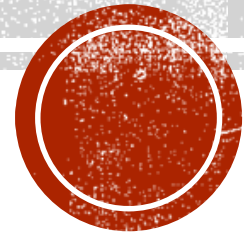


ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

Challenges of Rural Enforcement

**By: Chambers County Sheriff's Office Environmental Crimes
Detective S. Perry (#185)**



5 CHALLENGES (DISADVANTAGES) I PERSONALLY FACED AS A RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCER

1. Lack of Knowledge
2. Lack of Back-up
3. Encounters with known Citizens
4. Limited peer interaction
5. Longer periods of inactivity



1. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- *Due to the fact Chambers is a Rural County*
- In the beginning, I was not experienced in working environmental crime cases, and I needed to have contacts: The contacts made were the following:
 - **Environmental Crimes Officers outside of Chambers County.** These contacts were made at the Texas Environmental Law Enforcement Association (TELEA) conference, in Bandera TX. This is a great organization for all Texas Environmental Crime Enforcement Officers. The TELEA conference taught me about different Texas Statutes relating to environmental crimes. While at the TELEA conference, I met with many different Texas Environmental Enforcement Officers, and made many contacts. The contacts I made, were mainly from larger cities, such as Houston, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Ect. These Urban Environmental Officers told me about huge toxic waste dump cases, and massive amounts of illegally dumped tires, found in large urban area's. At that time, I enjoyed hearing about these huge cases, but due to the fact, I work in a Rural Community, I found it hard to relate to. At that time, I even remember saying saying, "**Those big environmental crimes don't happen in Chambers County.**"
 - -----Wow, I later found I was very wrong-----
 - **The Contacts with the CCSO-** The Detectives and Deputies who I worked with, did not know Texas Environmental Laws because, the Police and Sheriffs Academy's do not cover these laws.



2. LACK OF BACK-UP

- I went to many different “Hidden Places” involving different Environmental Crimes, I did not have immediate back-up, if things went bad.
- Most Rural Counties have a large area to patrol alone, and Chambers County is one of them.
 - *30 minutes or more to assist.*



3. ENCOUNTERS WITH KNOWN CITIZENS

- I grew up in Chambers County, attended school here, and spent most of my life here, most of the time on these environmental crime cases, I have encountered complainants, victims, and witnesses involved in these cases, who are friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and even relatives.
- The most difficult time, is when I have to list one of them as
 - The Suspect



4. LIMITED PEER INTERACTION

- Sometimes I may go all day without seeing another Deputy. This is a challenge due to the fact, if a deputy happens to observe an environmental crime, they may not know they are witnessing one.
- On the other hand, if they know what to look for, it may be a few days, before I am made aware of it, and begin the investigation.



5. LONGER PERIODS OF INACTIVITY

- Environmental Crimes may go unreported for long periods of time. This is a challenge to the Rural Environmental Officer, because of the following
 1. Evidence, such as water pollution and air pollution may dissipate.
 2. If illegal dumping of trash is reported and found, sometimes rain can destroy informational documents/ paperwork, that could be used to identify the suspect, and help in case prosecution.



EVEN THOUGH

- The previous 5 challenges (Disadvantages) may make the job of Rural Environmental Crime Enforcement more difficult, but these 5 challenges also can assist you in becoming a better Environmental Crimes Enforcer.



THE 4 CHALLENGE (ADVANTAGES) OF BEING A RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES ENFORCER

1. **Knowledge-** Due to the fact, in the beginning I didn't know the Texas Environmental Laws, and really could not ask other deputies that I worked with, I had to read, memorize, and learn how to apply Texas Environmental statutes, in different cases, such as the,
 - Texas Health and Safety Code (Illegal Dumping)
 - Texas Water Code (Air Pollution, Hazardous Waste, Water Pollution, ect.)
 - Texas Administrative Code.

In the beginning, I was not experienced with Environmental Laws. TCEQ agents, Alex Crank, Ed Rutland and TCEQ supervisor Dan McReynolds felt pity for me, and helped me out tremendously with advise, game cameras, and understanding the different laws to apply in different investigations. Without their expertise, and assistance, I would have not made it as an Environmental Crimes Detective.



THE 4 CHALLENGE (ADVANTAGES) OF BEING A RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES ENFORCER

- **2. Encounters with known Citizens:** Working in a rural area can be difficult, but it also can be a huge advantage too. The citizens you most likely already know, will tell you about everything you want to know about the case you are currently investigating, and this will help you out a great deal. But, unfortunately sometimes, the same citizen, will then tell you things unrelated to your case, that you really never wanted to hear.
- If the person you already know turns out to be the suspect, then this is an advantage also, due to the fact, some of the time, they will admit to the illegal dumping, because they don't want to lie to someone they already know.
- I have experienced that suspects you already know, would rather lie to a stranger.
 - For ex: Telemarketers



THE 4 CHALLENGE (ADVANTAGES) OF BEING A RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES ENFORCER

- **3. Limited peer interaction:** Can be an advantage.
- This allows the Environmental Crimes Detective to focus on his Environmental Crime Cases, without other criminal activity “in progress” or other distractions.



