

Chapter Nine: Actions to Meet Goal Five

Goal Five of this Plan states:

By 2013 the state of North Carolina shall create and continually maintain 20 years of landfill capacity in the state.

This goal is designed to be continuous. For example, by 2013 North Carolina should have enough landfill capacity for disposal through at least the year 2033. In the year 2014 there should be enough capacity to last until 2034 at minimum.

Landfill capacity is necessary to protect human health and the environment from the hazards and nuisances of improper disposal. If landfill capacity is depleted, the alternatives of long-distance shipping or incineration will increase economic burdens. Goal Five seeks to prolong the lifetime of operational landfills and ensure 20 years of future disposal capacity. The goal has multiple applications because ensuring ample space for solid waste disposal requires waste reduction, increased recycling and an improved landfill siting process.

KEY ACTIONS TO MEET GOAL FIVE

Situations vary from county to county, but overall landfill capacity is limited. The factors that prolong and expand landfill lifetimes must be addressed now. The key actions outlined to achieve Goal Five directly address the state's landfill capacity needs. Because good solid waste management is complex and multifaceted, the key actions recommended to achieve goals one through four – increasing technology, recycling, diversion, public education and involvement – also help realize Goal Five.

Objective 5.1. Increase waste reduction efforts.

The obvious way to extend the state's landfill capacity is to reduce the amount of waste disposed in its landfills. Increased efforts to reduce waste at its source, recycle and compost would decrease the amount of waste generated and disposed in the state. Without opening a single new facility, the state would be able to “buy time” from its existing landfill capacity.

The following key actions for this objective are described under Goal 3:

- Enact statewide disposal bans on recyclable materials like pallets and clean wood waste, oil filters, cardboard, newspaper, office paper and cathode ray tubes.
- Establish per capita recovery targets for local government programs.
- Enact a statewide tipping fee on solid waste disposal and transfer to help meet waste reduction goals and provide program funds.
- Implement variable rate pricing and local mandates to increase recycling participation.
- Continue and expand North Carolina's participation in product stewardship initiatives.
- Implement a consistent funding source to recover electronics.
- Increase public awareness and commitment to recycling.
- Increase “buy recycled” programs by state and local agencies and the private sector.
- Increase state agency diversion of organic materials.
- Include recycling and composting in disaster debris management plans.

- Increase grants and loans available for source reduction, recycling and composting.

Objective 5.2. Develop a process to certify facility need.

North Carolina has no formal process to document or certify the need for disposal capacity. In the past, disposal capacity developed on a laissez faire basis. Local perceived needs or private waste company efforts to increase business infrastructure have driven it. Defined planning strategies may be necessary.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Research states where a planning process that certifies disposal needs has been considered or implemented.
- Convene stakeholders (e.g., public and private landfill developers) and describe the necessity to certify landfill capacity needs and propose preliminary parameters.
- Propose a formal need certification program.
- Finalize and implement a need certification program after public review and comment.

Objective 5.3. Provide information about landfill capacity need.

As North Carolina researches and implements mechanisms that measure landfill capacity, the information should be distributed to stakeholders. The facts are invaluable to the siting process and will help the public understand disposal capacity issues.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Conduct an annual capacity analysis and project the need for MSW landfills.
- Include a synopsis of the state's disposal capacity in the Solid Waste Management Annual Report.
- Report capacity and need analysis data to the Environmental Review Commission.

Objective 5.4. Give local community groups information about solid waste facilities.

Ongoing public education efforts require the state to share data about solid waste with the public. Involving the public in decisions about solid waste facilities also requires education. The state should formalize the education process with a requirement that information should be shared with community groups.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Implement a comprehensive public participation program.
- Respond to public queries about solid waste facilities in a timely manner.
- Explore possibilities to post data about permitted solid waste facilities on the Internet.

Objective 5.5. Review the public participation process.

Public participation is a critical yet controversial element in the landfill siting process. Though difficult to achieve, efforts must be made to balance the applicant's need for a fair siting process with the public's right to be informed and involved in the decision-making process.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Analyze current public participation laws and rules to determine where opportunities exist to improve or change the process.
- Solicit stakeholder viewpoints on the public participation process.
- Propose changes to public participation laws and rules.

Objective 5.6. Improve the efficiency of permit application reviews.

The time it takes to review and issue a permit influences disposal capacity. The time period is largely governed by the current statutory process and the availability of staff and resources to review permits. Process improvements may be necessary.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Review the current permit process and identify opportunities to increase efficiency.
- Provide a funding mechanism to ensure the resources for faster permit reviews.
- Support the Professional Engineers of North Carolina, the Solid Waste Association of North America, the National Solid Waste Management Association, and other organizations that provide permitting information to consulting firms.

CONCLUSION

This update of the original 10 Year Solid Waste Plan sets a course for North Carolina's continued success in solid waste management. It also recommends the steps necessary to ensure public safety and protect the environment. Because the public plays a vital role in successful waste management, input from North Carolina residents has informed and been incorporated throughout this Plan. This input, coupled with analyses of the previous plan's successes and shortcomings, formed the basis for this 10 Year Plan's goal statements and recommended actions.

In keeping with the Plan's 10-year span, all five goals have a deadline of 2013, but successful strategic plans are inherently flexible and designed to be adapted as circumstances change. As with any plan, this Plan's effectiveness rests on the state's ability to monitor outcomes and adapt as needed.

Combined action from the General Assembly, the DENR, local governments, the private sector, and North Carolina residents will be needed to achieve the goals. The five goals and their associated objectives are vital to improve solid waste management in North Carolina. They are also necessary to safeguard the public health and welfare. North Carolina has achieved a great deal in its last 10 years of solid waste management. This Plan sets the path for another 10 years of safe and successful solid waste management.