

Scrap Metal Collection on State Forest Land

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is it legal to collect illegally dumped metals from state forest lands?

Yes. Illegally dumped items such as refrigerators, washers, dryers, aluminum siding, car parts, etc. are generally removed from state forest land by volunteers. A *Waiver of Liability* must be signed and submitted before work begins. Note that metal items that are still in service such as signs, gates, culverts and guard rails are illegal to remove.

Public land in Michigan is under various ownership jurisdictions (federal, state parks, state forests, utilities, etc.). Make sure you are aware of land ownership as well as the applicable rules for that land before removing metals.

NOTE: Propane tanks and other metal containers are sometimes used in the production of Meth labs on public land. If you see suspicious looking materials or propane tanks with blue corrosion around the nozzle, please leave in place and report to the Michigan State Police Methamphetamine Investigation Team at 989-732-7588.

2. Are there known dump sites that contain metal on public land?

Yes. Conservation Officers investigate illegal dumpsites throughout Michigan and provide locations to the Adopt-a-Forest coordinator. This list is accessible on the web at <http://www.cleanforests.org/dumpsite%20search>. You can search by county, township or keywords. Note that most metals get removed by reclaimers before they are taken off the list.

3. Can I remove metals from dump sites and then re-dump the non-metal portions (such as scrap tires)?

No. Any illegally dumped items that you remove from public land become your property. For example, you cannot take tires with rims, remove the rims, and then re-dump the rubber portion on public land. Non-metal items should be recycled when possible or disposed of properly. Contact the Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278 if you need help locating disposal or recycling facilities.

4. Can I search through illegally dumped piles for metals and remove metal portions on-site?

Yes. However, be mindful that you may be stopped for illegal dumping. Depending on your actions, an officer may believe you are illegally dumping as opposed to reclaiming metals. If it appears as if you are dumping, it is likely you will receive a ticket.

Do not confront illegal dumpers! Your personal safety is very important to us. If you happen to witness illegal dumping, DO NOT APPROACH THEM. If you are able to get a description of the vehicle (type, color, make, approx. year) and/or a license plate number, turn it over to the local authorities (Sheriff, Conservation Officer, or Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel) with an account of what you witnessed. To report dumping in progress, call the Report All Poaching Hotline at 1-800-292-7800.

5. Can I use equipment to dig up metals that have been buried on public land?

No. Using equipment to change the landscape on public land is prohibited without proper permits. If you have questions about specific areas, contact your local DNR office.

6. Can I use an ORV in non-designated areas to assist in removing metals from public land?

No. Please remember that you must follow all public land rules when utilizing public land.

7. Can I cut down or remove vegetation and/or trees to better access metals on public land?

No.

8. Can I go into gated, locked or posted no-entry areas in order to collect metals?

No. Many areas are posted no-entry for wildlife purposes. In addition, forest staff sometimes use caging materials to conduct studies. Special projects or restricted areas will often times be gated or signed. Only go into areas you know are open to the public.

9. Can I collect metals abandoned near oil well and mining sites?

Usually not. Many metal items near these sites are used as equipment or tools. Even if they look abandoned for many years, they may be property of the company who holds a lease on that land. Contact your local DNR office for permission to remove items near these sites.

10. Can I remove old railroad tracks?

No. Railroad tracks, even if not attached, are property of the railroad company and should not be removed from public land.

11. I am also interested in metals illegally dumped on federal land; who do I contact?

Contact your local United States Forest Service (USFS) Office.

12. Metal companies are questioning where I'm getting the metals I'm bringing in to recycle. Can I get something in writing saying I'm cleaning up public land?

Note that many salvage yards have new requirements due to a rise in metal theft in Michigan. The fact that the items you're bringing in are raising questions may be an indication that they should still be in service and should not have been removed from public land. Make sure you are only removing unwanted metals. Feel free to show this FAQ sheet to scrap metal companies.

13. Do I have to claim money earned from scrap metal collection on my taxes?

Refer to tax *Publication 525, Taxable and Non-Taxable Income* or talk to your tax preparer about your earnings from scrap metal collections.

14. I am willing to remove the metals but do not want payment for them. Is there somewhere the money can go to help with illegal dumping?

A non-profit organization accepts funds for the Adopt-a-Forest program and the money is used to dispose of illegally dumped trash. Checks can be made payable to Michigan SAF-*Adopt-a-Forest* and mailed to: 2122 South M-37, Traverse City, MI 49685.

Safety First: Extreme caution should be used when collecting metals. Make sure to wear appropriate personal protective equipment and use proper lifting techniques. In addition, many metals are sharp and rusty. Be very careful and seek medical treatment immediately if injury occurs.

For more information about cleaning up public land, visit www.cleanforests.org, call Ada Takacs at 231-922-6048, or contact your local DNR office.

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