

"PRESCOTT MESAS"

SUMMARY:

This project is unique due to its multi jurisdictional issues. The problem area is approximately 140 acres, surrounded by housing developments. The 140 acres consisted of State Trust Land within the City limits of Prescott and Bureau of Land Management land within Yavapai County. Federal, State, County and City agencies came together to work as one on this project.

The problem consisted of this area being used as a dump site. People were dumping everything from household garbage to construction debris to old appliances and furniture. A party spot, the area was littered with broken beer bottles, hypodermic needles, used condoms and remains of campfires. This area was also being used as a racetrack. There were jumps and berms and the noise and dust associated with this activity was very disturbing to the nearby residents.

A meeting was held for the community, specifically for the affected residents. At the meeting specific problems/concerns were documented. These problems/concerns were presented at a later date to Federal, State, County and City officials. Each agency had its own information regarding problems in the area however none were working together to solve it. We had been patching holes up until this point and had never really gotten a handle on it. Contacts were made and partnerships formed at this meeting for the implementation of our response to begin.

Our response was to:

- o Limit the access into the area by using signage and barricades
- Restrict motorized vehicles
- + Actively patrol
- 4 Educate and inform the public
- Provide alternative locations for legal activities

There has been no evidence of dumping or party activity in the area since the implementation of our response. There has been a significant drop in the area being used by ATV's, however due to the large area and the ability of people to create entrances, we continue to have isolated incidents of vehicles violating the motorized vehicle restriction.

## "PRESCOTT MESAS"

### **DESCRIPTION:**

#### SCANNING:

This problem was identified by a group of residents who live in close proximity to an approximate 140-acre parcel of land. Some of these residents had written letters along with sending audio tapes and photos depicting activities and asking for help with this problem. The residents live in neighborhood developments around this area. The parcel of land is made up of State Trust Land within the City limits of Prescott and Bureau of Land Management within Yavapai County.

According to the letters, the area had a long history of problems starting as long as ten years ago when the area was being mined. The mining operation hauled in living quarters and heavy equipment. With this came sewage, sanitation and environmental issues. These issues ceased after the Bureau of Land Management halted the operation. Next came "squatters" who came in and set up camp. This went on for years until the Bureau of Land Management put a stop to it. The next and current problem was the area being used as a party spot, dumpsite and moto-cross/race track. The current problem has been going on since at least 1997.

After the most recent letter (July 2000), some research was done and documentation was discovered that this problem was brought to our attention in October of 1997. The problems had either not been addressed or had been but not effectively. This problem was then selected to be a priority. The Prescott Police Department decided that we would coordinate the effort between the several different agencies that have jurisdiction in the area.

#### ANALYSIS:

After first receiving information reference this problem, we contacted residents in each of the four neighborhoods that surround the area. The residents that were contacted were asked about the problem and their concerns were documented. A contact person in each neighborhood was designated to distribute information to the residents in their specific area. A community meeting was set for August 9, 2000. It was our hope that in this meeting we would hear "from the horses mouth" so to speak, what concerns the residents had, giving everyone involved a chance to voice their opinion. With this list of concerns we

would be able to team up the different agencies and develop a plan to effectively address and solve the problem.

At the community meeting several concerns were listed:

- Parties - People were using the area as a party place.
- Fires - People are making fires in the area and leaving them unattended. This was occurring in an area where fire danger is extreme.
- + Fireworks - Unlawful use of fireworks, fire danger and noise disturbance.
- Shots fired - Discharging firearms within a close proximity to residential neighborhoods.
- Illegal dumping - The area is being used for discarding garbage, construction debris, appliances, car parts and furniture.
- o Criminal damage - Damage was being done to the vegetation, graffiti was being sprayed in the area.
- Loud noise - From ATV's occurring early in the morning to late in the evening.
- Dust - From the ATV's.
- o Trespass - People using private property to access the area.
- # Unlicensed vehicles - People driving unlicensed vehicles on streets to get to this area. The vehicles are driven recklessly and potential for accidents is high.
- Mental anguish - The residents are upset because of their peace being disturbed/lifestyle being affected.

The meeting was very beneficial and a large number of residents attended, showing their concern for this problem. Prior to the meeting surveillance was conducted and photographs were taken of evidence that would support the concerns we had heard up until this point. One definite observation was that people using this area were not biking or hiking in they were using motorized vehicles to gain entrance and the use of vehicles was noticeably damaging the area.

