



**NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH INC.**

NEWS RELEASE

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N.C. CENTER SAYS LANDFILLS RUNNING OUT OF ROOM, LOCAL RECYCLING EFFORTS IN INFANCY

A new study by the N.C. Center for Public Policy research shows most local governments have little hope of diverting 25 percent of their waste from landfills through recycling without further help from the state. This is despite a legislative mandate to do so by 1993. The Center's research disclosed that only 34 of North Carolina's 100 counties have recycling programs, yet half the local landfills in the state will run out of room within five years.

"The results of this study were sobering," says Insight Associate Editor Mike McLaughlin, co-author of the article. "We found ambitious recycling efforts in some communities across North Carolina, but we also found that two-thirds of the state's communities are doing little or nothing to recycle trash or otherwise divert garbage from landfills. And landfills are filling up fast across North Carolina because the average American produces half a ton of garbage every year."

The 1989 General Assembly directed local governments to divert at least 25 percent of their garbage from sanitary landfills through recycling by January 1, 1993. But the legislature failed to equip those local governments with the tools they need to meet that goal, the Center says in the December issue of its quarterly magazine, North Carolina Insight.

Solid waste includes paper, food and yard waste, glass, metals, and plastics. The Solid Waste Management Act -- which sets the 25 percent waste diversion target -- also institutes bans on the landfilling of certain kinds of waste, such as yard waste. But the Center says the act falls short in three key areas, and offers recommendations for action by the 1990 General Assembly to correct those shortfalls.

"The law is ambitious but could go much further," says McLaughlin. "Waste reduction is one neglected area. Another problem is financing. Finally, there are insufficient markets for materials collected through recycling. The state must address all of these areas if it hopes to achieve its waste diversion goal." McLaughlin emphasized that the current crisis does not represent a failure on the part of local governments, but instead an area where the state and local governments must work together toward common goals -- waste reduction and recycling.

The Center recommends: (1) that the state require all counties to implement "tipping fees" at local landfills that reflect the true cost of solid waste disposal (a tipping fee is a charge for dumping, usually assessed on a per-ton basis); (2) that the state increase its appropriation for implementing the provisions of the Solid

Waste Management Act during the 1990 session; and (3) that the state adopt a preference for the purchase of supplies with recycled content, even if the price is up to 5 percent higher.

The Center's research on solid waste and recycling forms the basis for a half-hour documentary on the statewide public television network's "Stateline" series. That program will be re-broadcast by the UNC Center for Public Television on Thursday, December 28 at 7:30 p.m., with an encore presentation on Sunday, December 31 at 5 p.m.

To determine the extent of recycling efforts currently underway and to gauge the progress local entities must make if they are to meet the waste diversion target, the Center conducted a survey of all 100 counties in North Carolina and 70 of its largest municipalities. The study was published in the issue of Insight magazine released today as part of a comprehensive article on solid waste management.

Center's Findings on the Number of Recycling Programs in Place

The Center's survey shows that residents in 34 of North Carolina's 100 counties have access to an established recycling program. More than \$10,000 a year is spent in these counties or municipalities on recycling programs, or the counties offered three or more recycling options county-wide or employed a full-time recycling coordinator. Another 28 counties provided what were described as minimal services, and 38 counties, a clear plurality, offered no services at all. (A complete county-by-county listing of the survey results is attached.)

"A budget commitment of \$10,000 is not a huge sum, even in the state's most rural counties," says McLaughlin. "Still, barely a third of the counties qualified. That means two-thirds of the counties in the state offer little or no opportunity for citizens to recycle. We have a long way to go if local governments are to divert 25 percent of their solid waste through recycling. Even the best programs now in place fall well short of the 25 percent waste diversion goal set by the state. Unless the counties get moving, we'll all be down in the dumps."

Recycling options included in the survey were (a) buy-back centers where customers are paid for recyclable materials, (b) drop-off centers where residents may deposit recyclables, and (c) curbside collection programs that pick up recyclables at private residences. The survey also asked respondents whether they offer salvage operations at the county landfill, leaf and limb collection services that keep these yard wastes out of sanitary landfills, and other programs that keep solid waste out of landfills.

