

By 2005 County must cut waste by almost half

Out of sight, out of mind - where does our garbage go? This is the fourth article in an occasional series on garbage and recycling.

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Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to the dump we go with bottles and cans and garbage bags hi-ho, hi-ho.

Standing next to the amount of garbage we each produce each year – approximately 1,600 pounds – could make one feel dwarfed.

In the county's 1998-99 fiscal year, Jackson County produced 23,789 tons of garbage. The 1999 population for Jackson County is estimated to be 29,621, solid waste technician Chad Parker said.

Of that, 8.7 percent – 2,087 tons – was recycled at one of the county's seven staffed recycling centers (SRCs).

State waste stream reduction goals say we have to reduce our waste stream (the amount of garbage going into landfills) by 25 percent by 2001 and 40 percent by 2005.

This can be done by increasing the amount we recycle, composting kitchen scraps and yard waste, reusing products and packaging, and by buying products using less packaging.

To recycle, take your recyclables – paper, mixed paper and newspaper, plastics: #1 and #2, cardboard, steel and aluminum cans, glass, white goods, oil and antifreeze to one of the SRCs.

The seven SRCs in Jackson County are:

- Qualla – on the Shoal Creek Church Loop road at the Old Qualla School
- Balsam – on Mineral Springs Road in Sylva
- Green's Creek – on Highway 441
- Dillsboro – next to the old county landfill and Webster Enterprises
- Cullowhee – on Little Savannah Road, behind the Cullowhee Fire Department
- Tuckasegee – on Highway 281
- Cashiers – at the old Cashiers landfill site on N.C. 107 south.

Each SRC is open Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The county plans to build another SRC in Glenville, probably on Pine Creek Road off N.C. 107 north – if they can find a one-acre piece of property to build it on, county manager Jay Denton said. "I cannot find a piece of affordable property on or near 107," he said.

White goods are accepted at every site except Dillsboro and Green's Creek, Parker said. White goods can be taken to Webster Enterprises directly below the SRC in Dillsboro. Furniture is also accepted at SRCs in their grey boxes.

Cashiers and Dillsboro have swap shops where you can leave items such as furniture, books, toys and clothing that can be swapped for other items or taken home at no charge.

For other items, recycle them as follows:

- **Cans:** steel and aluminum food and drink cans are accepted. Leave lids attached if possible and rinse all cans. Labels do not need to be removed. Steel and aluminum needs to be separated.
- **Glass:** all glass food jars and drink bottles are accepted. Remove all lids and rinse all containers. Labels do not need to be removed. Glass cookware such as Pyrex, ceramics, mirrors, window glass, headlights, light bulbs and medicine bottles aren't accepted. Glass is separated into colors – clear, green, and brown. Blue glass is recycled with green.
- **Plastic:** #1 PETE and #2 HDPE plastic bottles are accepted. Labels do not need to be removed. Plastics that are #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7 are not accepted, nor are plastic bowls, cups, meat or deli trays, egg cartons, take out food trays, frozen food plates or film canisters, even if they have #1 or #2 stamped on the bottom. Cardboard egg cartons can be recycled with corrugated cardboard.
- **Newspaper:** all newspapers and inserts are accepted.
- **Mixed paper:** Magazines, junk mail, cereal boxes, paperback books, brochures,

booklets and loose paper are accepted. Paper towels, cups, plates, tissues, blueprints, carbon paper, waxed paper and wallpaper are not accepted.

- **Corrugated cardboard:** all corrugated cardboard is accepted. Wax cardboard is not.
- **Oil and antifreeze:** oil and antifreeze are accepted separately at the Cashiers and Dillsboro SRCS. Do not mix oil and antifreeze together. All kinds of antifreeze are accepted.

Composting bins for kitchen and yard waste will soon be available at SRCs Parker said. Jackson County received a \$7,500 grant from the state's "Backyard Composting" grant project. The grant money is being used to purchase composting bins and for educational materials and classroom education.

Food waste is a high percentage of the waste that ends up in landfills, Parker said. If people consistently compost they can reduce 400-600 pounds from each household, each year, Jim Hickman of the state Department of Environmental and Natural Resources said.

With approximately 2.1 people per household in Jackson County, that would amount to 190 to 280 pounds less of garbage per person each year – an 11 to 17 percent reduction.

The composting bins will be sold at county SRCs on various Saturdays, starting within a month or so. They will be sold at or near the county's cost, approximately \$30 a bin, Parker said.

Two Jackson County schools are involved in the project – Cullowhee Valley and Fairview Elementary Schools. Parker said he is interested in educating students in other country schools about reduction and recycling as well.

Reduce, reuse and recycle are the key elements in reducing our waste stream. Even little things make a difference – such as donating used clothing to thrift stores instead of throwing them away, Parker said.

The seven dwarves, off to work, knew that little things could make a difference. In reducing the amount of waste that ends up in our landfills, our small efforts matter too. “Just those small things,” Parker said.

Here are the figures for how much waste Jackson County has produced and recycled since 1994.

The percentage of waste stream reduction has to also factor in population growth – how much garbage is produced per person per year.

The 98-98 figures include the demolition of the Ritz Theater in Sylva which added 1,135 tons to the C&D landfill. No large buildings were torn down the year before, county solid waste technician Chad Parker said.

The *waste* column includes commercial waste, construction and demolition, and residential garbage.

Year	Waste (tons)	Recycling	Percent recycled
1994-95	24,296	2,490	9 percent
1995-96	unavailable	1,914	unavailable
1996-97	27,366	1,764	6 percent
1997-98	22,253	2,148	9 percent
11998-99	23,789	2,087	8.7 percent