



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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COUNTY RECYCLING RATES RISE SLOWLY

RALEIGH—Despite robust markets for recyclable materials and a growing solid waste stream in the state, recycling efforts by local governments in North Carolina continue to experience slow growth, according to the state's latest solid waste report.

The report, compiled annually by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, finds that disposal is increasing faster than growth in tonnage recycled by municipal and county programs. During FY 2004-2005 the disposal of waste statewide climbed by more than three percent while local government recycling rose less than two percent.

The recycling industry experienced a second straight year of very strong demand for recyclable materials but almost no increase in supply. Although the number of households served by curbside recycling continues to increase due to the construction of new homes and annexations, the solid waste report finds that the number of curbside recycling programs has declined by almost 50 statewide since 1999.

“We think many local governments across the state are missing opportunities to modernize their programs and to take advantage of an unprecedented strength in recycling markets,” said Scott Mouw, chief of the Community and Business Assistance section of the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance. “Recycling has a substantial positive impact on North Carolina's environment and economy, but regardless of demand, only about 55 percent of North Carolinians participate in their local programs. Raising participation rates is a critical way for local programs to become more efficient.”

The recycling industry can be expected to increase its presence in North Carolina with expansion of existing firms, the recruitment of out-of-state companies and the start-up of new recycling endeavors. A pending bill in the General Assembly would boost recovery of electronic wastes by local governments and drive job creation by electronics recyclers. One firm in Durham County is already expanding its e-waste operation, with plans to hire 50 employees within the next six months and perhaps an additional 75 within a year, if demand remains high.

Two recycling bills passed in 2005 by the N.C. General Assembly should help some of the state's recycling businesses recover more materials. The first, which goes into effect in October 2009, bans oil filters, wooden pallets, plastic bottles and oyster shells from disposal. The second bill requires all ABC Commission permit-holders to recycle beverage containers beginning in January 2008.

North Carolina is home to some of the nation's largest plastics recyclers, more than 20 oil filter recycling companies and to a pallet recycling industry that employs more than 1,000 people. The bills represent a major growth opportunity for the state's recycling businesses and for local government recycling collection programs as well.

The average county per capita recovery, which does not include yard waste, was up one pound to slightly more than 111 pounds per person. If every county in North Carolina could achieve the average, local government recovery of recyclables would increase by more than 100,000 tons.

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Dare County held onto the top spot in the county-by-county rankings. With a recovery rate of almost 712 pounds per person, Dare County recycled more than six times the state average on a per capita basis. Although the rankings are based on year-round populations and not peak seasonal populations, Dare County's extremely high recovery rate is proof that vacationers are taking advantage of local recycling services while visiting the Outer Banks.

A list detailing per capita annual recycling rates for each North Carolina county are attached. The totals include tonnage recycled by both county programs and municipal programs within the county. For more information, contact Jim Hickman, DPPEA local government assistance team leader, at (919) 715-6528.

County	Population	2004-05 Per Capita Recovery (pounds)
DARE COUNTY	34,248	711.85
PITT COUNTY	141,508	497.89
BUNCOMBE COUNTY	215,112	350.07
MACON COUNTY	31,769	345.78
CATAWBA COUNTY	147,789	327.62
SWAIN COUNTY	13,470	272.69
ORANGE COUNTY	120,965	254.00
GUILFORD COUNTY	434,693	212.04
ALLEGHANY COUNTY	10,847	207.62
WATAUGA COUNTY	42,854	197.02
CRAVEN COUNTY	91,980	187.19
MCDOWELL COUNTY	43,247	174.22
IREDELL COUNTY	136,008	173.51
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY	29,714	166.62
STOKES COUNTY	45,887	166.54
MADISON COUNTY	20,204	162.62
BLADEN COUNTY	32,996	161.40
DUPLIN COUNTY	51,482	154.52
DURHAM COUNTY	238,865	150.17
MECKLENBURG COUNTY	768,789	149.51
JACKSON COUNTY	35,629	149.28
YADKIN COUNTY	37,054	145.89
LENOIR COUNTY	58,546	143.92
NEW HANOVER COUNTY	174,313	141.22
MITCHELL COUNTY	15,992	140.05
HAYWOOD COUNTY	56,498	139.27
PASQUOTANK COUNTY	37,606	130.55
PERQUIMANS COUNTY	11,840	128.26
WAKE COUNTY	723,708	126.19
CARTERET COUNTY	61,870	124.13
BRUNSWICK COUNTY	85,034	123.95
PAMLICO COUNTY	13,074	122.69
UNION COUNTY	151,847	120.99
POLK COUNTY	18,966	119.49
CLAY COUNTY	9,618	116.13
MARTIN COUNTY	24,702	113.76
CHOWAN COUNTY	14,471	111.89
FORSYTH COUNTY	320,764	111.79