Center Findings on the Remaining Life of Local Landfills

In addition, respondents were asked to update information about their counties in a 1988 Center study which found that about a third of the state's 119 municipal or county sanitary landfills had five years or less of life remaining and that 13 would be full in less than two years. The latest Center research shows the problem has gotten worse. Of 112 municipal and county landfills now operating in 1989, 52 -- nearly half -- will run out of landfill space within five years. And 20 -- nearly a fifth of the landfills now operating -- will be full within two years.

"Most of our landfills over the next 10 years will be closed down because they are full," said Rep. James Craven (R-Moore) in legislative debate over the Solid Waste Management Act. "Garbage is the greatest problem in our state today," he concluded. Craven wanted a 50 percent recycling goal included in the bill.

"This problem of rapidly depleting landfill space and the cost and controversy in siting new landfills drove the state to act to reduce solid waste production through recycling," says McLaughlin. "That's why these landfill figures are so important. New regulations to prevent groundwater contamination and rising land values have vastly increased the cost of constructing landfills. Additionally, counties encounter strong public opposition when they try to find a place to put a landfill."

The list of counties that reported no recycling efforts cuts across the entire state. It includes Avery, Mitchell, and Yadkin in the west; Granville, Montgomery, and Rockingham counties in the Piedmont; and Dare, Duplin, Johnston, and Nash in the east. The landfills in all of these 10 counties have less than 5 years of space left. Most of the counties with no recycling activities are small and rural, many are among the state's poorer counties, and about half -- 18 of the 38 counties with no recycling programs -- have less than five years of life remaining in their landfills.

Exemplary Programs

For the most part, the Center's research found North Carolina's more affluent and urban counties to be the recycling leaders, with the heaviest concentrations of non-recyclers in the extreme western and eastern parts of the state, where access to markets may be a greater problem than in the more industrialized Piedmont. A clear leader in recycling is Mecklenburg County, which pioneered curbside recycling in Charlotte and in smaller municipalities within that county.

Curbside collection programs, which maximize participation through the convenience of at-home pickup, are operating in eight North Carolina counties -- Alamance, Catawba, Cumberland, Durham, Mecklenburg, Moore, Orange, and Wake. But the survey found even Mecklenburg's program fell well short of the 25 percent waste diversion goal set by the legislature. And except for a volunteer effort in Wayne County, none of the programs paid for themselves through the sale of recyclable materials.

By weight, the nation's waste stream is 41 percent paper and paperboard, 26 percent food and yard waste, 8 percent glass, 8 percent metals, and 6.5 percent plastics. However, many factors can influence the composition of a local solid waste stream. In Alamance County, for example, an analysis found that corrugated cardboard cartons from furniture showrooms comprised 31 percent of that county's waste. Alamance now mandates recycling of all corrugated cardboard.

To achieve the kind of waste diversion set forth in the Solid Waste Management Act, the Center says that local entities must establish comprehensive solid waste management programs which include an incentive for citizens to recycle or reduce waste. The state must provide more guidance in helping local governments implement these recycling programs and must encourage and develop markets for the huge influx of recyclable materials that will result from successful implementation of the Solid Waste Management Act.

Center Recommendations

The Center recommends that mandatory tipping fees at local landfills be implemented to reflect the true cost of solid waste disposal. This would help bring home to North Carolina citizens the enormous costs of a throwaway society. Such fees also provide an incentive to avoid landfilling and to reduce the amount of garbage produced. These fees would give counties a financing mechanism to help pay for their solid waste programs. About a third of North Carolina's counties already charge a tipping fee at the landfill for private, commercial, and municipal haulers -- a fee that varies with the amount of recyclables removed from the load. Tipping fees in other states range from \$4.95 per ton in South Carolina to \$65 per ton in Massachusetts. In North Carolina, they range from no charge at all in many counties to \$46 a ton in Buncombe County.

Second, the Center says the state should increase its relatively low appropriation for implementing the provisions of the Solid Waste Management Act. The act calls for a statewide solid waste management plan, recycling in state agencies, and important studies on markets and procurement. Yet the legislature appropriated only \$800,000 out of a \$12 billion annual state budget for what may be the most pressing policy issue of the coming decade. "We would like to have -- and I think the problem merits it -- somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5 million," says Rep. Joe Hackney (D-Orange), the chief architect of the Solid Waste Management Act. "It's the perennial environmental problem, which is underfunding."

