



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: April 29, 2005

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IMPACT OF RECYCLING ON STATE'S ECONOMY HIGHLIGHTED IN NEW PUBLICATION

RALEIGH – North Carolina's recycling industry is one of the state's fastest growing economic sectors, but recycling companies are suffering from a lack of materials. Those are some of the findings of a study released by the N.C. Recycling Business Assistance Center, a program of the N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance.

"Recycling Means Business! The Impact of Recycling on North Carolina's Economy" profiles 43 of the state's leading recycling companies, documenting the wide range of firms creating jobs in communities across the state through the recovery, processing and reuse of recyclables. With more than 540 companies involved in managing recovered materials, the state's recycling economy is vibrant and growing, featuring businesses involved in all aspects of converting discards into useable products and resources. Still, large amounts of recyclables are being thrown away instead of being made available to recyclers and contributing to job growth in the state.

"A need exists to raise public awareness of the recycling economy and its direct benefit to the state," said Matt Ewadinger, RBAC manager. "Recycling is not only good for the planet, it's good for North Carolina's economy. The 'Recycling Means Business' publication demonstrates the idea that protecting the environment and creating jobs can go hand in hand."

The companies showcased in "Recycling Means Business!" include:

- Fortune 500 firms operating major manufacturing facilities in rural counties, including the nation's largest recycler, Nucor, and Weyerhaeuser's Plymouth mill, which make 250,000 tons of recycled cardboard per year.
- Synergy Recycling, LLC, a computer recycler bringing life and jobs back to an old textile mill.
- Envision Plastics, a plastics processor using sophisticated, patented technologies to sort processed materials.
- A fast-growing compost company, McGill-Leprechaun, providing beneficial soil amendments to farmers in eastern North Carolina.
- Shimar Recycling, Inc., a woman-owned collector and processor of commercial recyclables serving businesses in the Triangle.
- A small, family-owned paper processing business, K&K Recycling passed down to the second generation.
- Oaks Unlimited, manufacturer of fine wood flooring who has integrated recycled materials into a new product line.

The catalyst for developing this document was DPPEA's recent study, "Employment Trends in North Carolina's Recycling Industry," which tracked recycling's impact on jobs and the state's economy. Survey findings include:

- Recycling employment has increased 60 percent in 10 years; recycling businesses currently employ approximately 14,000 people, an increase from 8,700 people in 1994.

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- Recycling jobs as a percentage of the state's total employment has increased 40 percent in 10 years, from 0.25 percent of the total labor force in 1994 to 0.35 percent in 2004.
- Fifty-four percent of the businesses surveyed forecast creating more recycling-related positions in the next two years.
- Recycling employs more people than North Carolina's biotech and agricultural livestock industries.
- The number of companies listed in the state's recycling markets directory has increased from 306 in 1994 to 542 in 2004, a 74 percent increase.

A copy of the study can be found at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/34/33911.pdf>.

This publication demonstrates that the waste stream is a potentially rich source of materials that can be put back to work for the North Carolina economy. Ewadinger notes, "The bottom line is that when materials are transformed from waste to products, businesses grow, money is invested in communities and people find jobs."

"Recycling Means Business!" can be found online at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/34/33912.pdf>. For more information, please contact Ewadinger (matt.ewadinger@ncmail.net) at (919) 715-6504.

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