



Adult probationers paint over graffiti near “Black Bridge” as part of their mandated community service Friday, April 10, in the Butler area.

Adult probationers clean up illegal dumpsites

KINGMAN – Once again, the Mohave County Probation Department is using offenders to clean illegal dumpsites while working off community service requirements.

Residents are getting used to seeing probation officers and adult or juvenile offenders working to clean up trashy areas in Mohave County.

A work crew of adult probationers was organized by Probation officers John Somma and Lance Bowen to collect trash

and paint over graffiti near “Black Bridge,” south of Kingman, Deputy Probation Officer Senior Dustin Alder said. “They also cleaned up and covered a lot of graffiti under the wash near Kingman High School. More than a ton of trash was removed from the desert and fifteen gallons of paint were used to cover vandalism and graffiti.”

“This was a one-day project, held on April 10,” Somma said. “I think it is important that our probationers pay back something to the same community that they

victimized. They have to take responsibility for their actions and possibly take care of some actions that other people have caused, such as the trash and graffiti.”

“We had 11 adult probationers ranging in age from 19 to around 30 years old,” Bowen said. “Most of the trash was household junk, beer bottles, that kind of thing. There was a lot of graffiti out there. There were seven different areas in the wash, under bridges, that were cleaned and graffiti was painted over. They (probationers) did a really good job there.”

The adults chosen to work this detail were people who weren’t doing their community service “the way they were supposed to,” Bowen said. “They had missed their service elsewhere. We told them to show up for our detail or they would be in trouble. They showed up at the office and we drove them out to the site. This is the first time we had identified problem people and took them out to a work project. They did really well.”

“There was one person who did not show up to our crew,” Somma said. “A warrant was issued for his arrest. He hasn’t been apprehended yet, but, hopefully, he will be picked up soon.” Somma said the offender’s probation will be revoked and he will “absolutely” be seeing the inside of the jail for violating his probation, “among the numerous other violations he had. This shows him there are consequences for his actions, or inaction in this case.”

Somma said he has worked with the county’s ERACE (Environmental Rural Area Clean-up Enforcement) on projects in the past while working with juvenile offenders, “and they are always helpful. They provide us with trash bags, materials and dumpsters.”

“We cleaned up 1.1 tons of trash,” ERACE Investigator George Young said. “We usually are involved with the juveniles’ projects, but this time it was adults. We would like to do a lot more with them because we can get a lot done and it’s basically free labor. We accomplished a lot. I took two loads to the landfill. It was a good day.”

Evidence within the trash at one site linked to the person responsible, Young said. “We have a suspect. He didn’t clean up the mess and now he will be prosecuted. We can’t prove he dumped it, but the trash did come from his property.”

This project is a direct example of one element of the Probation Department’s mission statement to “serve justice” by requiring offenders to give back to the community for the harm they have done, Alder said. “These two officers (Somma and Bowen) organized this project on their own and coordinated all the logistics. They clearly went above and beyond their normal assigned duties in an attempt to give something back to the community. With projects like this one, everyone wins. The community benefits by having needed work completed at a fraction of the cost while positive values and accomplishments are obtained by the offenders under supervision.”

“It is good to see our probationers working hard to give back to the community as part of them being held accountable all while remaining contributing members of society versus just sitting in a cell,” Mohave County Chief Probation Officer Friend Walker said.