

## **DIVISIONS OF WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE AND OUTREACH**

### **SOLID WASTE AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The divisions of Waste Management and Environmental Assistance and Outreach provide technical assistance to businesses, industries, local governments and citizens to help them reduce and properly manage waste. The divisions' assistance helps protect and improve citizens' public health and the environment.

The Solid Waste program regulates safe management of solid waste through guidance, technical assistance, regulations, permitting, environmental monitoring, compliance evaluation and enforcement. Waste types handled at North Carolina facilities include municipal solid waste, industrial waste, construction and demolition waste, land-clearing waste, scrap tires, medical waste, compost and septage. The Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach offers environmental sustainability assistance, including recycling, waste reduction and composting, water and energy efficiency, and education on how to prevent waste and pollution.

North Carolina has 40 permitted municipal solid waste landfills that take waste at approximately \$40 per ton – one of the lowest costs for waste disposal on the east coast. North Carolina communities disposed of a total of 9,467,045 tons of municipal solid waste [MSW] and construction and demolition [C&D] waste in waste management facilities located within North Carolina and out-of-state. Owners and operators of North Carolina landfills are required to monitor landfills to detect and respond to releases of contaminants to the environment.

The state per capita disposal rate has fallen below one ton per person per year for the first time since fiscal base year 1991-92. In FY 2010-11 (July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011), the state disposed of solid waste at a lower rate relative to the last decade, falling 27 percent since fiscal year 2005-06. This is most likely due to continuing recycling efforts, and decreased construction. North Carolina communities disposed of 9,467,045 tons of waste in North Carolina and out-of-state facilities. This represents a small increase of 71,588 tons from the previous fiscal year.

Analysis of the North Carolina MSW landfills indicates a four percent increase in disposal when compared to last year's figures. The increase correlates with a two percent increase in population and a slight upturn in the economy. A linear model suggests that the state will continue to see an increase in waste disposed. As has been seen in the last three years, waste disposal was down because construction and demolition of homes was down, which directly relates to the economy. Historically, good economic growth has lead to increased waste disposal. Landfill bans (such as those for plastic bottles, aluminum and electronics) and an increase in recycling program participation may also keep waste disposal increases to a minimum.

The N.C. Department of Revenue reported Solid Waste Tax collection of \$18,310,171, which equates to 9,155,085 tons of taxable solid waste going into landfills within North Carolina and through transfer stations going to landfills in neighboring states.

North Carolina-permitted solid waste management landfills and an incinerator received a total of 8,994,728 tons of solid waste for FY 2010-11. Waste originating from South Carolina and Virginia equaled 177,770 tons. North Carolina exported 618,017 tons for FY 2010-11, a decrease of 22 percent from the previous year. Exported solid waste was sent to South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia.

Recycling of traditional recyclable materials, such as paper, glass, aluminum and steel cans, and plastic, increased 5.4 percent from FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11. Plastic bottle recycling in particular increased 23.4 percent last year and has increased by close to 45 percent over the last two years. Electronics materials collected by local programs has almost doubled since FY 2008-09, rising from .84 to 1.55 pounds per capita in FY 2010-11. The number of curbside recycling programs reached a record high of 283 in FY 2010-11, serving more than 1.68 million households across the state. Oil filter collection by local government recycling programs has tripled since FY 2008-09, driven in large part by the filter disposal ban. Prices for recyclable materials were extremely strong in FY 2010-11 before declining slightly at the end of the fiscal year, indicating healthy market demand for recovered commodities.

It is recommended that the department continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the state's disposal bans. The department should coordinate efforts among local governments and industry to ensure disposal capacity is available in all areas within North Carolina. It is also recommended that the department encourage the diversion of identified large solid waste streams, such as food and wood wastes, from large generators of these wastes. Continued work towards expansion of the collection of plastic bottles and other recyclables is advised in order to ensure that capacity of the growing recycling markets in North Carolina is met.