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ADEQ to Participate in Cleanup from Illegal Border Crossings in Madera Canyon Area of Pima County on Saturday, May 30

PHOENIX (May 28, 2009) – Officials from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and Coronado National Forest will partner with local volunteer groups in a cleanup Saturday in Madera Canyon, southeast of Green Valley, to remove waste discarded by undocumented migrants on area trails.

ADEQ is participating in the cleanup as part of its Undocumented Migrant (UDM) Waste Project, through the department's Office of Border Environmental Protection. The cleanup is being organized by U.S. Forest Service employees and will focus on two so-called "layup areas," where illegal immigrants discard many of their personal possessions before receiving rides from smugglers.

A media tour of the cleanup site will be conducted at 9 a.m. Saturday. To go to the meeting point, take Exit 63 off Interstate 19 in south Green Valley and drive 13 miles to the southeast to the Madera Canyon Visitor Information Station.

"The trashing of the southern Arizona countryside is a huge problem," said ADEQ Acting Director Patrick J. Cunningham. "We have been working with officials at the state, federal and local levels, as well as community groups, to develop a coordinated strategy for addressing this enormous issue and organizing cleanups of migrant waste."

ADEQ has organized numerous cleanups of migrant trash during the past year in the Yuma, Douglas, Sierra Vista, Arivaca and Santa Cruz River areas near the Mexican border and about 100 tons of waste have been hauled out of those areas.

In addition to its UDM Waste Project, ADEQ has a broader, ongoing effort to address the overall problem of illegal dumping throughout Arizona. The agency has established a program to work with local officials to prevent illegal dumping and clean up illegal dump sites across the state.