

SOLID WASTE IN OKLAHOMA

On Oklahoma's scenic rivers, as elsewhere in the state, every person has a duty to make sure their trash, garbage and unwanted items get disposed of responsibly. Dumping of wastes by the roadside, in the river, or on the property of others is never a good idea. In fact, it's illegal and in Oklahoma, it's a crime punishable by fines of up to \$5,000, possible jail time and other penalties that may be ordered by the court. Open dumps pose the following health, safety, and environmental threats:

- § Fire and explosion
- § Inhalation of toxic gases
- § Injury to children playing on or around the dump site
- § Disease carried by mosquitoes, flies, and rodents
- § Contamination of streams, rivers, and lakes
- § Contamination of soil and groundwater
- § Contamination of drinking water wells
- § Damage to plant and wildlife habitats
- § Decrease in the quality of life to nearby residents and the local community.

Open dumps create a public nuisance, divert land from more productive uses, and depress the value of surrounding land.

Pack It Out!

First, being responsible means packing out all you bring in, placing it in a trash container, taking it home, etc. - making sure that ultimately it gets delivered to a landfill, recycling center, or other approved disposal site.

Report Open Dumping to Your Local Authorities!

Second, being responsible means notifying the local sheriff's office, the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission office, or the District Attorney if you see evidence of illegal dumping. Local law enforcement and public health officials have a duty to enforce open dumping laws. They have the advantage of being close to the crime scene and can:

- § Immediately respond to complaints
- § Investigate to find evidence of the persons responsible
- § Require an immediate cleanup of the area
- § Levy their own local fines
- § Issue citations or notices to appear in court
- § Patrol the problem area.

A complaint may also be filed through the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality hotline at 1-800-522-0206.

Help Clean Up!

Once each year local residents and guests participate in a fun Illinois River Cleanup Float Trip to reduce the trash load in and near the river. Prizes are available for the most and weirdest trash brought in. Contact the OSRC office for details on how to participate in one of these trashy trips. Further information about solid waste management in Oklahoma can be found at www.swino.org.