

# Activists, campers initiate cleanup of campsites

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SANTA CRUZ — A dozen homeless advocates and campers began an effort to clean up several tons of garbage in a canyon off Highway 1 and Ocean Street Thursday.

The refuse-littered campsites gained public attention two weeks ago when city and county law officials walked into the wooded area and moved residents out, ticketing some for illegal camping. The campsites have been in existence for at least three years.

Several homeless people and local activists have returned to the area, vowing to clean up their act after the recent publicity.

"I am a homeless activist, but I am also an environmental activist," said Jane Imler, who has filed papers to run for City Council this fall. "We had some trash back here and the people who live out here asked to do this."

Imler was one of several people at the makeshift town Thursday afternoon picking up garbage and placing it in plastic and burlap sacks. With the county Environmental Health Department still debating how the mess will be cleaned up, the recent attention on the problem inspired Imler and others to take care of it themselves.

"Obviously we knew we had to pick up the camp, but I had never yet trudged in. We decided to do it once it broke in the press," said Imler.

Though the effort to bag the trash is expected to continue until the area is free of refuse, Imler admitted the volunteers were not sure how they would get the full bags to the dump. According to Imler, Supervisor Dan Forbus, whose district includes the area, said he would try to make a dumpster available. Failing that, said Imler, the group plans to use trucks owned by friends in Santa Cruz.

At the county Environmental Health Department, efforts are under way to get the owners of the property to come up with cleanup plans. Most of the area occupied by the campers is owned by the Pasatiempo Homeowners' Association and Pasatiempo Inc., according to health officials.

"We are trying to facilitate efforts by the property owners to clean it up. We are working with them to



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## Bags of trash await pickup.

resolve the problem," said Ilse Kolbus, solid waste program manager for the county.

Kolbus said the county is pleased that the residents of the campground are making their own effort to clear away the trash, but she wants to make sure they finish the job.

"That's good if what they get picked up goes to the appropriate place. If they are doing it, I don't think anybody is going to run in and tell them to stop," Kolbus said.

According to Kolbus, the county will continue to monitor the site in hopes of preventing future accumulations of refuse.

"We need to look at long-term solutions," she said. "That may involve better access to the area so it can be patrolled."

In the meantime, the volunteer garbage patrol vows to continue its efforts, perhaps forming a human chain to move the bagged garbage from the site to the highway to be removed.

"We won't take it out until we are sure we have a dumpster or trucks to get rid of it," said Imler.