

FEW COUNTY RESIDENTS ARE RECYCLING

Brunswick Has Long Way To Go In Solid Waste Battle

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County has come a long way in the past 16 months in terms of recycling, but it is nowhere near the statewide goal for waste reduction set forth in the 1989 legislation known as Senate Bill 111.

That was the bottom-line message from five county officials who discussed waste management at a seminar last Thursday at the Public Assembly Building in Bolivia.

Speakers said the county is more fortunate than others in North Carolina due to the availability of recyclable collection centers and at least five years worth of space in its landfill.

But Brunswick County Engineer Robert Tucker said the county will be hard pressed to meet the mandates approved two years ago in S.B. 111—including the goal of 25 percent solid waste reduction by July 1, 1993.

Since passage of the most important solid waste legislation in North Carolina history, Tucker said the county has reduced the amount of waste going into its landfill by only 1 percent.

The county engineer "seriously doubts" the area will meet the 25 percent waste reduction goal, unless a curbside recycling program is started in highly-populated areas.

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the people in the county doing a great job," Tucker told an audience of about 20 people who attended *The Waste Dilemma...Tough Choices For The 90s*. "The other 95 percent are sitting back watching them do a great job."

Tucker said there isn't much the state can do besides deny permits if the county doesn't meet the goal. "There really wasn't a lot of teeth put in the legislation as far as penalties," he said.

Besides the 1993 waste reduction goal, the law included mandates on recycling, packaging and training for landfill operators. S.B. 111 also prohibits the burial of items such as motor oil and whole tires in landfills.

To comply with the law, Tucker said the county is splitting tires in half before putting them in the landfill. Brunswick County also funds

volunteer-staffed recycling centers and is working on plans for a separate yard waste landfill and composting facility.

Tucker said the county probably will do away with green box sites in the near future and set up manned sites. Tipping fees, which would be charged to users of the landfill, are under consideration.

Recycling Efforts
Volunteer recycling efforts in Brunswick County started in November 1989 when the first collection center opened in Boiling Spring Lakes.

Since then, other recycling sites have opened at Sunset Beach, Calabash, Shallotte, Holden Beach, Long Beach, Southport and Leland. Volunteers run most of the trailers, which are provided by Bush Recycling of Florence, S.C.

Brunswick Clean County Coordinator Terry Munn said 411 tons of waste had been collected at the recycling centers as of January.

Ranked according to weight, the biggest category of recyclables has been newspaper and office paper, followed by glass, cardboard and other paper, aluminum and plastic.

As part of the recycling movement, Brunswick County's chapter of Keep America Beautiful was founded in June 1990. Munn said the organization, which stresses recycling education, has 13 volunteer board members and 30 to 40 committee members.

Sonja Remington, environmental health specialist with the Brunswick

County Health Department, said the average county resident creates about 3 1/2 pounds of trash every day and 1,300 pounds a year.

"We create the trash. We need to care about what happens to it," she said. "People create the litter and people can stop it."

Besides being mandated by state law, Ms. Remington said there are many reasons to recycle. It preserves space in landfills for items that cannot be recycled, cuts down on disposal costs and helps the environment.

Bruce Williams, area specialized associate agent with the Agricultural Extension Service, said even the laziest people can recycle every time they cut the grass.

By some estimates, Williams said grass clippings account for 10 percent of the waste generated each year in the United States. Americans throw away 15 million tons of grass clippings per year.

Williams said leaving grass clippings on the lawn will not damage the yard and will save the homeowner time and money. He said most lawn care experts recommend "grasscycling."

For best results, Williams said no more than the one-third of the grass should be cut with each mowing. If the desired height of the grass is one inch, for instance, it should be cut when it is 1 1/2 inches tall.

Local golf courses leave grass clippings on their fairways. Williams said clippings are removed from greens because the blades of grass interfere with putting.

As part of the seminar, Williams discussed composting, a natural process in which organic matter decays and can be used for fertilizer. Composting is a way of recycling yard waste.

"Nature is probably the biggest composter in the world, and I think we should learn something from that," Williams said.

Brunswick County Home Economics Extension Agent Mary Russ



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER
HOME ECONOMICS EXTENSION AGENT Mary Russ collects recyclable items in her home with this bag holder made out of PVC pipe. It was on display last week in Bolivia as part of a solid waste seminar.

also talked about handling hazardous waste around the home. "When you go shopping read the label," she advised. "Buy the least harmful product you can find that will do the job."

Driver's License Bill Would Exempt Public Safety Workers

A bill co-sponsored by Rep. E. David Redwine would reinstate the exemption for certain drivers licenses for public safety workers.

H.B. 19 would allow a Class "C" licensee to drive any firefighting vehicle, rescue vehicle or any combination of vehicle, regardless of gross weight, operated in performance of duties for a municipal or rural fire department or rescue squad.

Two other bills of particular interest were introduced this week, Redwine said.

H.B. 102 would amend the state Constitution to 1) provide for the appointment of appellate judges by the governor, with the advice and consent of the General Assembly, and 2) authorize the General Assembly to provide a procedure to determine if judges so appointed should be retained in office.

The bill calls for a statewide election this November to decide the issue.

"I support the concept," said Redwine, "because I believe it will mean a better judicial system and help de-politicize the judicial process."

In the Senate a bill was introduced which would permit elderly individuals to defer payment of property tax increases on their residence until the property is transferred.

The bill, S.B. 57, would allow a North Carolina resident age 65 or older, with a disposal income of \$25,000 a year or less, to defer increases in property taxes on his permanent residence.

Taxes deferred could not exceed 85 percent of the value of the property, said Redwine. The deferred taxes would constitute a lien on the

property and would have to be paid upon the owner's death, transfer of the property to anyone other than a spouse, or upon failure of the owner to occupy the property as a permanent residence for three successive years.

During the past week various appropriations subcommittees met to begin their review of various departments of state government.

Redwine said the Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee, of which he is co-chairman, has begun its overview with the Department of Corrections. The department has presented its program needs and budget expansion requests.

Last year state voters passed a \$200 million bond referendum to renovate existing prison facilities and to build new facilities.

One question before the subcommittee now, said Redwine, concerns the expenses required when and if the new facilities are built.

"We have estimated that it will cost \$40 million per year to operate these new facilities," he said in his weekly report. "At this point in time, with our budget shortfall, we may have a hard time finding that amount of money."

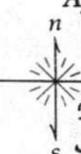
"Of course, we have to keep in mind the need for these additional prison spaces."

Overcrowding is a serious problem within the North Carolina prison system, resulting in early release of prisoners when occupancy "caps" are reached.

Those with questions about these or other issues in the General Assembly can contact Redwine at (919) 733-5787, or write to him at 632 State Legislative Office Building, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.



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