

## United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge 1611 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Ajo, AZ 85321-1634

AL 19 2012

Sarah Walters 33 North Stone Avenue Suite 700 Tucson, Arizona 85701

Dear Ms. Walters:

I am writing to provide comments on the proposed solid waste ordinance on landfill fees for the Ajo Landfill and Transfer Station. I serve as the refuge manager for Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge which protects of 800,000 acres of Sonoran Desert habitat. The town of Ajo is located immediately to the east of the eastern boundary of the refuge.

The small un-incorporated community of Ajo, Arizona has a higher than normal poverty rate (24.1% greater than the State of Arizona average and 81.3% greater than the National average) and unemployment rate (11.5% compared to 8.7% for Arizona and 8.3% for National Average). Many individuals in this community simply cannot afford the solid waste disposal rates proposed for the Ajo Landfill and Transfer Station. Because of this, I am concerned about the potential for increased wildcat trash dumping on refuge lands directly adjacent to the Ajo community.

Refuge lands already receive large amounts of wildcat dumping from illegal immigrants who move through the area. The cumulative impact of illegal trash dumping from Ajo residents is of great concern to me. With only 5 refuge law enforcement officers available to cover over 800,000 acres of refuge lands, we simply do not have the resources available to address the current wildcat dumping issue; much less the additional dumping which will certainly occur should the Ajo Landfill begin to impose fees for solid waste.

Some of the impacts I am concerned about which can be associated with wildcat trash dumping include; food habituated wildlife, increased potential for wildland fires, increased illegal off road driving, and visual impacts to visitors and wilderness.

For these reasons I would ask that you not impose landfill fees for the Ajo Landfill and Transfer Station. Or, you have a plan to ensure that sufficient enforcement is available to discourage wildcat dumping. If you have questions or concerns with this request, I can be reached at <u>Sid\_Slone@fws.gov</u>, or by calling me at 520-387-4993.

Respectfully submitted;

Sid Slone

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Manager

40m (-) En