

## **Adopt a Highway program continues to keep Arizona beautiful**

Volunteer efforts remove roadside litter along 2,000 miles of roadway, saving taxpayers money

PHOENIX – Nearly 7,000 miles of Arizona highways take motorists on a journey through a variety of environments, from desert landscapes to snow-covered highlands to bustling urban settings. Keeping this wide-ranging system of roadways free of litter is no easy task, yet more than 12,000 volunteers and hundreds of sponsor groups beautify Arizona’s roadways and support the efficient use of state transportation system resources.

Since its inception in 1988, the Arizona Department of Transportation’s Adopt a Highway program has offered an opportunity for individuals, organizations and businesses to perform litter clean-up activities on two-mile sections of the state’s highway system.

Each year, Adopt a Highway volunteers typically collect around 63 tons of litter and provide ADOT with a current statewide labor value of \$2.3 million. The Adopt a Highway program is active in all 15 counties in the state along approximately 2,000 miles of roadway.

More than 1,500 volunteer groups and several hundred sponsor groups collect litter. In rural areas, volunteer groups are asked to clean up their designated section of highway at least twice a year. An ADOT acknowledgement sign recognizes the volunteer group’s section after their first cleanup. In the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas, sponsor group organizations pay an ADOT-approved professional landscaping company to remove litter on a section of freeway.

The cost to taxpayers for the program is minimal. ADOT’s costs include vests and trash bags for the volunteers, and the production of the acknowledgement signs. A single ADOT staff member is responsible for managing the statewide program with operational and permitting support by ADOT field offices.

“The Adopt a Highway program promotes civic responsibility and community engagement,” said Patricia Powers-Zermeño, Adopt a Highway program manager. “Picking up litter is a way for someone to have a positive impact on the appearance of their community with just a few hours of effort.”

It is community spirit that attracts volunteers to the Adopt a Highway program in appreciation of Arizona’s natural beauty. Ron Curtis and his family volunteer on a section of the Arizona State Highway System in the Navajo Nation. “It’s a tradition,” said Curtis. “The earth is our mother and nowadays it is up to us to take care of mother earth. It brings us together and we send a message out.”

Richard Martin rides a motorcycle and says it’s important for him to give back. “We use these highways all the time. I encourage motorcyclists to participate,” said Martin.

Barbara Ricca is a 10-year volunteer in southeastern Arizona. She likes being outdoors and began participating in the Adopt a Highway program to introduce her family to community service. “My girls are grown now, but the satisfaction of working in the community is still strong,” said Ricca. “Right before my daughter Amanda moved to Scotland last year, I asked her what she wanted to do and she said volunteer with the Adopt a Highway program one more time.”

Not only do volunteers feel a sense of satisfaction cleaning up the environment, periodically they also find some entertainment in the things they pick up along Arizona’s roadways: a metal sculpture of a roosting bat, articles of clothing from head to toe, cans of food, geocache items and sometimes small bills or coins.

To learn how to participate in the ADOT Adopt a Highway volunteer program, visit [azdot.gov/Highways/AdoptaHwy/Index.asp](http://azdot.gov/Highways/AdoptaHwy/Index.asp).

Read more at: [azdot.gov/media/News](https://azdot.gov/media/News)