

# New recycling law to promote better habits

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Starting in October, it will be against state law to throw plastic bottles in your trash.



The challenge, though, is that there is no real way to enforce the statute to make people recycle. But supporters say the new law is a step in the right direction.

"It'll help us reduce waste going to the landfills. Obviously, it'll help us recover a valuable material," said state recycling director Scott Mouw.

Mouw said about 70,000 tons of plastic ends up in the state's landfills each year. About 20 percent gets recycled.

"We hope it will make a difference," he said. "We hope people will take this law in the spirit that it's intended, which is to say to everybody in North Carolina that we need to do a better job of recovering this material."

Mouw said everything from water bottles to detergent bottles can be recycled and reused to make new containers.

It is already illegal to throw out aluminum cans. County and state officials admit recycling laws are difficult to enforce.

"They're not going to be looking in people's trash cans. They're not going to look in dumpsters," Mouw said.

Mouw said they will be watching landfills for large plastic bottle violations.

"Enforcement is not something that will be heavy-handed," he said.

"I think it's probably a good thing," said Deborah Lee, who recycles but admits she is not that mindful of it. "I know we're probably behind the times and other people are already doing it, so I don't have a problem with that."

Plastic bottles are not the only items that will be banned from trash cans starting Oct. 1. Other banned items will include motor-vehicle oil filters, wooden pallets and even oyster shells.

However, cities or towns could get a waiver from the state to keep the law from taking effect on the local level.

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