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County encourages citizens to recycle

Henderson County residents who "Get Caught Recycling" at the Stoney Mountain Transfer Station Saturday through Aug. 30 will be randomly picked to get free Asheville Tourist tickets.

By [Harrison Metzger](#)

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Henderson County residents who "Get Caught Recycling" at the Stoney Mountain Transfer Station Saturday through Aug. 30 will be randomly picked to get free Asheville Tourist tickets.

It's part of a revamped effort to increase recycling, which last year diverted only about 2.5 percent of the total trash collected. And it is just the start, say county leaders who are promising improvements to the recycling program.

Those may eventually include county incentives to get more waste haulers offering curbside recycling, or the addition of more locations where residents can recycle.

Rewarding recycling

For years, residents who have wanted to recycle have had to dodge the truck traffic at the Stoney Mountain Transfer Station (landfill) to toss their cans, bottles and newspapers in bins in a dusty gravel lot.

Adrienne Outcalt, who started work in February as Henderson County recycling coordinator, said she gets daily calls from residents asking when the county will improve recycling and offering suggestions. The Asheville Tourists ticket give away is an effort to reward residents who recycle under what county officials admit are less than ideal conditions.

"It is really exciting for us to partner with the state, which is how we obtained the tickets," Outcalt said. "We have got 700 tickets to give away. We recognize what is in place right now is not optimal and we want to do more, but in the meantime we want to do this to recognize people who make that effort ... to show them we appreciate it."

The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance helped the county obtain the

tickets.

Outcalt will visit the recycling area weekly to randomly pick residents to receive four free tickets per family. The county is also planning to bring recycling information, displays, Tourist tickets and other gifts to events such the July 4 celebration at Jackson Park, said Pam Brice, the county public information officer.

Market driven change

With the closing of the construction and demolition portion of the landfill by the end of this month, the county will have to pay \$34 per ton to ship an estimated additional 20,000 tons of debris to South Carolina, County Engineer Marcus Jones said.

Meanwhile, high energy costs and costs for raw materials are making recycling more profitable than it has been in the past. For instance, the county can now get \$130 per ton for fiber (mixed paper).

Jones and other county officials hope to see a double benefit from more recycling, increasing revenues from materials to offset the estimated \$500,000 to \$600,000 in additional costs the county will face to truck construction and demolition waste to South Carolina.

While the county's present recycling rate of 2 to 3 percent may seem pitiful, Jones said he sees the increased profitability of collecting materials as "a huge opportunity."

New leadership

Outcalt said she is pleased that county commissioners, the county manager, county engineer and solid waste director are all "seriously committed to recycling."

"Recycling has top down support like it never has before," she said. The county showed that commitment not only by hiring Outcalt, but also in its choice of a new county solid waste director. Will Sagar, who worked 14 years as solid waste director in neighboring Transylvania County, started work last week and is studying ways to improve solid waste collection and recycling, Jones said.

"Will Sagar has strong experience in solid waste," Jones said. He cited Sagar's experience in Transylvania County, saying "they have a very progressive recycling program."

Sagar is also a founding board member and past president of the Carolina Recycling Association. He has won awards for Transylvania's recycling efforts and has developed strong relationships with state environmental officials who regulate solid waste and provide grants, Jones said.

"What I think we need the most help with right now is recycling," Jones said. "So I think he is a good match for Henderson County Solid Waste."