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Pantano Wash project in Tucson turns up decades-old car bodies, gravestones

By Murphy Woodhouse Arizona Daily Star Mar 10, 2017 Updated Mar 10, 2017



Courtesy of Pima County

Massive amounts of scrap metal and concrete have been pulled from the Pantano Wash. The reinforcement project aims to provide protection for nearby businesses.

By the numbers

Found in a bank reinforcement project in the Pantano Wash.

80 tons of scrap metal.

10 tons of tires.

240 tons of concrete.

50 headstones.

2,400 tons of plant material, nearly all invasive species.

Crews working for the county along the **Pantano Wash** have turned up tons of decades-old garbage, including **rusted-out vehicle bodies from the 1950s and 1960s** and rejected, typo-ridden grave markers.

“There’s so much junk it boggles the mind,” said Eddie Paul Garcia, an inspector with Psomas Civil Engineering, the county’s contractor on the bank reinforcement project. “It’s really amazing how much stuff people in previous generations

Ground into mulch and hauled in 60 truckloads to a Marana farm.

Source: Pima County

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would dump in the river here.”

The \$8.2 million work will provide protection for businesses near the wash and a paved 1.3-mile stretch multiuse path that adds to the extensive Loop trail system, according to a county release on the trash discovery.

The amount of scrap metal pulled from the project is estimated at 80 tons. Ten tons of tires and 240 tons of concrete were also unearthed, along with 50 headstones, which the county clarified are not believed to have ever been used for burials.

The scrap metal will be stored onsite until enough accumulates to merit being hauled away to be recycled. The stone and concrete can be repurposed to provide additional bank protection.

Larry Robison, a public works manager with the county flood control district, said that **old car bodies were once commonly used to reinforce banks, but the practice has long since been abandoned due to numerous environmental concerns.**

“In the 1970s, people finally wised up to the fact it’s not doing us any good,” he said. “You’re leaving an old junker, which often has the battery left in it, so you’re polluting the wash while not doing much to actually reinforce the bank.”

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