

## **SUMMARY OF FORUM ISSUES CONCERNING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SWM) IN NORTH CAROLINA**

To increase public participation in updating the state solid waste management plan a series of forums were held throughout the state to receive information regarding what direction the state should take in the coming years.

The Solid Waste Section held nine forums across the state. The forums were held in: Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Wake, Orange, Craven, Pasquotank, Wilkes and Lee Counties and Triangle J Council of Governments. Discussions were also conducted at meetings of National Solid Waste Management Association (NSWMA) , NC Chapter of American Public Works Association (NC APWA) and Carolina Recycling Association (CRA). Attendees ranged from elected city and county officials to solid waste professionals and interested citizens.

**The comments received are those of individuals and organizations, consequently they may not be reflective of the views of the Department. The comments are not necessarily fact but a public response to the list of questions presented at each forum.** Comments were given the same weight whether voiced by an individual or by a group. Comments have been paraphrased only to allow subject grouping. The responses are grouped into major areas believed to be the most pertinent solid waste management issues in the state. Some subsections may show repetitive or inconsistent comments. This is to maintain the integrity of each individual comment.

The forum questions were:

1. Why was the state successful in reaching the goal of having municipal solid waste managed in more protective landfills?
2. Why has our state been unsuccessful in reaching the goal of reducing waste on a per capita basis?
3. What should solid waste management in NC in the year 2009 look like? (i.e. what is the desired outcome?)
4. What needs to be done by whom in order to have the desired outcome regarding waste management in the year 2009?
5. Are there other steps/issues/questions that need to be developed or addressed?

### ***1. Why was the state successful in reaching the goal of having municipal solid waste managed in more protective landfills?***

The forum responses to the first question appeared to be uniform and consistent throughout each of the forums and meetings.

- ❖ It was a mandate
- ❖ It was enforced
- ❖ The state agency was staffed to handle the work load
- ❖ It was understood
- ❖ It was technically possible
- ❖ It did not require behavioral changes on the part of most of the state's citizens
- ❖ It was accepted as a public health issue
- ❖ The Governor's office, the legislature and the Health Commission supported it when challenged

- ❖ State agency provided leadership based on knowledge of the threat to the public health and environment of the previous landfill model
- ❖ It was essential for the public health
- ❖ It was recognized that additional delays would increase the size of the problem
- ❖ Changes didn't alter citizen's lifestyles
- ❖ The technology was available and understood
- ❖ Facility managers and other solid waste professionals were required to be trained
- ❖ The public became aware of solid waste issues through increased education and understood why changes were necessary
- ❖ Changes were understood as being health related
- ❖ "98 Rule" to close non-lined, non-compliant landfills was supported when challenged by the legislature
- ❖ Federal and state regulations were similar

## ***2. Why has our state been unsuccessful in reaching the goal of reducing waste on a per capita basis?***

The forum responses to the second question were varied and sometimes contradictory, however three conclusions were reached by the forum participants concerning why the state will not reach the 40% waste reduction goal:

1. Changes in the Dynamics of Solid Waste Management
  - Loss of flow control by local governments
  - Alternative technologies did not develop
2. Lack of Commitment
  - It was "just a goal"--not a mandate
  - Few resources were devoted to it
3. Economics
  - Landfills remain an inexpensive option
  - Strong economy encourages waste

The above conclusions were drawn from the responses to the second question:

- ❖ It was not understood
- ❖ Would have required cultural changes
- ❖ It was difficult
- ❖ It was just a goal -- not a mandate
- ❖ It was not supported when challenged
- ❖ Relatively few resources were directed at the goal
- ❖ Few understood the costs and benefits of waste reduction
- ❖ Poor markets for recycled materials made recycling economically unfeasible
- ❖ Poorly designed recycling programs doomed many to failure and ridicule
- ❖ Strong economy produced waste and relative wealth did not prompt conservation
- ❖ Full cost analysis of waste management practices was not accomplished
- ❖ Local governments lost flow control as a tool to manage waste
- ❖ "Black box" technology did not develop on the scale as anticipated (mixed waste composting, waste to energy)
- ❖ Landfills are relatively inexpensive
- ❖ Several local government owning landfills need waste to supply operational revenues
- ❖ Little educational initiatives were directed toward conservation of resources or better waste management practices
- ❖ Local government elected officials are reluctant to deal with long term issues of solid waste
- ❖ Much of the needed changes to effect waste reduction require national action (such as packaging)
- ❖ State has failed to strongly enforce aluminum can ban and other bans

### **3. What should solid waste management in NC in the year 2009 look like?**

The comments received are those of individuals and organizations, consequently they may not be reflective of the views of the Department. Question Three generated the most discussion and represented the diversity of individuals and organizations present. Responses to this question resulted in a wide range of comments which were attempted to be captured, whether substantiated or not.

