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North Carolina bans plastic bottles in landfills

Julie Rose
Thursday August 20, 2009

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Water bottles and milk jugs are the latest items to be banned in North Carolina landfills. The prohibition takes effect October 1st. But WFAE's Julie Rose reports the bottle ban is blunt on enforcement:



North Carolina is one of just a few states in the country, and the only one in the Southeast, to ban plastic bottles in its landfills. That includes water and soda bottles that have become ubiquitous in American life, as well as detergent bottles and plastic peanut butter jars.

But how can the state possibly enforce a ban like that? State Recycling Director Scott Mouw says it can't.

"The state's not going to look in people's garbage cans and dumpsters," says Mouw. "The enforcement will be very, very difficult on this legislation. Does that mean everybody should heave a sigh of relief and say, 'Okay now I don't have to do it?' We hope that's not the case. We hope people really understand the reasons why these bans are put in place."

Mouw says the state will rely on landfill operators to watch for trash haulers who dump lots of plastic bottles. Ideally, he says the landfill operators will pressure the haulers to pressure their customers to recycle more plastic. And he says penalties for violators are unlikely.

State lawmakers decided the ban was appropriate because 95 percent of North Carolina residents have access to plastic bottle recycling, but only 18 percent actually do it according to state data.

Motor oil filters and wooden pallets will also be banned from North Carolina landfills starting October 1st. Aluminum cans are already banned.

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