THE 4 CHALLENGE (ADVANTAGES) OF BEING A RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES ENFORCER

- **4. Longer Periods of Inactivity:** This is the biggest advantage of all to an Environmental Crimes Enforcer. Due to longer periods of inactivity, this Environmental Crimes Detective was able to investigate Environmental Crimes, by
 - spending a great deal of time at the scene gathering evidence and taking photos.
 - Thoroughly Investigating these cases by using the photos, and other evidence found at the scene, and on-line.
 - While investigating these cases, sometimes suspects were found, and filed on . Other times, the case became inactive and no-one was charged with the crime. But in nearly all of the illegal dumping cases the trash was removed from the scene, recycled or disposed of properly in a licensed storage facility.



CCSO ENVIRONMENTAL CASES

ENVIRONMENTAL CASES 2016-2018

- 20 Class C – < 5 Lbs.
- 27 Class B - >5 lbs. < 500 lbs.
- 12 Class A - > 500 lbs. < 1000 lbs.
- 21 Felony - > 1000 lbs.

- TTL 80 CASES

RESULTS

- 49 Illegal dumping sites were cleaned up.
- Appx. 302,161.08 Lbs. of trash was removed from the sites.
- Appx. 5 acres of land was cleaned up
- 268,860 lbs. of trash (mostly scrap tires) were sent to the recycler
- 42 violators were identified.
 - 16 cases were handled in the Justice of the Peace court
 - 18 cases were handled in the District/County Criminal Courts.





CASE #160000944

Commercial Illegal Dumping >200 lbs. THSC 365.012 Felony SJ.

05/04/2016 Scrap tires were found illegally dumped at 1001 Jackson Rd. Anahuac, Chambers County





CASE #16002381

Illegal Dumping > 1000 lbs, THSC 365.012, Felony SJ.

On 08/09/2016 CCSO discovered approximately 1000 + tires illegally dumped into Turtle Bayou at Whites Park Rd., Anahuac, Chambers County TX.

After a year long investigation, it was found this was a commercial chronic tire dumping site, and had been going undetected for years.

