

**2021**  
**North Carolina Interagency Report**

**Litter Cleanup, Education/Prevention  
and Enforcement**

**This report provides information for reporting year 2021**

**February 1, 2022**

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## **Litter Report 2021**

This report is prepared pursuant to Session Law 2006-79, Section 15 G.S. 147-12 (b) and provides information describing North Carolina's 2021 litter prevention initiatives.

The state's 2021 litter prevention campaign had three components:

- Litter cleanup
- Education - prevention
- Enforcement

Information contained in this report is for calendar year 2021 unless otherwise noted. This interagency report was prepared by NCDOT with multiple agencies providing reporting year information. A list of these agencies and litter report contacts is provided in Appendix A of this report.

## Executive Summary

The Coronavirus pandemic greatly impacted litter collection efforts in 2020; both spring and fall Litter Sweeps were canceled and Contract Litter Removal was abruptly halted statewide. This resulted in larger quantities of litter accumulating on NC roadways visible to the public in 2020. However, since January 1, 2021, NCDOT and our partner organizations have re-engaged and have picked up over 13 million pounds of litter in 2021. Spring and fall Litter Sweeps were back on in 2021.

Additionally, in 2021 NCDOT greatly enhanced its public education program related to Anti-Litter messages with new social media posts, press releases, and new creative public service announcements (PSAs, videos, and radio broadcasts). NCDOT partnered with Country Music Star Luke Combs and various NC Athletic Organization coaches and mascots to develop these PSAs to help educate and encourage NC residents to not litter, secure their loads, and work together to keep NC clean. NCDOT also developed a new Swat-A-Litterbug phone application to make it easier for the public to report litterers from their mobile phones

In 2021, NCDOT spent \$19,063,815 removing 13 million pounds of litter from the 80,000 miles of highway. Expenditures and work accomplished by NCDOT employees, Adopt-A-Highway, and NCDOT Contract Forces increased significantly from 2020, resulting in a record setting amount of litter that was collected in 2021

NCDOT Contract Forces picked up a record setting 10,160,115 pounds of litter in 2021. The Adopt-A-Highway (AAH) program continued to make a difference as the volunteers reported picking up 951,555 pounds of litter during 2021. The Sponsor-A-Highway (SAH) program recovered 836,760 pounds of litter. NCDOT Forces picked up 2,774,985 pounds of litter. Other volunteers who picked up litter on NC roadways reported picking up 203,010 pounds in 2021.

Statewide litter prevention continued to be collectively supported by NCDOT, its Litter Management Programs, North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS), North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. NCDOT promoted litter prevention by supplying information through North Carolina Welcome Centers and social media sites, as well as providing litter prevention promotional items to numerous local organizations and schools.

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts provides a detailed 2021 recap of statewide littering charges by offense code and by law enforcement agency in this report. There were 2,643 charges and 848 convictions in 2021. As in previous years, the Conference of Chief District Court Judges continued to provide an alternative to first time offenders charged with littering of less than 15 pounds. On execution of written waiver of appearance and trial, and plea of guilty/responsible, an offender may have the court appearance waived. The fine for intentional littering is \$250 plus costs and \$50 plus costs for unintentional littering. This was adopted by the Conference of Chief District Court Judges on October 20, 2021, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 7A-148, and applies to any new offenses on or after December 1, 2021.

## **1.0 Statewide Roadside Litter Cleanup**

### **1.1 North Carolina Department of Transportation**

North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), hereinafter also referred to as the department, maintains a Litter Management program to address litter along State roadways. In 2021, NCDOT coordinated and implemented its various litter cleanup programs including: Adopt-A-Highway (AAH), Sponsor-A-Highway (SAH), Contract Litter Removal (CLR) contracts, NCDOT Forces litter and bag removal. Additionally, the bi-annual Litter Sweeps were held in April and September 2021.

NCDOT Roadside Environmental has designated Litter Managers in each of the fourteen (14) NCDOT divisions to coordinate efforts for litter abatement programs.

NCDOT's Litter Management database, which was upgraded in February 2018, has continued to make reporting litter pickups easier and accessible for all groups.

NCDOT's Litter Sweeps are typically held the last two weeks of April and September. The department provides volunteers with gloves, safety vests, and bags for use in roadside litter removal. The department also provides additional manpower during Litter Sweeps for litter cleanup, removal, and immediate disposal of bags filled with trash from NCDOT roadsides.

NCDOT continues to build its relationships with statewide nonprofit organizations to promote litter prevention for safe, environmentally sound, and aesthetic roadways. The nonprofit organizations involved include Keep North Carolina Beautiful, Inc. (KNCB) and the North Carolina Solid Waste Enforcement Officers Association. The department also worked with the volunteers in the AAH program and other citizen volunteers and industries as well as Community Service Work Program (CSWP); State Highway Patrol; and local governments. In addition, the department's private, public, partnership initiative, the SAH Program continued to expand. This program provides a means for businesses, individuals, and other organizations to sponsor roadside litter removal.

