



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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COUNTY RECYCLING RATES INCH HIGHER

RALEIGH – Despite a strong performance from several counties, local government recycling rates in North Carolina grew by less than one percent in FY 2003-04, according to the state’s latest solid waste report.

The report, submitted annually to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, finds that increases in recycling rates continue to lag behind statewide disposal rates, which grew by more than four percent. During the same period, market conditions drove historically high demand for recovered materials and the state’s recycling industry experienced a lack of supplies. Strong markets should bring local programs many opportunities to expand their collection efforts and to provide recyclables needed by the state’s recycling businesses.

“Every program in the state has room to improve and no one is demonstrating that better than the top-performing communities,” said Scott Mouw, chief of the Community and Business Assistance section of the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance. “Whether it is switching from small recycling bins to larger carts in Kernersville, simplifying the collection system in Raleigh or implementing a construction waste recycling program in New Hanover County, the best programs in the state are continually evolving as the industry changes.”

Dare County took over the top spot in this year’s per capita recycling ranking, knocking Pitt County from a position it held for the past three years. Dare County’s annual per capita recycling rate of 712 pounds was more than six times the state average of 110 pounds per capita.

Dare County’s recovery rate was buoyed by a large quantity of recycled appliances and scrap metal. Had these materials been excluded, the county would have dropped to third on the list. Communities that experience population fluctuations from tourism can skew the numbers slightly; however, Dare County’s strong recovery rate indicates that vacationers are taking advantage of recycling services provided by the county and towns.

Pitt County fell from its first place ranking last year to sixth place this year. Pitt County’s drop in the rankings is due to a 21,000-ton decrease in the amount of clean wood that the county processed as boiler fuel. Although the rankings do not include yard waste and other vegetative debris for statistical reasons, clean wood and pallets that are recycled or used as boiler fuel are included.

Macon County moved up to third in the rankings from fourth place last year. The county consistently shows an outstanding recycling rate thanks to a strong county-run waste reduction program. Buncombe County also moved up one spot to fourth; its program is supported by the city of Asheville’s curbside recycling program, which boasts the state’s highest recovery of residential mixed paper by providing a second recycling bin for mixed paper, allowing for the collection of more material. Mixed paper is an example of a recyclable commodity in high market demand that could be recycled by more communities across North Carolina.

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Lenoir County and Camden County broke into the top 10 this year, coming in second and seventh, respectively. Both counties recovered or salvaged significant quantities of construction waste, which makes up roughly 30 percent of the overall state waste stream.

Though counties in the Triangle and Triad regions of the state have access to construction waste recycling services, recovered tonnages don't show up in reports submitted to the state since they are privately operated.

To reverse the trend of rapidly increasing disposal and to meet the demands of the recycling industry, more communities need to adopt comprehensive public education programs and add new, readily marketable materials to the collection programs. Mouw said that increasing public usage of existing recycling services is the easiest, low cost way to improve local program performance.

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 local government assistance team leader, at (919) 715-6528.

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County	Population	2003/2004 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)*
DARE	33,328	712.30
LENOIR	58,900	445.70
MACON	31,376	360.03
BUNCOMBE	212,246	317.91
CATAWBA	146,458	315.41
PITT	139,007	287.19
CAMDEN	7,844	257.61
ORANGE	120,881	254.19
SWAIN	13,353	233.25
WATAUGA	42,772	198.73
GUILFORD	431,199	192.59
DUPLIN	50,775	182.02
JACKSON	34,990	163.37
SCOTLAND	35,506	158.05
GATES	10,834	152.30
TRANSYLVANIA	29,468	151.04
MECKLENBURG	750,221	149.60
PERQUIMANS	11,712	149.59
MADISON	19,976	149.37
DURHAM	236,088	148.52
PASQUOTANK	36,432	142.04
CRAVEN	92,692	141.34
HAYWOOD	55,822	133.56
MITCHELL	15,925	131.99
CHOWAN	14,366	131.42
BRUNSWICK	81,810	129.23
WAKE	699,503	124.82
GRAHAM	8,044	124.24
PAMLICO	12,992	123.83

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

County	Population	2003/2004 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)
BURKE	88,790	122.56
FORSYTH	317,643	122.13
ALLEGHANY	10,790	121.87
CARTERET	60,574	121.81
NEW HANOVER	169,050	121.41
YANCEY	17,926	120.70
CLAY	9,368	120.56
CHATHAM	53,684	118.26
WAYNE	113,988	112.05
CALDWELL	78,132	111.39
UNION	144,708	110.47
HENDERSON	94,496	110.10
DAVIE	37,222	109.10
BLADEN	32,784	101.83
AVERY	18,093	98.76
MCDOWELL	43,080	98.13
YADKIN	36,821	95.51
GRANVILLE	52,442	94.54
WASHINGTON	13,468	93.08
ASHE	25,086	92.33
LINCOLN	67,394	90.94
PENDER	43,699	90.16
HYDE	5,720	89.74
NASH	89,626	88.64
LEE	49,792	88.09
ALAMANCE	136,372	81.37
CABARRUS	143,433	80.93
WILSON	75,662	79.18
SURRY	71,980	76.77
ROCKINGHAM	92,423	74.32
HERTFORD	23,755	73.93
COLUMBUS	54,557	72.27
WILKES	66,909	71.10
CURRITUCK	20,598	70.61
MOORE	78,226	70.57
RUTHERFORD	63,432	70.29
IREDELL	133,280	69.92
CLEVELAND	97,548	68.93
FRANKLIN	51,652	68.76
ROWAN	133,134	67.16
DAVIDSON	151,935	61.89
ANSON	25,224	59.34
WARREN	20,054	57.76
EDGECOMBE	54,077	54.94
GASTON	191,236	52.83
GREENE	19,882	51.53
RANDOLPH	134,980	51.16

MARTIN 24,928 50.16

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County	Population	2003/2004 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)
JONES	10,184	50.11
NORTHAMPTON	21,798	45.52
SAMPSON	62,214	44.80
CHEROKEE	25,280	44.04
STOKES	45,604	42.25
POLK	18,896	41.40
CASWELL	23,720	38.38
PERSON	36,980	36.34
ALEXANDER	34,532	34.53
ONslow	156,967	29.06
HALIFAX	56,874	28.60
JOHNSTON	136,304	28.51
VANCE	43,860	27.46
STANLY	59,060	26.08
CUMBERLAND	307,856	25.21
HARNETT	97,794	21.70
TYRRELL	4,226	21.22
BERTIE	19,813	19.16
ROBESON	125,554	17.86
BEAUFORT	45,589	17.68
RICHMOND	46,490	14.53
MONTGOMERY	27,332	9.22
HOKE	36,990	8.91

Average FY 2003-04 county recovery: 110.14 lbs. per capita