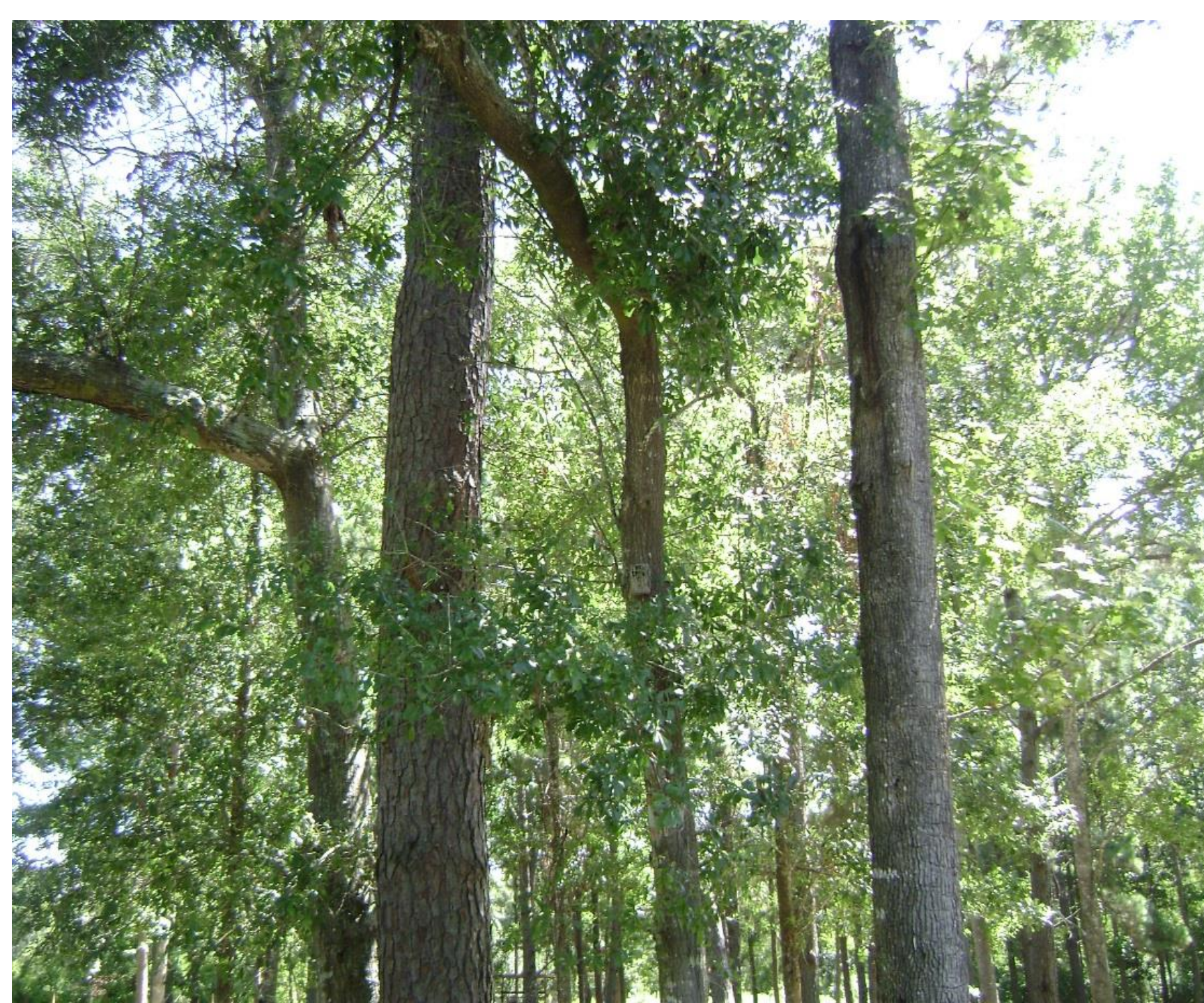




CASE #160000944

The Tire dumping investigation continued, and the suspect continued to dump scrap tires:





CASE #160000944

On 08/03/2016 a Game Camera was installed at scene, but did not catch the suspect.