### **1.2 NCDOT Adopt-A-Highway Program**

NCDOT's Litter Management office administers the department's AAH program. This statewide program is a mutually beneficial partnership between the department and community volunteers. The volunteers participating in the AAH program include businesses, individuals, schools, civic organizations, and professional, religious, and social groups. Participants agree to support local roadside litter removal by adopting a two-mile stretch of roadway and volunteering their time to pick up the litter at least four times a year. The AAH agreement is for a four-year period. In return, the department provides gloves, safety vests, and bags for cleanups and recognizes each group by installing a sign with the group's name at each end of its adopted roadway. Upon reaching 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30-year milestones, recognition awards along with anniversary stars to be placed on their signs, are given to the volunteer groups. Some AAH volunteer groups were also recognized by the department via social media in 2021.

In 2021, the AAH Program cost \$619,241. Program costs include administration, sign installation, bag removal, and provision of safety vests, bags, and gloves. There were 10,655 man-hours charged to this program in 2021.

The State Litter Management Program Outreach Coordinator utilized the assistance of Division Litter Managers and various program coordinators and co-coordinators throughout all 14 divisions. The coordinators manage the adoption and signage approval processes and other program administrative responsibilities within their assigned counties.

At the close of 2021, there were 9,394 road miles adopted by 4,845 AAH groups. The volunteer cleanup efforts of the AAH program saved the state's taxpayers millions of dollars. Volunteers reported working 87,823 hours and picked up 951,555 pounds of litter.

Other Volunteers, who do not have an AAH contract, reported picking up 203,010 lbs. during 2021.

### **1.3 NCDOT Sponsor-A-Highway Program**

NCDOT's Sponsor-A-Highway (SAH) Program was initiated in 2011 as a public-private partnership. Beginning as a pilot, it covered 22 counties. In 2015, the program expanded statewide covering all NC interstate highways. In 2017, the program stretched beyond interstates. The SAH Program provides a means for businesses, individuals, and other organizations to participate in beautifying and environmentally enhancing North Carolina roadways while having the advantage of advertising their company name at the same time.

This public private partnership is pursuant to North Carolina Section 3. General Statute 136-28.1 (l). Per the terms of the program, a service provider's responsibilities include marketing, securing sponsors, sign installation and maintenance, and litter removal and disposal using their own crews. The sponsors, who hire the department's approved service providers for highway litter removal, receive a logo acknowledgement panel that's attached to the SAH program sign. The signs are installed at the beginning of each sponsored one-mile segment.

There are two service providers who have contracted with NCDOT. They are Adopt A Highway Maintenance Corporation of Costa Mesa, California, and Adopt-A-Highway Litter Removal Service of America, Inc., of Encinitas, California. Both companies have a long history in the roadside litter removal industry, and use their own staff, cleaning supplies, and vehicles. Their employees are trained to work on interstates and other high traffic volume roadways.

The cost for sponsors participating in the program is negotiated solely between sponsor and service provider. There is no money exchanged between NCDOT and the service providers. At the close of 2021, SAH service providers maintained 675 sponsored one-mile segments, which was an increase from the 608 segments maintained in 2020. Some sponsors have multiple segments. Each segment is cleaned monthly. SAH service providers recovered 836,760 pounds of litter from NC roadways in 2021.

## **1.4 NCDOT Contract Litter Management**

At the close of 2021, a total of 8,240,310 pounds of litter was collected by litter and mowing/litter combined contracts. NCDOT Roadside Environmental Litter Managers in NCDOT's 14 divisions oversee multiple litter and debris removal contracts that support litter collection efforts statewide. In 2021, contractors contributed to NCDOT's Contract Litter Removal (CLR) efforts. The contract types include, but are not limited to, litter only, mowing & litter removal, corridor only, on-call, and large debris removal contracts. The success of NCDOT Contract Forces continues to be dependent on the outstanding efforts put forth by NCDOT Roadside Environmental staff and the department's litter removal contractor partners.

## **1.5 NCDPS Road Squads/ Litter Crews**

Per the Appropriations Act of 2017 (SB 257), after the issuance of a request for information (RFI) and receipt of bids by the Department of Transportation for litter pickup on State highways and roads, the Department of Transportation shall first offer the contract to the Division of Adult Correction upon the same terms and conditions as the most favorable bid received by the Department of Transportation from a suitable contractor. The Division of Adult Correction shall have 30 days to accept or decline the offered contract.

Due to logistical issues involving travel/work time for DPS crews and the requirements to remove litter before mowing is performed, DPS has not participated in one of NCDOT's litter contracts.

