

Vacant county land continues to be trashed

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A county-owned land parcel next to the Wal-Mart continues to be a magnet for trash. All one has to do is follow the trail of discarded chips packets, expended food and gum wrappers, plastic utensils / drink cups and shopping carts to recognize laws prohibiting trespassing and littering are not working and human disregard for these offenses continues to fester.

Over the years, volunteers have steadfastly cleaned up scores of tons of trash several times only to see the property, hidden by lots of green growth, continue to be assaulted.

Simply stated, there are no consequences for irresponsible folks who foul our community. These crimes are low level misdemeanors and rarely, if ever, are prosecuted.

2nd District Supervisor Valerie Starkey organized yet another clean-up several weeks back. As part of the Clean California program, Starkey brought together hero volunteers from Mission Possible Women led by Daphne Cortez, removed a dozen abandoned shopping cars from down in the ravine.

Other volunteers included Rory McDonald, Mike Richter, Michael Duval and many Wal-Mart employees, on and off-duty. Wal-Mart provided refreshments. Recology Del Norte donated a large trash bin and hauled away the most recent dump of garbage. 1660 lbs. of trash were removed. Starkey provided gift cards to all the hero volunteers.

Regrettably, the vacant land has been trashed again.

Cal Trans built yet another fence and included a convenient walkway paralleling the 101 on-ramp at Washington Blvd. The agency also added a safety crosswalk over Washington for pedestrians to access Wal-Mart. From there, one simply follows the trash trail to the store.

Starkey asked her colleagues on the Board to clear-cut the growth in an effort to remove the hiding spots for folks who are living within and creating these messes. Due to staff shortages, the cutting back of brush has yet to start.

Sheriff Garrett Scott whose job it is to enforce the no trespass ordinance is unable to do so. Scott concurs, “We simply do not have the staff to maintain the property and provide law enforcement for the rest of the county.” Scott wants the area properly controlled and those who trespass should be fully prosecuted.

The Sheriff also reports his Department is down 11 deputies. “Larger counties and cities attract our law enforcement with big signing bonuses and higher salaries. We lose good deputies because we cannot compete.” The Sheriff stated the Department needs to up its salary schedules and be competitive.

Cutting back the heavy brush for open view helped the Department of Fish and Wildlife deter transients from occupying and trashing its property along South 101 over four years ago. The cutback has worked well.

Is the time now to give this county parcel a greencut?