Third, the Center says the state needs to set an example by adopting a price preference for purchasing supplies with recycled content and by implementing recycling programs in state agencies and offices, the latter of which already is required in the Solid Waste Management Act. For instance, the Center printed its report on recycled paper, even though the cost was 4.9 percent higher. Gov. Jim Martin supported such efforts in a November 1989 speech to the National Recycling Congress in Charlotte. "Recycling paper and aluminum cans in state government snack bars and offices may encourage our state employees to bring recycling home and help develop community support for the idea," Martin said. "By purchasing recycled goods, we may also help create a demand for and reduce the cost of recycled goods in the marketplace."

Stimulating markets for collected recyclables and for goods with recycled content may prove to be the major role for the state in assuring the success of the Solid Waste Management Act," says McLaughlin. "But it also will take strong economic incentives, a public education program, and programs that make it easy for the public to recycle if the state is to recycle a fourth of its waste by 1993," he concluded.

The N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation created to examine state government policies and practices. The Center is supported in part by grants from the Z. Smith Reynolds and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundations, both in Winston-Salem. Other funding comes from 111 corporate contributors and more than 700 individual and organizational members. In addition to North Carolina Insight, the Center has conducted studies on disparities in funding among rich and poor school districts in North Carolina, on the performance of for-profit and not-for-profit hospitals, and the possibility of a Environmental Index evaluating progress or decline in the state's air, water, and other natural resources.

Copies of the issue of North Carolina Insight containing the research on recycling and solid waste management in North Carolina are available for \$6.30 (plus \$1.00 postage and handling) from the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, N.C., 27602, or call (919) 832-2839.

For more information, call Mike McLaughlin, Jack Betts, or Ran Coble at the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research at (919) 832-2839.

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
ALAMANCE				
Alamance County	3+	yes	DO,LL,O,S	\$140,000
Burlington	—	no	CS,LL	\$6,000
ALEXANDER				
Alexander County	3+	yes	BB	\$22,000
ALLEGHANY				
Alleghany County	7+	no	none	—
ANSON				
Anson County	2	no	DO	N/A
ASHE				
Ashe County	10+	no	none	—
AVERY				
Avery County	2	no	none	—
BEAUFORT				
Beaufort County	5+	no	DO	N/A
Washington	—	no	CS	N/A
BERTIE				
Bertie County	3+	no	none	—
BLADEN				
Bladen County	2+	no	S	—
BRUNSWICK				
Brunswick County	5+	no	none	—

Key

BB: Buy-back center where customers are paid for recyclable materials

CS: Curbside collection of recyclables on a regular schedule

DO: Drop-off center where residents may deposit recyclables

LL: Leaf or limb collection and diversion from the sanitary landfill

O: Other recycling activity (office paper collection, for example)

S: Salvage of bulky goods from landfill

+: More than

-: Less than

N/A: Specific amounts not available; recycling expenditures contained within overall solid waste budget or general expenditures

Planning: Recycling program in planning stages

#: Joint city/county program

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
BUNCOMBE				
Buncombe County	2+	yes	DO,LL,O	\$200,000
BURKE				
Burke County	30+	yes	BB,DO,LL,O,S	\$260,000
Morganton	—	no	DO	N/A
CABARRUS				
Cabarrus County	15+	yes	DO	\$31,552
Concord	—	no	S,LL,	N/A
CALDWELL				
Caldwell County	2+	no	DO,LL,S	\$150,000
CAMDEN				
Camden County	—	no	none	—
CARTERET				
Carteret County	5+	no	DO	N/A
CASWELL				
Caswell County	5+	no	S	—
CATAWBA				
Catawba County	12	—	* BB,CS,DO,LL,S	\$100,000
Conover	—	no	DO,LL,S	\$15,500
Hickory	—	no	DO,LL,S	N/A
Long View	—	no	CS	\$18,000
Newton	—	no	CS,DO,LL	N/A
CHATHAM				
Chatham County	5+	yes	DO,O	\$40,544
CHEROKEE				
Cherokee County	2-	no	LL,S	N/A

This table includes county and municipal recycling efforts and is organized by county. All 100 counties are listed, even those with no recycling programs and no landfills. Cities which operate a landfill or which participated in the Center's recycling survey are also included.

