "Eddie, along with the enthusiastic staff from the Ironton Ranger District devoted a lot of hours making sure the multi-week cleanup went smoothly and safely."

According to Fitton they've already pulled over 120 tires out of the woods and approximately 20 tons of garbage. Fitton notes, "Most of the trash is miscellaneous household debris, but we've been surprised how many old gas tanks and hazardous things we've found as well." He said finding that type of thing has caused them to adjust course but the excellent relationship they have with the prison crew has made all the difference. "We discovered the landfills wouldn't take the fuel gas tanks unless they were cut up for safety reasons. The prisoners said that wasn't a problem and proceeded to cut them up for us."

Fitton continued to say "funding for the project was minimal and is unfortunately a drop in the bucket to what is needed to really make a difference on the District. Last year we

did good work and used the small budget to award a contract to cleanup only five sites. In this lean budget year, we funded our staff but with a creative approach using prison crews we were able to make a difference on the District and clean up more trash than we have in nearly forty years."

Fitton said the Lawrence-Scioto County Solid Waste District is also working with them to clean up dumps. This two-county agency is working in partnership with the USFS to clean up dumps both on federal and private lands. "Between us we've got way more dumps to clean up than any one group could even accomplish. The job seemed overwhelming," said Fitton. "But when we realized that other groups were interested in helping and saw how many hands there were out there to pick up trash and help, it became doable. So each of us are pecking away at what we can and communicating our cleanup locations and accomplishments."

Dan Palmer is the District Coordinator for the Lawrence-Scioto County Solid Waste District. He has one crew leader for each county who work with correctional community service crews on dump cleanups. Palmer agrees that the dumping problem is serious in both counties and said, "It's good to see the Wayne National Forest and Counties working together to address the issue."

Palmer and Fitton agree that by cleaning up the dumps they are improving watersheds and water quality. "Those hazardous substances are draining right out of the dumps into our water," said Fitton, "and that affects the health of our streams and lakes as well as drinking water."

Fitton said they've also been working closely with law enforcement. "In one case we'd just cleaned up twelve dump sites on Kimble Ridge Road and immediately a new dump appeared. Our District LEO, Don Flegel, was contacted and was able to determine who dumped it and that person was out there cleaning it up themselves the next day!", Fitton said happily. He noted in other cases where they found names in piles of garbage, USFS and the Lawrence-Scioto County Solid Waste District Law Enforcement Officer, Bob Stearn, are working together on the cases. "We are also working together to develop a surveillance strategy for active locations". Dan Palmer noted the County Officials are very serious in stepping up efforts to address the issue, including raising fines and a No-Tolerance Policy on issuing fines for persons dumping. He is also trying to lead an effort to increase awareness of the issue with state legislators to increase the penalties for illegal dumping.

"The last part of the success," said Fitton, "is that this trash isn't just being hauled from the woods to the landfill, we're recycling as much as possible." He said the tires are being taken to recycle and the dumpsters they've filled are taken to a new Rumpke Transfer Station site within Lawrence County. At that facility they separate out the metal and any other recyclable materials before landfilling the rest. "The recycle station in our USFS parking lot that we host with the Lawrence-Scioto Solid Waste District also continues to get a little more use by the community, so we're hoping recycling is catching on!"

The woods look brighter on the Ironton District this spring as the dogwood and redbud start to bloom. Spring cleaning is underway and you have to think that Mother Nature

herself is pleased.

*For more information contact Teena Ligman at 812-277-3579*