

Trash & Recycling

Trash and recycling schedule is on the [town calendar](#).

Supporting Documents

Landfill & Recycling Centers in Brunswick County 2.61 MB

Caswell Beach Yearly Recycling Tonnage 172.83 KB

NC County Recycling Rankings 159.72 KB

Recycling items Accepted by Waste Industries 1.75 MB

On June 6, 2022, the Town of Caswell Beach Board of Commissioners held a conference call with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) and SONOCO Recycling. The call covered questions and concerns from our Board of Commissioners as well as citizens present. Below is a summary of the questions discussed:

What is being recycled?

Cardboard and mixed paper, glass, #1 and #2 plastics, steel cans and aluminum products.

Where does the recycled material go?

Glass goes to a facility in Wilson, North Carolina. Most paper and cardboard are sent to plants in North Carolina and 60% of remaining materials are sent to facilities in North Carolina and South Carolina and a few other southeastern states.

How much is being recycled?

Caswell Beach recycled 175 tons of materials last year (540 pounds per household). The average in North Carolina is 300 pounds per household. Brunswick County has the highest per capita rate in North Carolina, including construction debris.

What collected recyclable materials are being sent to the landfill?

The SONOCO representatives stated that 80% of the material coming to their facility is recycled. The remaining 20% is not recyclable and is sent to the landfill. Most of these non-recyclable materials are food waste, textiles, wood scraps, hoses and wires, and other assorted garbage that is tossed into recycle bins. The NCDEQ reps stated that this is similar to statewide numbers. NCDEQ reports that of the material that goes into material recovery facilities. Cardboard and mixed paper account for 48%, with glass at 21%, cans at 3%, plastics at 7%, and the remaining 20% being trash. In beach areas with summer tourists, more volume is generated but there also are more contaminants as not all areas have the same recycling rules.

When asked to comment further about rumors that entire loads are sent to landfills when they are contaminated, the SONOCO representatives assured us that is not true. As material goes down the line, anything that can be recycled is extracted, and only the trash left at the end goes to the landfill. They noted that as a for-profit company, SONOCO is in business to make money by selling materials and not paying to send recyclable materials to a landfill.

Are plastics being dumped in landfills nationally, as reported by Beyond Plastic?

Recent articles have reported that only 5% of plastics are recycled. While that statistic may be correct, that is not an indication that recycling is faulty. When calculating percentages, weight is the factor that is used, and most household recyclable plastics are extremely light weight. Also, small plastic items (smaller than a credit card) are not recyclable. Much of the plastic in the nation is used in items such as textiles, cars, carpet, etc. The weight of the plastic in these uses is quite heavy and not recyclable. About 40% of plastic is used for packaging, and only 30% of that is recyclable.

What is the anticipated future of recycling in NC and Brunswick County?

NCDEQ representatives said that the outlook is very positive, where there is a very active community, with strong leadership and involved citizens, recycling works. In our region, with strong growth and outreach, with education about the facts of recycling and recognition that landfills are a finite resource, the outlook is positive. Local markets are strong for recycled goods. The southeastern United States used to send paper goods to China. However, these goods are now kept here as new mills have been built to process paper in the southeastern United States. There also is good investment in processing other recyclables.

Is it true that fees for recycling will increase due to contaminants in bins?

While that may be true in other areas, it is not true for us. Our contract with GFL, formerly Waste Industries, expires in December. Per that agreement, there will be an increase of 3% but it is not due to contaminants.

What difference is seen in towns with universal recycling versus towns with opt-in programs, and what are the costs for each type of program?

In North Carolina, towns with universal programs have an 80% participation rate. Those with opt-in programs see a 38% participation level on average. Coastal towns with high tourism and rentals see a 5% to 10% participation in opt-in situations. Cost per participant per year with universal programs averages \$59 per household versus \$75 for subscription programs.

What percentage of towns in NC have recycle programs and how are they paid for?

There are 552 total municipalities in NC, and 321 (58%) have curbside pickup programs. All 100 counties have a recycling program. Reported recycling totals revealed that 47% of tonnage is curbside pickup, with only 18% collected in convenience centers or drop off sites. The remainder is from commercial entities, construction and demolition recycling, school programs, and the like. NCDEQ estimates that about $\frac{1}{3}$ of programs are funded by fees, $\frac{1}{3}$ by property taxes, and $\frac{1}{3}$ by a combination of taxes and fees.