

Bureau of Land Management- Southern Arizona Project FY 2009 Fact Sheet

The Southern Arizona Project (SAP) is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Arizona to mitigate the effects of undocumented immigration and drug smuggling on Arizona's borderlands. Cleanup and mitigation projects are managed by the BLM and cooperating agencies or nonprofits and are funded out of the SAP budget.

Undocumented immigration and drug smuggling operations have deleterious effects on the fragile landscape of the Sonoran Desert. Unauthorized automobile and foot travel create de facto trails and roads throughout this landscape that are continually used for illegal purposes. Vehicles used in these illegal activities are often simply left in the desert if they run out of gas or otherwise become disabled. Trash left by undocumented immigrants is another familiar problem. These people typically move en masse through Arizona's borderlands leaving trash along their routes and also in great concentrations at "lay up" sites where they rest or wait for rides.

Remediation and restoration of impacted lands is another focus of the SAP. Disturbances to the natural landscape can fragment wildlife habitat, cause excessive erosion, and increase the presence of invasive plant species. Remediation efforts have focused on unauthorized roads and trails. Grading of disturbed sites, removal of invasive brush, and reseeded with native plants are standard practices in road and trail restoration. The installation and maintenance of fencing and other barriers can also help minimize illegal travel on enclosed lands. This is a continual challenge, as illegal activities occur every day on Arizona's borderlands.

The SAP is managed by the BLM Arizona State Office in Phoenix, and project funds are shared between the Safford, Tucson, Lower Sonoran, and Yuma Field Offices. These are the four field offices that manage lands along and within 100 miles of the international border—the area where most border-related illegal activity occurs. The BLM also enters into assistance agreements to help fund other entities in their cleanup and restoration projects on impacted lands within the 100 mile zone. Partners in FY 2009 included: Coronado National Forest, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Cochise County, the Town of Marana, the City of Yuma, the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, the Cocopah Tribe, and the International Sonoran Desert Alliance.

Student interns hired through the Student Conservation Association (SCA) helped make the SAP successful in FY 2009. SCA interns were able to take part in on-the-ground cleanup projects and also coordinate volunteer efforts, maximizing the impact of volunteers' time. Funds were also used to hire Southwestern Conservation Corps (SCC) crews for cleanup projects.

Highlights from FY 2009:

Trash removal: Over 234 tons (468,000 lbs.) of trash was removed through efforts by the BLM and partners during FY 2009.

Vehicle removal: 62 vehicles and approximately 800 tires removed during FY 2009.

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Land restoration: Over 650 acres of land were cleaned up and restored. Restoration efforts included clearing of invasive plant species, replanting areas damaged by unauthorized roads and trails, grading of disturbed sites to restore natural contours, and erecting barriers to minimize future access to these areas.

Nationally designated areas requiring cleanup and restoration: Cleanup, remediation, and mitigation projects completed in Sonoran Desert and Ironwood Forest National Monuments, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Cabeza Prieta, San Bernardino, Leslie Canyon, and Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuges, and Coronado National Forest.

Tohono O'odham Reservation: Over two dozen sites and 18.5 tons of trash cleaned up as a result of SAP/TO partnership agreement.

Arizona Game and Fish Department: Over 20 tons of trash removed near Arivaca during Hunters Who Care cleanup event in March 2009.

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality: SAP provided ADEQ with funding in FY 2009 to assist in the development of web-based and GIS management tools for the collection, standardization, and sharing of data between the many stakeholders affected by waste issues along the international border. Goals of this project include identifying, mapping, and making available information on waste sites throughout southern Arizona and logging cleanup efforts in a consistent manner. Doing this will help ADEQ quantify accomplishments made in the cleanup of these sites and encourage cooperation between stakeholders.

Southern Arizona Project- FY 2009 Totals

Trash removed	over 234 tons (468,000 lbs)
Tires removed	8 tons (approximately 800 tires)
Vehicles removed	62
Bicycles removed	404
Lands remediated	Over 650 acres
BLM roads repaired	33 miles
Unauthorized roads closed	7
Fence maintenance	7 miles
Signs erected	48
Wells maintained	3
Marijuana plants destroyed	103



A typical “lay up” site. Clothing, backpacks, food wrappers, and water bottles make up the bulk of the trash at this site.



Volunteers made many cleanup efforts possible. Safety instruction is part of volunteer training.



Two days work yield of approximately 7 tons of trash



Road used for illegal smuggling through the Sonoran Desert National Monument before and after remediation.