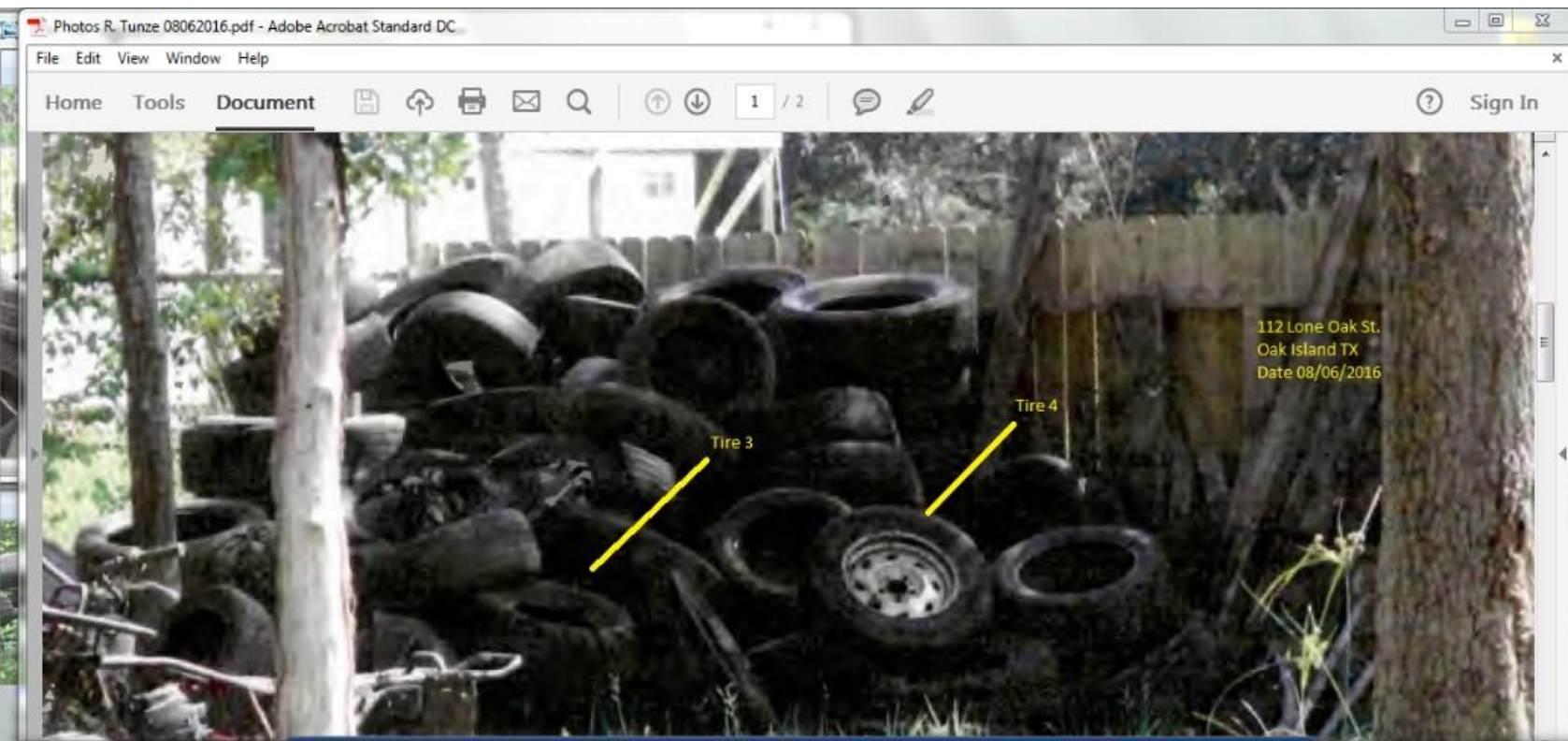




CASE #160000944

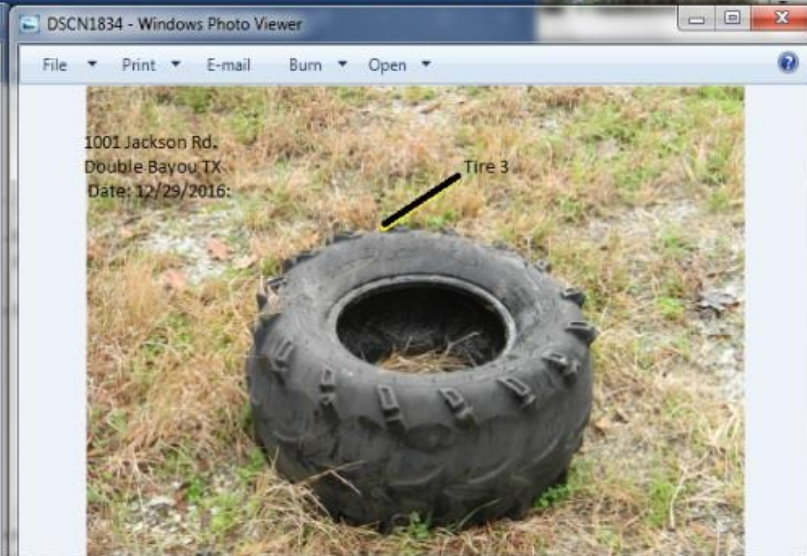
On 12/26/2016 during this investigation, the suspect was identified, due to 2 unique tires found at the scene, the suspect was paid to dispose of, from a local tire shop.





CASE #160000944

Also due to a nuisance complaint, 2 additional tires were photographed at his house, and were later found illegally dumped at the scene.





CASE #160000944

These tires were weighed and were >200 lbs. Due to the fact this was Commercial Illegal Dumping, the suspect, was later indicted on 2 counts of Commercial Illegal Dumping, Felony. 14910 lbs. of tires were removed from this site and later sent to a tire recycler.





CASE #16002381

On 10/07/2017 the grant helped to remove the approximately **245,000** lbs. of scrap tires, from the scene, and later were recycled in FT. Worth, TX.





CASES #17000231 AND 17000210

On 01/24/2017 construction debris was found illegally dumped on Oak Island Road (North of IH-10) , Winnie, Chambers County, TX.





CASES #17000231 AND 17000210

On 01/30/2017 more construction debris was found illegally dumped on Oak Island Road (South of IH-10) , Winnie, Chambers County, TX.



**CASES #17000231
AND 17000210**

- Both debris fields, appeared to have the same debris, James Hardi-Plank color coded.
- Serial Numbers printed on the back of these planks, were used to track them back to being made in Chicago, IL. After investigating this case further, it was discovered that only one company in the Southeast Texas region had ordered these planks, and they were in Tomball, TX.
- It was then later found the contractor was remodeling a house in Beaumont TX. After further investigation, it was found the contractor suspect was driving from Tomball each day, and remodeling a house in Beaumont TX. After work, the suspect would drive through Chambers County on IH-10 to go home. The suspect would stop and dump the construction debris on Oak Island Rd., so he would not have to pay the charge at the landfill in Harris County to dump the debris.
- The suspect was arrested for 2 counts of illegal dumping.



CONCLUSION

- After handling Environmental Crimes for the past 3 years, I have realized that big Environmental crimes that are being committed in the Urban Areas, are very similar to the Environmental Crimes committed in the Rural Communities. I have observed hidden by brush, an abandoned Toxic Waste Facility, which had been there for very long time. CCSO has also worked cases involving appx. 7500 illegally dumped scrap tires.
- The biggest challenge for rural environmental enforcement, is finding these huge illegal trash and Hazardous Waste dump sites, because they most definitely exist in different rural communities in Texas.
- These places do exist, but may not have been discovered yet.
- I should have listened and learned more from Urban Environmental Officers, instead of saying, **“Those big environmental crimes don’t happen in Chambers County.”**
- Thank You.

