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N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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COUNTY RECYCLING RATES CLIMB

RALEIGH — For the third year in a row, Pitt County residents recycled more material per person than folks living in any other North Carolina county.

According to North Carolina's latest solid waste report, Pitt County's annual per capita recycling rate of 714 pounds topped all other county program rates, and was more than six times higher than the average statewide per capita recycling rate of 109 pounds. Pitt County's success in recycling can be attributed to its integrated processing made possible through its proximity to a materials recovery facility (MRF)—East Carolina Vocational Center— and its recycling of large amounts (more than 27,000 tons) of wood waste that was used as boiler fuel.

Joining Pitt County in the list of North Carolina's top recycling counties are Dare, Catawba, Macon, Buncombe, Swain, Alleghany, Orange, Guilford and Haywood counties. Dare County – a tourism hot spot – has a per capita recycling rate of 621 pounds. This rate is boosted by the recycling habits of tourists, who are not included in the county's base population, upon which the per capita recycling rate is based. Catawba County's per capita recovery rate of 366 pounds can be credited to the county's well-integrated recycling program, its institution of a pay-as-you-throw system for waste disposal in the county's unincorporated areas, and strong variable tipping fees which cause citizens to be more careful in their disposal habits. Statewide and local disposal bans have increased the level of recycling for many materials throughout North Carolina.

A strong recycling program and positive public perception of recycling helps Macon County post a per capita recycling rate of 342 pounds; Buncombe County's cardboard ordinance, as well as its adoption of a pay-as-you-throw solid waste disposal program in unincorporated areas, has helped it attain a per capita recycling rate of 335 pounds. And even Swain County, with a population of only 13,287 residents, has increased its per capital recycling rate to nearly 240 pounds, largely due to a strong recycling program which has invested in its ability to process recycled materials.

“Swain County's program is proof that even small counties can achieve success in recycling,” said Scott Mouw, chief of the Community and Business Assistance section of the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA). “Recycling markets are stable and strong for household recyclable materials, and based on the high rates of our top recycling counties, local government and citizens across North Carolina can and should do better when it comes to diverting recyclable materials from landfills.”

Commonly recycled materials are still present in large volumes in solid waste disposed by households across the state. Examples of commodities that municipal and county recycling programs can potentially recover much more of include:

- Recoverable paper represents between 20 and 25 percent of all waste disposed by households. This fiber includes commonly collected grades such as newspaper and magazines, but also grades that are increasingly accepted by mills and recoverable by MRFs and other processing centers. It is clear that greater amounts of recyclable residential paper could be recovered from North Carolina households.

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- Food waste is one of the largest remaining “untapped” recoverable materials in the residential waste stream. Unlike paper, however, the residential food diversion infrastructure is very immature. Backyard composting diverts some of this waste, and a few commercial composting facilities can process the material. Still, no community in North Carolina is actively collecting separated residential food waste.
- Containers (bottles and cans) are a relatively smaller percentage of disposed waste, but may still represent as much as one out every 10 pounds that a household throws away. The recycling rate for these materials has not been optimized.

A list detailing per capita annual recycling rates for each North Carolina county can be found below. For more information, please contact Jim Hickman, DPPEA waste reduction specialist, at (919) 715-6528/6500 or jim.hickman@ncmail.net.

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County	Population	2002/2003 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)*
PITT	137,901	713.71
DARE	32,177	620.84
CATAWBA	146,548	366.28
MACON	30,936	342.14
BUNCOMBE	210,550	335.41
SWAIN	13,287	239.92
ALLEGHANY	10,860	232.25
ORANGE	119,746	217.03
GUILFORD	428,794	213.75
HAYWOOD	55,114	206.81
WATAUGA	42,892	205.70
CRAVEN	91,902	190.73
DUPLIN	50,612	168.99
GRAHAM	8,030	162.08
DURHAM	233,548	159.91
PASQUOTANK	35,816	153.03
JACKSON	34,132	148.72
WILSON	75,374	147.89
MECKLENBURG	734,365	141.85
BRUNSWICK	79,054	141.78
MADISON	19,856	141.36
DAVIE	36,770	141.34
POLK	18,866	132.01
TRANSYLVANIA	29,400	130.60
UNION	138,928	128.77
CHATHAM	52,582	125.54
NORTHAMPTON	21,773	124.77
MITCHELL	15,934	122.49
FORSYTH	314,853	121.74
PAMLICO	13,024	119.70
CLAY	9,216	116.73
WAKE	679,510	116.59
CARTERET	60,064	115.22
WAYNE	113,844	112.67
HENDERSON	92,988	110.56
YANCEY	17,944	108.31
CALDWELL	78,234	106.01
CURRITUCK	19,632	105.16
NEW HANOVER	166,072	104.23
BURKE	89,354	101.40
LENOIR	59,294	99.44
AVERY	17,946	99.42

* Does not include yard waste recovery.
Includes county and municipal recovery

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County	Population	2002/2003 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)*
PERQUIMANS	11,607	99.32
SCOTLAND	35,766	98.34
LEE	49,810	93.07
ASHE	24,734	90.27
RUTHERFORD	63,345	89.29
WASHINGTON	13,600	89.09
CHOWAN	14,304	88.88
NASH	89,185	85.98
GATES	10,708	85.40
LINCOLN	66,598	85.21
MCDOWELL	42,960	83.34
ALAMANCE	136,144	82.12
STANLY	58,974	81.06
MOORE	77,424	80.36
ROCKINGHAM	92,589	78.70
PENDER	43,135	77.65
CABARRUS	140,176	76.13
GRANVILLE	51,540	74.70
ROWAN	132,921	70.89
YADKIN	36,958	70.57
COLUMBUS	54,890	69.95
HERTFORD	23,863	69.37
CAMDEN	7,328	69.00
CLEVELAND	97,271	67.93
HYDE	5,846	66.44
SURRY	72,028	65.83
IREDELL	130,362	64.90
FRANKLIN	50,326	64.49
EDGECOMBE	54,945	59.86
MARTIN	25,082	58.81
WILKES	66,660	58.53
DAVIDSON	150,799	57.76
ALEXANDER	34,224	54.57
GASTON	191,874	50.17
WARREN	20,000	49.02
RANDOLPH	133,836	47.93
SAMPSON	61,768	44.62
GREENE	19,471	43.10
JONES	10,243	42.81
CHEROKEE	25,080	40.60
BLADEN	32,656	38.67
CASWELL	23,718	36.43
TYRRELL	4,170	33.76
JOHNSTON	132,660	32.97
PERSON	36,764	32.10
ONslow	152,424	28.11
VANCE	44,378	26.91
ANSON	25,358	26.55
HALIFAX	57,105	24.92
HARNETT	96,152	24.08
STOKES	45,355	23.24
MONTGOMERY	27,282	19.92
BEAUFORT	45,672	19.20
CUMBERLAND	305,851	17.49
RICHMOND	46,721	12.86
HOKE	36,000	8.32
BERTIE	19,807	4.67
ROBESON	125,206	1.57

Average FY 2002-03 county recovery: 109.31 lbs per capita