

Recycling efforts could create new jobs

By Pam Haynes
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HIGH POINT - North Carolina recycling director Scott Mouw thinks the new law banning plastic bottles, wooden pallets and oil filters from being thrown into the trash will do more than clean up landfills.

It could pave the way for new jobs too.

"It could create jobs and new products in smaller companies because they're competing with China and other companies to get recycled plastic," he said.

The bill was introduced by state Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Chatham, who is now the N.C. House Speaker. He said the law could reduce dependency on landfills, recover valuable materials, and create jobs and business opportunities for North Carolinians.

It was adopted by state legislators in 2005.

Mouw said that the state has several businesses that use recycled materials on a daily basis. If those materials were more abundant, new jobs and businesses could come to the area.

Pallet Resource of N.C. Inc. in Lexington collects used wooden pallets to reuse, repair and resell, or cut into mulch. Mouw said companies like PRNC could benefit from the law because wooden pallets can no longer be thrown away in landfills.

Neal Grimes, president of the company, said the business might benefit from the law, but landfills in Davidson County already have banned wooden pallets.

"The new ban might have a more profound affect on other parts of the state because landfills might still be accepting the waste," he said. "But we would love to entertain phone calls from people or businesses that do have pallets. We are a resource to get rid of that stuff."

Grimes said he supports the new law as the owner of an environmentally friendly business.

"Wooden pallets would eventually biodegrade, but there's a bigger threat with plastic bottles. The greatest affect would be to get plastic bottles out of the landfills and recycle those."

Mouw said other companies like the Raleigh-based Recycle America, one of the nation's largest mixed bottle processing plants, could benefit from the law.

"North Carolina is sort of ground zero for plastic recycling in the U.S. We really need to find a way to feed that. We need to help people recycle more bottles," he said.

"It will not only divert materials from landfills, but it will keep the material around longer and put it back into the economy."

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