Bold type indicates a combined total of five years or less of life remaining in one or more municipal- or county-operated landfills.

Notes

- * Rocky Mount lies in both Edgecombe and Nash counties.
- ** Private landfills and landfills not currently in use are excluded from the list. If a county or municipality operates more than one landfill, the remaining life of each landfill in its jurisdiction is listed.
- *** Macon County has a volunteer recycling coordinator.
- **** Rutherford County has a part-time recycling coordinator.

Table by Amy Carr

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
CHOWAN				
Chowan/Gates/ Perquimans Edenton	10+	no	DO	—
	—	no	LL,O	\$10,000
CLAY				
Clay County	10+	no	none	—
CLEVELAND				
Cleveland County	10+	no	DO,O	—
Shelby	—	no	DO,LL	N/A
COLUMBUS				
Columbus County	10	no	DO	\$10,000
CRAVEN				
Craven County	10	no	none	—
CUMBERLAND				
Cumberland County	10+	yes	CS,DO,LL	\$24,644
Fayetteville	—	no	LL	N/A
Hope Mills	—	no	DO,O	N/A
CURRITUCK				
Currituck County	5	no	none	—
DARE				
Dare County	5	no	none	—
DAVIDSON				
Davidson County	2+	no	none	—
Lexington	1	no	none	—
Thomasville	3+	no	LL	N/A
DAVIE				
Davie County	5+	no	LL,S	N/A
DUPLIN				
Duplin County	2+	no	none	—
DURHAM				
City of Durham	2+	yes	* CS,DO,LL,O,S	\$759,000
EDGECOMBE				
Edgecombe County	10+	no	none	—
Tarboro	—	no	DO,LL	N/A
Rocky Mount*	—	no	DO,LL,S	N/A
FORSYTH				
Forsyth County	—	no	none	—
Winston-Salem **	10-, 2+	no	BB, DO, LL, S	N/A
Kernersville	1-	no	DO	N/A
FRANKLIN				
Franklin County	1-	no	DO,LL,O,S	N/A

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
GASTON				
Gaston County	10+	yes	BB,DO,LL,O,S	\$250,000
GATES				
Gates/Chowan/ Perquimans counties	10+	no	none	—
GRAHAM				
Graham County	1-	no	DO	N/A
GRANVILLE				
Granville County **	1+, 1+	no	none	—
GREENE				
Greene County	20	no	none	—
GUILFORD				
Greensboro	4+	no	DO,LL	\$13,794
High Point **	2+, 10+	no	DO,LL, O	N/A
HALIFAX				
Halifax County	10+	no	none	—
HARNETT				
Harnett County **	10+, 10+	no	none	—
HAYWOOD				
Haywood County	1-	yes	DO,O	\$30,000
Canton	10+	—	—	—
Waynesville	—	—	LL	—
HENDERSON				
Henderson County	15	yes	DO,S	N/A
Hendersonville	—	no	DO,S	N/A
HERTFORD				
Hertford County	1-	no	LL	—
HOKE				
Raeford	4+	no	planning	—
HYDE	—	no	DO	N/A
IREDELL				
Iredell County	2+	no	planning	—
Mooresville	—	no	LL,S	N/A
JACKSON				
Jackson County	5+	no	BB	\$30,000
JOHNSTON				
Johnston County	2+	no	none	—
JONES				
Jones County	26	no	none	—
LEE				
Lee County	7	no	DO	\$10,000
Sanford	—	—	LL	N/A

