

## Chapter Seven: Actions to Meet Goal Three

Goal Three of the Plan states:

By 2013, reduce litter and illegal disposal by five percent from 2000-2001 levels.

Littering and illegal dumping are increasingly significant issues. Few solid waste problems generate as much public furor or seem as intractable. The N.C. General Assembly has given considerable attention to the litter issue. New legislation passed in the 2001 Session requires loads to be covered and increases enforcement. Local governments pay less attention to illegal dumping despite the threat it poses to the environment and aesthetics of their community.

Effective litter and illegal dumping programs establish and maintain continuous educational campaigns. At the local level, full-time enforcement officers who report to the solid waste department increase efforts to prevent or deter illegal dumping. Durham and Mecklenburg counties have gone a step further and established environmental courts that enhance enforcement while raising the prominence of environmental crimes in their jurisdictions.

### KEY ACTIONS TO MEET GOAL THREE

#### **Objective 3.1. Document the extent and nature of illegal dumping and litter in North Carolina.**

DENR and DOT cleanup and enforcement programs already collect data, but local governments are not required to do so. The data is invaluable because it helps identify problem areas and creates a baseline to measure future efforts' effectiveness.

The following key actions contribute to this objective:

- Continue collecting data and distribute it to the General Assembly, Governor's Office and the public.
- Coordinate data collection efforts and consider jointly reporting key findings.
- Work with local governments to track and report illegal dumping complaints.

#### **Objective 3.2. Increase educational efforts about litter reduction and illegal dumping enforcement.**

Most education programs help reduce litter, but programs that target the population groups most likely to litter are more efficient. Targeted campaigns increase the value of limited resources to achieve the desired result.

The following key actions contribute to this objective:

- Coordinate state-level education efforts with DOT to promote recycling and discourage litter.
- Educate and train local governments on programs to clean illegal dumpsites and litter.
- Promote a funding mechanism for educational efforts about illegal dumping and litter.

#### **Objective 3.3. Require local solid waste plans to include measurable litter control and illegal dumping programs.**

Community-based efforts to reduce litter and illegal dumping can be very effective. They identify acute litter and illegal dumpsites, and help gather local resources and volunteers to clean up those areas. Ties to

civic groups and local schools are best cultivated at the local level, so local solid waste plans offer an excellent opportunity galvanize community litter-prevention and cleanup efforts. Local programs must address illegal dumping as a priority.

The following key actions contribute to this objective:

- Require local solid waste plans to include detailed descriptions of how communities in the jurisdiction address illegal dumping and litter. The plans should establish and analyze local baseline levels, then generally describe how the problems will be addressed.
- Work with DOT, Keep America Beautiful, and the Big Sweep program to offer communities technical assistance and training on best management practices for local litter programs.
- Encourage the School of Government to assess and make recommendations to improve illegal dumping and litter enforcement authority.

**Objective 3.4. Require more extensive reports on litter control enforcement efforts from the Highway Patrol, local law enforcement agencies, and the courts.**

Senate Bill 1014 passed by the 2001 General Assembly session already calls for implementation of this objective.

**Objective 3.5. Establish an ongoing funding source to prevent and clean up litter and illegal dumpsites.**

Cleaning litter and illegal dumpsites has already cost state and local governments millions of dollars, but the problems are still pervasive. Many communities have no program at all and others have inadequate programs. New and higher levels of funding would increase the actions needed to prevent and clean up problem areas while reducing the burden on other revenue sources (e.g., General Fund tax dollars).

The following key action contributes to this objective:

- Institute a statewide tipping fee or surcharge and dedicate a portion of that fee to illegal dumping and litter clean up programs<sup>1</sup>.

**Objective 3.6. Research bottle bills, “litter taxes” and successful mechanisms used by other states to prevent litter and illegal disposal.**

Other states have mechanisms that positively affect illegal dumping and litter. North Carolina should consider these mechanisms if the objectives of this plan, other actions by the General Assembly, or local programs do not succeed.

The following key action contributes to this objective:

- Respond to requests by the General Assembly or the Governor’s Office to explore and recommend appropriate mechanisms for North Carolina.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Six, Objective 2.3 for additional details on the statewide tip fee.