



Event and Venue Recycling

Case Study: **N.C. Zoo, Asheboro**

Recycling since: 1994

Type of Facility: Outdoor
Natural Habitat Zoo

Recycles: paper, cardboard, fluorescent light bulbs, batteries, motor oil, fry oil, beverage containers

Cost of Recycling:
Fluorescent light bulbs:
\$500/year; batteries:
\$900/ton; cardboard:
\$250/month

Interviewed:

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Description

The N.C. Zoo is a 500 acre natural habitat zoo in Asheboro that welcomed more than 729,000 visitors in 2008. The zoo is open for visitors year round, except on Christmas Day. The zoo's regular vendors include four zoo-themed restaurants serving hot food, smaller portable kiosks serving snacks, and around 10 vending machines serving bottled beverages. A catering service with an alcohol permit is also available for private party functions for up to 1,200.

Implementation

Recycling is offered for both staff and guests of the zoo. The staff recycles paper in eight, blue plastic 96-gallon bins and cardboard in three, 8-yard dumpsters. From these bins the contents enter a 5x12-foot enclosed trailer, which staff takes to Asheboro Recycling when needed. The zoo also internally recycles fluorescent light bulbs and batteries, which Asheboro Recycling also picks up when needed. The used fry oil from vendors is recycled into biodiesel onsite for use in zoo vehicles.

Externally, the primary items recycled by park visitors are beverage containers. As part of its beverage contract, Pepsi provides around 200 40-gallon bins with a hip-roof and a beverage container slot. These bins are placed beside the 50-gallon brown garbage cans. The recycling bins are maintained by the zoo's environmental service crew and are dumped into a 30-yard container located at the back of the park as needed. Randolph County pays Allied Waste to service the container weekly. However, despite signs and decals on the container indicating it is for bottles and cans only, it often becomes an "after hours dump" since it is not enclosed within the zoo itself. At times the material has been so contaminated that the container contents were taken to the landfill. This is not economically feasible for the park, as the zoo pays its environmental service crew to hand-sort the bin contents, only for the recyclables to be contaminated offsite. The zoo is currently in talks with Asheboro Recycling to provide beverage recycling, as well as steel and cardboard, services which may change the current situation.



The zoo also finds employee education on recycling difficult. While the zoo employs 200 full-time staff, close to 100 seasonal workers are hired during peak months. While the zoo currently does not offer environmental education because of the staff fluctuations and differences in section training, there are plans to make a presentation available for new workers.



Results

While the zoo has been “green” since 1989, the environmental staff is proactive in identifying problems and making improvements. The zoo is enthusiastic about recycling as it relates to our planet and continues to spread its environmental awareness to their animal-loving guests.