

Memorandum

To: Solid Waste Advisory Board

From: Gayle Wilson, Solid Waste Director

Subject: Orange County's FY 09-10 Waste Reduction Rate is 56%

Date: August 3, 2011

The recently released State of North Carolina Solid Waste and Materials Management Report (http://www.wastenotnc.org/swhome/AR09_10/AR09_10.pdf) shows that Orange County landfilled an average of 0.60 tons per person per year or 3.3 pounds per day in Fiscal Year 2009-2010, a reduction of 56% compared to the 1991-92 base year of measurement when it was 1.36 tons per person annually or 7.5 pounds per day. That is the best waste reduction rate in the state for last fiscal year and the County's best ever since measurement began in 1996.

In 1997, the County and the three towns all adopted a waste reduction goal of 61% per capita and have made steady progress towards that goal ever since. Two years ago the waste reduction rate was 54%, the year prior 50%. This rate is measured by dividing all the tons of waste reported as originating from Orange County, regardless of where they were landfilled, divided by the County population that year. Annually the State compiles solid waste data on all 100 counties and includes the waste reduction rates in its report along with data on recycling, waste management, state-wide landfill capacity and other solid waste information.

While Solid Waste staff frankly believes and have believed for some time that the tonnage from Orange County going elsewhere may be underreported, there is no other metric that is statewide and vetted by a disinterested third party data collector, so this is the best comparative measure of progress that we have. It is certainly true that the recession, shrinking size of newspapers and light-weighting of cans, bottles and other containers have had an effect on waste and recycling tonnage, but despite all this, we are proud of our increased waste reduction. The overall recycling and waste reduction ethic in our county that has consistently been supported by the Board and the other governments has resulted in a set of programs that are second to none. The high quality of our recyclable materials continues to glean high market value and is renowned in the industry.

The State also reports tonnage of recyclable materials and tons of recycling per capita but those metrics are not part of the statutory State standard and tonnages can be easily manipulated; Orange County has set no goals for measuring that and there is very wide variability in the parameters for calculating what is recycled. Thus we stick to our waste reduction metric and continue to strive for 61% waste reduction. When we achieve that goal, we hope to propose a higher goal.