- ❖ NC should punish quickly and harshly those who litter and dump illegally
- ❖ NC should have larger penalties for environmental crimes
- ❖ NC should make it easier to prove litter violations
- ❖ NC should have more enforcement presence against litter and illegal dumps
- ❖ NC should have more education about the harm of litter and how to stop litter
- ❖ NC needs new institutions as existing ones (courts/police) are not responding properly to environmental problems
- ❖ NC should use white goods funds for litter control/response
- ❖ NC should have more strict enforcement of environmental laws
- ❖ NC should have easier evidentiary laws
- ❖ NC should have enforcement more widespread
- ❖ NC should have stronger punishments for environmental crimes
- ❖ NC should neither rely on exporting waste nor be a net importer
- ❖ NC should consider a tip fee to make NC landfills less attractive economically
- ❖ NC should not be a dumping ground for other state's waste
- ❖ NC should change regulations to create a landfill model that renders the waste inert
- ❖ NC should research new technologies and rule changes for the following:
  - ❖ Shredded waste as cover
  - ❖ Bio-reactor model of landfill
  - ❖ Furniture to be allowed into C & D landfills
- ❖ NC should expand methane recovery
- ❖ NC should have a statewide tip fee to provide a disincentive to landfilling
- ❖ NC landfills are OK as they are now
- ❖ NC should change regulations to make landfill operations less expensive
- ❖ NC should have full cost accounting for local government solid waste programs
- ❖ NC should have a program to address contamination on a risk-based analysis
- ❖ NC should have a program to "hold harmless" former local government landfill owners for clean-up
- ❖ NC should initiate a tip fee to set up a reserve to pay for old closed landfill clean up
- ❖ NC should use a tip fee to pay for addressing problems at old landfills
- ❖ NC should have a tip fee to make landfills less attractive and therefore recycling more attractive
- ❖ NC should use tip fee funds to increase enforcement
- ❖ NC should have a vehicle tax to be used to fund litter enforcement
- ❖ NC should use environmental fines for enforcement
- ❖ NC should have a tax on vacation homes/hotels to be used to fund recycling during the summer in vacation destination communities
- ❖ NC should require schools, state and local government agencies to recycle/compost
- ❖ NC should develop markets for materials
- ❖ NC should develop regional infrastructure and support regional activities
- ❖ NC should provide systematic subsidies to recycling industry
- ❖ NC should continue the tax credit program
- ❖ NC should subsidize local governments to buy recycled
- ❖ NC should strengthen buy-recycled programs
- ❖ The economics of recycling should be changed

- ❖ Recycling should be more economically favorable than landfilling
- ❖ The subsidies for virgin materials should cease
- ❖ A tax should be placed on virgin material use
- ❖ NC should have mandatory recycling of marketable materials
- ❖ NC bans should be for materials that have strong markets and are easy to identify
- ❖ NC bans should include:
  - ❖ Cardboard
  - ❖ Pallets
  - ❖ Paper
  - ❖ Polystyrene
  - ❖ Wood
  - ❖ Brown goods (furniture)
  - ❖ Bottles
- ❖ NC should have "common sense" programs that are non-technical
- ❖ NC should have statewide public signage for solid waste programs
- ❖ NC educational programs should be motivational
- ❖ NC should have educational programs on facilities and location siting
- ❖ NC should require full cost accounting by local governments
- ❖ NC state agencies should assist in siting of landfills
- ❖ NC state agencies should do research into new technologies
- ❖ NC should assist in the establishment of regional landfills and MRF's (material recovery facilities)
- ❖ NC should do a waste stream analysis
- ❖ NC should communicate with county commissioners about waste management
- ❖ NC should clearly define goals
- ❖ NC should apply accounting measures to define "true full cost"
- ❖ NC should provide funding to poor counties
- ❖ NC should have a bottle bill
- ❖ NC should educate local governments regarding full cost
- ❖ NC should have mandatory minimal levels of collection
- ❖ Collection should be universally available across the state
- ❖ Pay as you throw should be universal

#### ***4. What needs to be done by whom in order to have the desired outcome regarding waste management in the year 2009?***

Question Four appeared to provide an opportunity for individuals, organizations and local governments to develop a list of programs and solicit State assistance in helping local governments achieve their individual solid waste goals.

##### **State government should:**

- ❖ provide funding to poor counties
- ❖ encourage a state-wide bottle bill
- ❖ have mandatory minimal levels of collection
- ❖ have fines dedicated to environmental programs
- ❖ create incentives for industries that use hard to recycle materials in manufacturing process
- ❖ provide economic incentives (tax breaks or grant money) to local governments that recycle/reduce
- ❖ research new solid waste technologies
- ❖ communicate with county commissioners on solid waste issues
- ❖ clearly define goals
- ❖ establish a Center to look at future solid waste technologies (similar to Biotechnology Center)

- ❖ provide more flexibility in landfill construction criteria to promote in-state landfiling
- ❖ have additional landfill bans for materials that are easily identifiable and marketable
- ❖ assist in establishment of regional landfills and material recovery facilities (MRF's)
- ❖ provide state-wide educational signage
- ❖ establish a statewide tip fee
- ❖ fund clean-up of old landfills

**Local governments should:**

- ❖ buy more recycled materials
- ❖ have mandatory recycling of marketable materials
- ❖ institute full cost accounting for solid waste programs
- ❖ be encouraged to hire a solid waste planner to assist local governments
- ❖ establish recycling and compost programs

***5. Are there other steps/issues/questions that need to be developed or addressed?***

No additional comments were received other than thanking the Solid Waste Section for encouraging the exchange of ideas and providing a forum for public participation for a variety of viewpoints in the development of the state solid waste plan.