

Executive Summary

Buncombe County Solid Waste Management Plan

Pursuant to NC General Statute 130A-309A(b), each unit of local government is required to develop a Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan and update the Plan every three years. In Buncombe County, the original plan was adopted in 1997 and had been updated every third year since. This 2012 Plan Update, completed in cooperation with all six local municipal governments, was prepared in accordance with the latest Ten Year Solid Waste Management Plan Guide. The Plan presents a progressive vision for managing solid waste in Buncombe County through the development of intended actions for solid waste planning elements which include: reduction; collection; recycling and reuse; composting and mulching; incineration; transfer; disposal; education; special wastes; illegal disposal/litter; purchasing of recycled products; disaster response; collection of discarded electronics; and management of abandoned manufactured homes.

Accomplishments

Over the past several years, the jurisdictions of Buncombe County have individually and collectively made improvements to elements of their own solid waste programs and the County's shared solid waste system. The most notable accomplishments born from previous intended actions include the following:

- Per capita waste disposal decreased by 36 percent between fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2011. Buncombe County's fiscal year 2011 waste disposal rate was 0.94 tons per person per year, which was 5 percent lower than the statewide disposal rate of 0.99 tons per person per year.
- Residential recycling (in tons of materials) increased by 18.7 percent county-wide when compared to fiscal year 2008. Overall, five of six municipalities reported increased residential recycling rates. Expanding the types of materials collected curbside and a continued focus on public education have contributed to this increase.
- The City of Asheville has recently switched to single-stream recycling using 96-gallon roll out carts instead of bins. The switch was made based on the successful results of a pilot program conducted in four different neighborhoods. Increased customer participation and more recyclables collected are the expected outcomes of this switch.
- In late 2011, Buncombe County completed construction of a 1.4 MW Landfill-Gas-to-Energy Facility at the County's Solid Waste Management Facility. The facility currently provides enough electricity to power 1,100 homes by collecting and burning landfill gas. The facility was built using funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Federal Energy and Water Bill. Electricity produced by the facility is sold to progress energy and additional revenue is generated through the sale of Renewable Energy Credits. As the landfill expands, two additional generators will be added which will triple the amount of electricity that is produced and sold.
- Rainbow Recycling, Asheville GreenWorks, Curbside Management, and Friends of Swannanoa initiated quarterly "hard-to-recycle" collection events for underserved areas of the County.

Rainbow Recycling and the other local grassroots organizations continue to play an important role in promoting and offering a variety of reuse and recycling activities throughout the County.

- Buncombe County and other local jurisdictions continue to provide collection and drop-off opportunities for special wastes that are not appropriate for landfill disposal, or may be beneficially reused or recycled. During FY 2011, the County collected 180 tons of household hazardous waste (which included 91 tons of electronics); 260 tons of white goods; 2,698 tons of tires; 4,964 gallons of used oil; 315 gallons of antifreeze; and 558 lead-acid batteries. Buncombe County also began collecting used cooking oil at the landfill which is converted to biodiesel.
- Buncombe County's Keep America Beautiful nonprofit organization, Asheville GreenWorks, continued to provide effective community education programs to increase awareness of solid waste issues and waste reduction. Adopt-a-Stream, Adopt-a-Street, and Adopt-a-Highway programs were all organized to reduce the impact of littering and illegal disposal.

Current and Future Actions

Over the last several years, Buncombe County and the municipal governments have taken actions to increase residential recycling rates, lower collection service costs, expand commercial recycling opportunities, evaluate additional revenue sources to fund solid waste programs, and improve upon many other elements. Nevertheless, the local jurisdictions recognize that additional effort is needed in virtually all areas in order to achieve their established vision and goals. In this regard, the seven local governments have developed an updated list of intended actions that may result in additional improvements to the jurisdictions solid waste programs and the County's overall system. The intended actions support a shared vision for the 2012-2022 planning period that:

- Protects the health, safety, and general well being of all citizens of Buncombe County;
- Enhances and maintains the quality of the environment, conserves natural resources, and prevents water and air pollution by providing for a comprehensive, rational, and effective means of regulating the disposal of solid waste within the County;
- Is integrated, efficient, and effective;
- Provides disposal capacity, waste collection services, and waste reduction programs at an equitable price;
- Includes the elimination of improper disposal of waste and the reduction of illegal dumpsites;
- Provides incentives for individuals to sort their own solid waste prior to collection;
- Provides for a mechanism to enforce state and local recycling goals within the County;
- Provides waste reduction opportunities that are convenient for residents; and
- Educates the community to increase the understanding of the environmental benefits of waste reduction and proper waste disposal.