In 2021, NCDOT did use Minimum Custody Road Squads for a total of 8,678 man-days at a cost of \$1/day for citizen reported litter incidents. The use of these inmates for litter pickup on 131 road miles had a total cost of \$82.00.

## **1.6 Community Service Work Program – Litter Control Efforts**

The Community Service Work Program (CSWP) was established as a grant funded initiative in the early 1980's. During 1983, it was established as a program through the Safe Roads Act. Effective January 2002, CSWP was transferred from the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety to the Department of Correction, Division of Community Corrections through legislative action.

As of January 1, 2012, CSWP is now a part of the NCDPS. CSWP is a separate program from the inmate work crews. Offenders in CSWP are not incarcerated, but are ordered to perform community service work hours, as a condition of either supervised or unsupervised probation, depending upon the criminal offense committed and the offender's history.

Community Corrections judicial services coordinators place offenders at government or non-profit agencies, within the local community, to perform work needed by the agency. During 2021, there were more than 1,470 agencies statewide which participated in the CSWP by contracting as worksites for placement of community service offenders.

Offenders perform a variety of work, including general labor, skilled labor, clerical labor, professional labor and litter removal. The value of the various types of labor is calculated upon the North Carolina Department of Labor categories and relative market value minimum payment rates. Many of these agencies focus on litter control regularly and also participate in the NCDOT Litter Sweeps. Table 1-1 below summarizes CSWP litter pickup results by year.

**Table 1-1 CSWP Litter Pickup Results by Year**

Year	Pounds Collected	Number of Hours Worked
2021	692,395	38,466
2020	666,530	37,029
2019	1,153,782	64,099
2018	1,236,516	68,695
2017	1,399,988	77,777

## 1.7 NCDOT Litter Removal Disbursements Summary

Table 1-2 below summarizes NCDOT disbursements for litter removal by year. Note: 2020 CLR disbursements were abruptly halted because of Coronavirus pandemic.

**Table 1-2. NCDOT Disbursements for Litter Removal by Year**

NCDOT Disbursement by Year					
Program	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
NCDOT Employees	\$6,604,912	\$7,048,064	\$9,310,918	\$3,551,357	\$1,322,487
AAH	\$619,241	\$312,098	\$504,882	\$456,815	\$504,011
NCDPS (Minimum Custody Road Squads)	\$82	\$139	\$942	\$1,024	\$4,496,778
CLR	\$11,839,580	\$3,820,017	\$11,848,712	\$14,161,507	\$12,378,721
Total Disbursement by Year:	\$19,063,815	\$11,180,318	\$21,665,454	\$18,170,703	\$18,701,997

## 1.8 North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

### 1.8.1 Division of Parks and Recreation

The Division of Parks and Recreation hosts litter cleanup events and educational programs to demonstrate the importance of litter abatement and recycling. While in-person programs and volunteer projects were fewer in 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Division of Parks and Recreation continued to coordinate litter abatement and volunteer efforts, including:

- Haw River State Park coordinated cleanups on a section of road adjacent to their park through the AAH program.



## **1.9 Other Statewide Litter Cleanups**

### **1.9.1 Keep NC Beautiful**

Keep NC Beautiful, Inc. (KNCB) was established in 1984 within NCDOT. Following reassignment to other state agencies, it became a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 1986 and earned certification as a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful (KAB) in 1990. Visit [www.kab.org](http://www.kab.org) for additional information regarding KAB.

The purpose of KNCB is to serve as a liaison between KAB and the local affiliates to ensure they are meeting “good standing” requirements necessary to maintain certification. This is accomplished through workshops, meetings and general communications addressing the concerns of executive directors. KNCB’s long term goal is to have a KAB presence in all 100 counties. This goal serves to ensure state-wide efforts creating a greater awareness of the need and results of those efforts.

KNCB is currently comprised of a network of certified KAB affiliates located in 35 NC counties benefiting greater than 229 communities. Each affiliate is uniquely operated in accordance with the means of their governing body. While most affiliates are housed in a county or city government department (such as solid waste, planning, parks and recreation, community improvement and public health), others are volunteer organizations that may or may not have a paid executive director, but they do maintain an affiliate in good standing status as required by KAB.

Some counties have more than one affiliate within their boundaries, such as Gaston County with three, Guilford County with two and Mecklenburg County with two. The preferred scenario is affiliation at the county level as it encompasses the entire boundaries whereas a city affiliation may be restricted to their jurisdiction.

Adhering to the national KAB proven model of success, KNCB supports the four core focus areas of:

1. Litter prevention and cleanups;
2. Beautification and community gardens and greening projects;
3. Waste reduction, recycling, and reuse; and
4. Education.

