



“All Bottle” Best Management Practice: Watauga County Solid Waste and Recycling

All Plastic Bottles Recycling since: 2008

Message used: press releases, Web site, e-mail lists, hand outs at convenience centers and information on collection containers

Interviewed:

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Description

In 2008, the Watauga County Solid Waste and Recycling Department converted to an “all plastic bottles” from an “all plastics #1 and #2” collection program. The switch occurred because the new recycling coordinator thought the county’s plastic recycling was confusing to residents. The town of Boone has also made the switch. Its plastic recycling program is dictated by Watauga County’s plastic criteria and Boone’s contractor, GDS Inc., which takes recycling to the county’s material recovery facility.

Implementation

Watauga County advertised the switch to “all plastic bottles” through press releases, its Web site, e-mail lists and through information handed out at county convenience centers. Information was also included on collection containers and on an easy-to-read recycling chart that was included with the county property tax bill mail-out. To view the chart, see http://www.wataugacounty.org/sanitation/GUIDELINES%20FOR%20RECYCLING_rev_9_15.pdf. Lisa Doty, Watauga County’s recycling coordinator, says “I am a firm believer in making it as easy as possible for people to understand the recycling program...it doesn't get much easier than all bottles, all colors. It also gives the public the perception that they are recycling more than just #1 and #2 plastic, when in reality, almost all bottles are #1 or #2.” The county operates its own MRF and markets its recyclables through a broker that accepts commingled bales of plastic.

Results

When Watauga County switched to “all plastic bottles,” it saw a 220 percent increase in plastic tonnage. The county has never had a problem with the buyer rejecting a load, so it assumes there is very little contamination.