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
LENOIR				
Lenoir County	5+	no	none	—
LINCOLN				
Lincoln County	15+	no	none	—
MACON				
Macon County **	1-, 1-	no ***	DO	—
MADISON				
Madison County	1-	no	DO	\$10,000
MARTIN				
Martin County	2-	no	none	—
McDOWELL				
McDowell County	5+	no	DO,LL,O	\$5,000
MECKLENBURG				
Mecklenburg County	2+	yes	CS,DO,S,LL,O	\$1,000,000
Charlotte	—	yes	CS	\$2,211,504
Cornelius	—	no	CS,LL	N/A
Davidson	—	no	CS,LL	N/A
Huntersville	—	no	CS,LL	N/A
Matthews	—	no	CS,LL	N/A
Mint Hill	—	no	CS,LL	\$100,000
MITCHELL				
Mitchell/Yancey counties	3+	no	none	—
MONTGOMERY				
Montgomery County	2+	no	none	—
MOORE				
Moore County	10+	no	BB,DO,S	\$7,500
Pinehurst	—	no	CS,DO	\$31,200
NASH				
Nash County	2+	no	none	—
NEW HANOVER				
New Hanover County	50+	yes	planning	—
NORTHAMPTON				
Northampton County	10+	no	none	—
ONSLOW				
Onslow County	5	yes	BB,DO,O	N/A
Jacksonville	—	yes	planning	\$121,400
ORANGE				
Orange County/ Chapel Hill/Carrboro *	8	yes	* BB,CS,DO, LL,O,S	\$326,000
Hillsborough	—	no	CS,LL	N/A

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
PAMLICO				
Pamlico County	6+	no	LL,O	\$500
PASQUOTANK				
Pasquotank County	10+	no	none	—
PENDER				
Pender County	5+	no	none	—
PERQUIMANS				
Perquimans/ Gates/Chowan counties	10+	no	none	—
PERSON				
Person County/ City of Roxboro *	5+	no	none	—
PITT				
Pitt County	5	no	BB,DO,O	N/A
Greenville	—	yes	DO,LL,O	\$18,000
POLK				
Polk County	10+	no	DO	N/A
RANDOLPH				
Randolph County	8+	no	DO,LL,O,S	N/A
Asheboro	—	no	DO	N/A
RICHMOND				
Richmond County	10+	no	none	N/A
Hamlet	—	no	LL	N/A
ROBESON				
Robeson County	25+	no	none	—
Lumberton	—	no	DO	N/A
ROCKINGHAM				
Rockingham County	2+	no	none	—
Reidsville	—	no	DO,LL	N/A
ROWAN				
Rowan County	30+	yes	DO,LL,S	\$46,640
Salisbury	—	no	DO,LL	\$8,000
RUTHERFORD				
Rutherford County **	5+, 5+	no *****	LL, planning	N/A
SAMPSON				
Sampson County	5	no	none	—
SCOTLAND				
Scotland County	5	no	DO,LL	N/A
Laurinburg	—	no	LL,O	\$90,000
STANLY				
Stanly County	—	no	DO, planning	\$85,151
Albemarle	5+	no	LL	\$10,000

Table 3. County and Municipal Recycling Efforts in North Carolina, *cont.*

	Remaining Years of Life In Landfill	Paid Recycling Coordinator	Current Recycling Activities	Fiscal Year 1989-1990 Funding
STOKES				
Stokes County	12+	no	none	—
SURRY				
Surry County	5+, 5+ **	no	DO	N/A
SWAIN				
Swain County	2+	no	LL	N/A
TRANSYLVANIA				
Transylvania County	1-	no	DO, O	N/A
TYRRELL				
Tyrrell County	—	no	none	—
UNION				
Union County	10	no	DO,LL,S	N/A
Monroe	—	no	LL,DO	N/A
VANCE				
Vance County	2-	no	none	—
WAKE				
Wake County	10, 4 **	yes	planned	\$618,000
Cary	—	no	BB,CS,DO,LL	\$73,000
Garner	—	no	DO,LL	N/A
Raleigh	10+	no	CS,DO,LL,O	\$114,000
WARREN				
Warren County	1-	no	none	—
WASHINGTON				
Washington County	2	yes	O	N/A
WATAUGA				
Watauga County	5+	yes	BB,LL,S	\$71,791
Boone	—	no	DO,O	N/A
WAYNE				
Wayne County **	10+, 10+	no	BB,DO,O	N/A
WILKES				
Wilkes County	2-	no	none	—
WILSON				
Wilson County	2+	no	BB	—
YADKIN				
Yadkin County	3	no	none	—
YANCEY				
Yancey/Mitchell counties	3+	no	BB,DO	\$10,000