We were told that people have been using this area for quite some time with the most recent problems being since 1997. In the past few years this area has grown with development and is not a rural area anymore so the activity is more noticeable and affects more people.

A governmental meeting was held on August 29, 2000. Representatives from Federal agencies were: Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, which included Law Enforcement, Outdoor Recreation Planners and Field Managers. Representatives from State agencies were: Arizona Game and Fish and Arizona State Land Department Officials, which included a Trespass Manager and Off Highway Vehicle Coordinator. Representatives from the County agencies included: Yavapai County Sheriff's Office and Yavapai County Attorney's Office. Representatives from City agencies were: Prescott Police Department, Prescott City

Attorney's Office, Neighborhood Services and Block Watch Coordinator. Also in attendance was the president of the Prescott Open Trails Association. This organization promotes responsible "motorized hiking."

During this meeting we needed to gather information as to what each agencies abilities were. It was accentual to know who could do what as far as the enforcement end went and who was willing and able to help. We also needed to understand what types of activities were allowed or not allowed on the different lands. We wanted it to be a group effort since individual agencies had had a negative result in the past. The past taught us that one agency could not do everything and have a successful outcome. In this meeting the concerns from the residents were addressed and jurisdictional issues were discussed. A plan was formulated to respond to this problem. In an attempt to keep the residents informed minutes for the governmental meeting were sent to everyone who attended the community meeting.

**RESPONSE:**

We wanted to implement a solution that would greatly minimize the problem if not stop it all together. The path we chose was to have this area restricted to no motorized vehicles. This was the most difficult thing to deal with due to the Bureau of Land Management and State Trust Land going through their procedure to close the area. This process took several months to complete.

The area was signed and barricaded to accomplish this closure. Personnel from the State Land Department and Bureau of Land Management posted signs in this the area to implement this goal. The area was barricaded with large boulders with assistance from the Prescott Streets Department. Regular patrolling of the area was conducted by the local agencies to keep on top of the problem so any gains made would not be lost. A clean up was conducted after the area was closed off to maximize its effectiveness. Nearly 8,000 pounds of trash and 200 tires were taken out of the area. The clean up was done with the help of residents in the area, the County and City Community Service Work Programs and Police Officers. Local businesses donated food for a cook-out at the event.

Sharing the information in house as to how the problem would be handled was done before the implementation of the response plan. Until the area was officially closed to motorized vehicles, during

regular patrols we would contact people and inform them of the coming changes and offer alternate locations where their vehicles could be driven. Local agencies from Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, Forest Service and the Prescott Police Department's Patrol and Community Services Divisions had a large part with this notification process. In addition to these enforcement agencies the Prescott Open Trail Association also assisted. The jumps and berms were flattened to make the area less attractive for vehicles this was accomplished with the assistance of the Yavapai County Road Department. The media was utilized as a means of getting this information out to the public.

**ASSESSMENT:**

The results were that this area is no longer actively used as a gathering spot for parties, off road vehicle use, dump site and target range. The dust has settled, the constant noise is gone and there is no longer a parade of vehicles in and out of the area. Where once was just dirt due to the constant vehicle traffic, plants and grass has started to grow. The contacts that were made in each of the neighborhoods have told me of a dramatic change in the activity. Although not a total stop, there have been only a few isolated incidents in the past four months because of the large area and ability of people to create entrances into the area. The evaluation process has been from November 2000 through April 2001. Monitoring the area on a regular basis along with feedback from the residents that are the most affected by this problem, have been the most important evaluation criteria.

As far as implementing the response plan, the biggest problem was getting the restriction for motorized vehicles only because it took a while and our progress seemed to be halted. There will have to be a regular monitoring of the area to maintain the results. The residents of the area have made strides to make a 40-acre section of the land into a park. This is in an application process, which is hoped to be decided on this year.

**AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:**

- + The Prescott Police Department adopted this problem-solving initiative.
- A few years before this project began there was instruction on the SARA model given to the department.
- No additional incentives have been given to officers who engage in problem solving.
- The use of the SARA model was the only resource used to manage this problem solving initiative.
- + There were no issues or problems identified with the problem-solving model.
- General resources committed to this project were: hundreds of man-hours by officers in the Community Services Division of the Prescott Police Department, Prescott Police Department Community Service Work Program, Yavapai County Roads Department and the cost to dispose of the trash. None of these went beyond existing departmental budgets.

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