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CURRITUCK COUNTY	21,876	107.70
CHATHAM COUNTY	55,000	103.88
WAYNE COUNTY	115,110	101.47
RUTHERFORD COUNTY	63,220	99.99
CALDWELL COUNTY	78,548	99.94
CAMDEN COUNTY	8,525	98.86
LEE COUNTY	50,146	97.28
GRAHAM COUNTY	8,074	97.17
DAVIE COUNTY	37,927	94.45
ASHE COUNTY	25,104	93.35
GATES COUNTY	10,986	93.03
LINCOLN COUNTY	68,070	92.87
PENDER COUNTY	45,144	90.99
HENDERSON COUNTY	96,124	89.42
NASH COUNTY	90,712	87.08
SCOTLAND COUNTY	36,864	86.86
GRANVILLE COUNTY	52,942	83.72
HYDE COUNTY	5,642	82.91
MOORE COUNTY	79,342	82.47
COLUMBUS COUNTY	54,564	81.40
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	27,153	78.68
ALAMANCE COUNTY	137,126	77.42
FRANKLIN COUNTY	52,882	76.50
CABARRUS COUNTY	146,628	76.40
AVERY COUNTY	18,000	73.84
SURRY COUNTY	72,276	72.39
WILSON COUNTY	76,414	68.03
TYRRELL COUNTY	4,174	65.79
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY	92,118	64.91
CLEVELAND COUNTY	97,400	63.96
HERTFORD COUNTY	23,730	62.61
BEAUFORT COUNTY	45,860	60.42
ROWAN COUNTY	133,134	58.67
DAVIDSON COUNTY	153,264	57.29
JONES COUNTY	10,241	53.07
GASTON COUNTY	192,044	53.03
BURKE COUNTY	88,895	50.19
SAMPSON COUNTY	62,630	46.69
WARREN COUNTY	20,074	46.07
GREENE COUNTY	19,998	44.82
HOKE COUNTY	38,626	44.56
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY	21,566	44.40
CHEROKEE COUNTY	25,690	43.97
ANSON COUNTY	25,726	43.34
RANDOLPH COUNTY	135,805	43.32
EDGECOMBE COUNTY	53,916	41.33
WILKES COUNTY	66,982	38.06
HARNETT COUNTY	99,628	37.39
CUMBERLAND COUNTY	310,850	36.74
VANCE COUNTY	43,829	36.31
YANCEY COUNTY	18,071	35.73
RICHMOND COUNTY	46,452	34.97
CASWELL COUNTY	23,670	32.89
ONslow COUNTY	159,711	31.54
PERSON COUNTY	36,985	29.86
JOHNSTON COUNTY	141,391	26.10

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WASHINGTON COUNTY	13,480	25.54
HALIFAX COUNTY	56,476	24.89
STANLY COUNTY	59,078	22.43
BERTIE COUNTY	19,717	17.93
ALEXANDER COUNTY	35,140	9.36
ROBESON COUNTY	126,554	0.97

Average FY 2004-2005 county recovery: 111.5 lbs. per capita.

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