



Allegheny County Dump Site Survey and Assessment 2017 Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Land pollution is an often overlooked or casually dismissed problem by government and other authorities. Yet, when surveyed, residents of many Allegheny County communities note litter and illegal dumping as one of their primary concerns. Illegal dumping and litter degrade communities and the quality of life of residents who live near them. They pose risks to public health and environmental quality, and create a sense of neglect, reducing property values and inviting other crimes.

Allegheny CleanWays is a non-profit that has been working to eliminate illegal dumping and littering in Allegheny County since 2000, focusing most of its work on the City of Pittsburgh. Having removed close to **5 million pounds** of debris, including **30,239 tires**, from the wooded hillsides, empty lots, alleys, roadways, and riverbanks of the Pittsburgh area, Allegheny CleanWays has begun looking at ways to address illegal dumping in the rest of the county more effectively.

The first step in addressing any problem is to gauge and assess the problem. To that end, Allegheny CleanWays determined that a current assessment of illegal dumping in Allegheny County was needed. The last assessment, completed in 2005 by PA CleanWays (now Keep PA Beautiful), found 202 illegal dump sites, but did not visit every municipality nor look beyond what was visible from the public right-of-way. Additionally, many changes that have occurred in the past dozen years within the county making it likely that the sites have changed.

For the assessment, Allegheny CleanWays staff and contracted surveyors set a goal of driving down every road in Allegheny County to look for illegal dumping. When dumping was spotted, the surveying team assessed the site for contents, size, and other distinguishing characteristics such as distance to nearest residence, difficulty in cleanup, or proximity to water.

To ensure accuracy and thoroughness of the survey process, a second, more thorough, 'walking' assessment was done in two municipalities. In this assessment, more seasoned assessors drove through the communities, stopping periodically to investigate hillsides, ravines, and other spaces that might have been missed by a driving-only survey. While the walking assessment did identify a few additional sites that were missed in the initial driving survey, the results were similar enough to provide confidence in the survey method.

In all, 486 illegal dump sites were found in Allegheny County (not including Pittsburgh), with half of the sites concentrated in just eight municipalities and almost half of the municipalities (46%) having no identified dumping at all. The estimated weight of the identified debris totals 1,404 tons and includes approximately 27,000 tires.

Of the 486 sites found, 78% were less than 100 ft. from a residence and almost 25% were 100ft or less from a visible waterway. The three most common materials found at the sites were tires, renovation debris, and household trash such as toys, clothing, furniture, etc.