



# TACIR INSIGHT

TENNESSEE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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## **CLOSING GAPS IN TENNESSEE'S WASTE TIRE PROGRAM AND GIVING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MORE FLEXIBILITY TO PREVENT ILLEGAL TIRE DUMPING**

### **Background**

Responding to complaints from constituents and finding widespread concern about illegal tire dumping in both urban and rural areas across the state, Nashville Senator Steve Dickerson and Senate Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Steve Southerland asked TACIR to study the issue of waste tires and suggest possible measures to prevent and reduce illegal dumping.

Abandoned tires provide breeding grounds for insects that spread dangerous diseases. They present a significant fire hazard with potentially harmful resulting pollution. And tires are bulky and heavy, making cleanup costly and burdensome—particularly when large numbers are discovered in remote locations. Although Tennessee's existing waste tire program has been successful at diverting tires from landfills and recycling them, and many of the worst illegal tire piles have been cleaned up, TACIR's study finds that the tire program isn't structured to prevent ongoing illegal dumping issues.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

- To reduce tire dumping, TACIR suggests closing regulatory gaps with regards to dealers selling used tires and the contractors that haul waste tires for disposal.
- To provide funding for counties and the state to manage waste tires, Tennessee, like many other states, charges a fee—currently \$1.35—on the sale of new tires. The report recommends expanding the state's existing fee on new tire sales to include sales of used tires, in order to better identify all sources of scrap tires and treat all businesses responsible for scrap tires equally.
- Given the notable hazards associated with illegally dumping tires, most states require tire haulers to obtain permits and require tire businesses to use only permitted waste tire haulers. This report recommends that Tennessee do the same, including proof of financial assurance as a condition of permit approval.
- Most of the revenue from tire pre-disposal fees returns to the counties where the tires were sold, and county governments are each responsible for their own waste tire management. The report recommends amending the law that currently restricts how counties can use that money, which could help counties fund more efforts to proactively target illegal dumping, like increased business inspections, community outreach, or purchasing surveillance equipment.