

Landfill Restrictions To Get Tighter

NO MORE PLASTIC BOTTLES

By REECE MURPHY

Of The Record Staff

Disposable plastic containers. They're everywhere.

Milk, water, soda, juice, cooking oil, detergent, most everything liquid comes in plastic containers these days. Yet come Oct. 1, one place you won't find them is in the state's landfills, not officially anyway.

Those items — described as any plastic containers “that have a neck smaller than the body of the container, and that accept a screw top, snap cap, or other closure” — will join a list of landfill materials banned by the state legislature in 2005.

Other items being added to the list in October will be used oil filters and wooden pallets that are not part of general construction debris. Still, the most problematic remains the ubiquitous plastic bottle. What are you supposed to do with them?

Recycle.

“It's hard to speak for the legislators involved, but I think they realized there was a demand for these commodities to be used as raw materials to make new commodities,” Jim Hicksman of the State's Recycling Office said. “From an environmental and an economic perspective, it made the most sense to ban them from disposal and move them into the recycling waste stream.”

Harnett County General Services Director Jerry Blanchard said Harnett County was ready to handle any potential onslaught of bottles at its two landfill locations, four convenience centers and a recycling center at Campbell University with the ability to add more bins if necessary.

They'll be ready come Oct. 1, but here's only one problem he sees with the plan in regards to the bottles.

“I'm not quite sure how we're going to control this because we can't open each bag that comes to the landfill,” Mr. Blanchard said. “And I'm sure the hauler, if we hold them responsible, they're not going to want to open that bag when they pick it up. “So how it's going to be enforced is yet to be seen,” he said. “The other thing is they take up a lot of space. They're not heavy, but they are bulky, so if there's a lot of them we may have to buy a bailer.”

Mr. Hicksman said the state Division of Waste Management does have varying levels of administrative and/or civil penalties it can levy, but he said he doubted folks would have to worry about it much.

“Well, we know they're not going to be wandering the state looking at people's garbage cans,” he said. “All enforcement is initiated, basically, at the landfill, at the point of disposal.”

While it's almost a sure bet that many people will simply toss the bottles in the trash as usual, many will almost certainly comply with the ban.

Some residents like 83-year-old Grace Jackson of Dunn have another problem. She says she wants to recycle but is unable to.

She'd like to see somebody start a curbside recycling program, especially with the upcoming ban on plastic bottles.

“When I lived in Greenwood, S.C., you



Daily Record Photo/Reece Murphy

From left, Alex Dees and Andrew Goodson of Plain View recycle aluminum cans and plastic containers at the Spivey's Corner Convenience/Recycling Center on U.S. 421. Beginning Oct. 1, more people will be doing the same since a law banning plastic containers — including drink bottles — from the state's landfills means the items will have to be separated from household trash and recycled.

didn't throw away anything except food," she said. "It was wonderful. "But there's none of that here, and so many of us are not able to go and carry those things to the recycling centers," she said. "I would request that they get on the stick and start a recycling program where a truck could pick it all up."

Dunn City Manager Ronnie Autry said in these tough economic times, curbside recycling citywide would be economically unfeasible.

He said citywide pickup would almost certainly double the cost of trash pickup for city residents since it would require another day of service.

While he said requested curbside pickup for the elderly and handicapped is something the city might consider doing on its own, he drew short of committing and said it would have to be discussed first.

"Because you have such a hardtime getting rid of it, there's still no real market for recyclables," Mr. Autry said of the problem in general. "We just hope to continue promoting our drop-off location at Tyler Park.

One of the few towns in the areas with a recycling program was Newton Grove. But the program was terminated a few years ago due to an unexpected problem.

"We found out the outfit we had doing our garbage wasn't recycling, he was dumping it all in the same truck," Mayor Gerald Darden said. "Now we're not doing recycling anymore per se, we have a couple of containers if people want to recycle plastic and paper products, but we don't have a household program any more."

The only town in the area that does have curbside recycling is Linden.

"I would say right now, about half of our residents, maybe a little more, use it regularly," Linden Commissioner Frances Collier said. "I think it will probably pick up. But I think the town may have to put out a notice about the bottles."

Mr. Hicksman said he thinks even without everybody participating as they should, the proposition will be successful in removing tons of plastic bottles from landfills every year.

"We've talked with school systems that are implementing bottle recycling that didn't have it before, other groups and certain industries where many of the banned materials are generated, told them about their many recycling opportunities," he said.

"We know we won't capture 100 percent of every water bottle and milk jug in the state, but we do expect to see an increase in recovery," he said.

Mrs. Jackson, meanwhile, said she hopes the area soon gets on board with more active recycling programs, not only for herself, but for everyone.

"I think what it's all about is saving the earth," she said. "If not, we're not going to have anything left."