

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Cleaning up the County

Grassroots organizers dig in to bag up roadway litter

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The Bandera Prophet

At their own expense, a group of local residents grabbed some garbage pickers and hit the streets, filling up 108 bags of trash from along the side of the road. After the county mowed the easements earlier this month, hidden bags of garbage and other refuse was shredded and spread like confetti. Over the course of two days, around 25 volunteers cleaned up seven miles, from Hwy. 173 down Bottle Springs Road to Rodeo Road and back to Wharton's Dock Road at the Flying L.

"The trash was visible everywhere. Our right of ways were filled with litter. San Antonio looks better," Bridlegate resident Mike Stiborik said. Bandera County Road and Bridge Superintendent John Andrade said when crews are mowing, they don't always see the small grocery bags, but when they can, they take the time to pick them up.

"When they see whole bags, they will call the Sheriff's Office to inspect for utility bills to find names," Andrade said.

Pct. 2 Commissioner Bobby Harris said in his precinct, workers will go through trash bags found on side of the road and look for identification.

"If we find a name we will prosecute," Harris said. "We can fine \$200 or tell them to pick up certain amount of tonage."

Harris said the Don't Mess With Texas signs have been proven effective, because littering increased while they were down. Andrade said community clean-up days and the TxDOT Adopt-a-Highway program would be a good place to begin tackling the issue.

On Thursday, Andrade said starting up an Adopt-A-Road program would cost between \$650 to \$1,000 to get started, a reasonable expense with a bigger return. In exchange for a regular commitment to clean a section of road, the county would provide volunteers a signed road designation, fold-down caution signs, disposable vests and garbage bags.

“Everything costs something at start up, but it wouldn’t be much to keep it going. Bandera County would have to adopt its own policy,” Andrade said, adding the road sign - which costs between \$75 and \$100 each - would represent a person or business, and that designee would be responsible for maintaining a clean-up schedule.

“If the person does not consistently meet their quota, the sign comes down,” Andrade said.

Bob Brischetto, coordinator of the annual Lake Medina Conservation Society Medina River Cleanup which attracts volunteers from all over the country, offered his endorsement of the effort.

“We have 20 signatures from people so far who want to help out,” Brischetto told the court. “Litter doesn’t just stop at the roads.”