The strength of KNCB is its ability to organize “boots-on-the-ground” volunteers that provide valuable services that ultimately improve community aesthetics, create safer environments, and positively impacts economic development without relying on tax dollars. This is accomplished by the KAB behavioral change system:

1. Get the facts,
2. Prioritize the behaviors,
3. Develop and implement action plan,

4. Evaluate impacts, and
5. Provide feedback.

The system is comprised of four behaviors strategies:

1. Written expectations (ordinances/policies),
2. Infrastructure,
3. Persuasion, and
4. Rewards and penalties.

### **1.9.2 KAB Programs Utilized by KNCB Affiliates**

The KAB menu of programs is extensive and allows affiliates the opportunity to pick and choose as appropriate for their staffing and funding allocations. Although there are many programs available, their signature programs are:

*The Great American Cleanup™ (GAC):* 2021 marked the 23rd year anniversary of the nation's largest community improvement program, engaging millions of volunteers and participants every year to create positive change and lasting impact in local communities by creating cleaner parks, streetscapes, and public spaces through litter removal and elimination. KNCB affiliates 2021 GAC results are listed in Table 1-3.

*I Want to be Recycled:* a national advertising campaign promoting recycling from the voice of a recyclable item such as a plastic bottle that wants to become a park bench. Affiliates can customize the advertisement to include their logo.

*Cigarette Litter Prevention Program:* created by KAB in 2002, is the nation's largest program aimed at eliminating cigarette litter.

*America Recycles Day:* it is the only nationally recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States. Each year, on and in the weeks leading into November 15, thousands of communities across the country participate by promoting environmental citizenship and taking action to increase and improve recycling in America.

### **1.9.3 Other Programs**

Other KAB programs include:

*Gameday Challenge:* a friendly competition for colleges and universities to promote waste reduction at home football games.

*National Planting Day:* a fall initiative for affiliates and other partners to create beautiful spaces in public places and at home by planting pollinator gardens and native species.

*Recycle Mania*: a friendly two-month competition and benchmarking tool for college and university recycling programs that promotes waste reduction activities with their campus communities.

*Education and Behavior Change*: the cornerstones of KAB striving to educate and empower generations of community and environmental stewards with curricula and real-world experiences that teach the essentials of proactive community citizenship, including the preservation of our natural resources.

*Recycling at Work*: a voluntary national effort to increase recycling in the workplace. The program offers businesses a 10-step action plan, discounts on recycling bins, and other valuable tools to start and expand a workplace recycling program.

*Recycle-Bowl*: a four-week contest held in the fall for in-school recycling competition for K-12 students, teachers, school administrators, school facility managers, parent teacher associations/ organizations and other parent groups, and local recycling advocates.

All KAB programs have been developed, tested, and made available to affiliates in a turnkey format that allows them to customize and market in their local areas. The initial certification and annual maintenance fees (based upon affiliate population) entitles use of these programs.

*KNCB Community Improvement Grants*: When funds are available via sponsorship, cash grants are awarded in three focus areas: 1) Beautification 2) Litter Prevention 3) Recycling. The grant program was established to support our local affiliates and to fulfill our mission to engage and support these organizations to Keep North Carolina Beautiful. KNCB works with these organizations to offer hands-on community projects that promote the cleanliness and sustainability of their community environments.

Priority considerations for grants are provided to active KAB affiliates within North Carolina. Funding may also be considered for entities in the active process of obtaining certification as a Keep America Beautiful Affiliate.

#### **1.9.4 Affiliate Growth and Support**

KNCB actively pursues all leads for potential candidates for KAB affiliation. Most of the candidates are housed in city or county government and have exhausted their resources for handling litter on an ongoing basis and will contact KNCB for information on how to develop a comprehensive litter prevention program. Others are grassroots driven and are successful in getting local community support to achieve affiliation. Often leads are found by disgruntled citizens who want to see something done to eradicate the problem.

During the certification process, KNCB provides direct support to ensure that the candidates meet milestones in order to reach the completion of the requirements by the certification target date. KNCB reaches out to assist affiliate members that are in danger of being de-certified from failure to meet KAB requirements to remain in good standing. KNCB serves as a liaison between KAB

and the local affiliates to provide information or guidance on program implementation or reporting requirements.

### **KAB State Leaders Council**

The council is comprised of executive directors of state KAB affiliates. The council meets semi-annually and participates in monthly conference calls. The purpose is to provide information and introduce changes in new or established programs that will have an impact on local affiliates. This prepares the executive directors in developing strategies to facilitate and help implement those changes in local communities.

The council also provides a forum for bringing forth issues local affiliates experience in program implementation and allows for reasonable modifications to ensure desired results. This “buffer” streamlines the process of identifying common shared problems requiring attention.

### **Carolina Recycling Association (CRA) KAB Council**

KNCB is a founding member of the CRA KAB Council and is comprised of both North and South Carolina affiliates and is open to the CRA membership. The council hosts a workshop at the CRA’s annual conference to provide training of which six hours is required to be in good standing by KAB. This is an invaluable benefit as some affiliates lack the funds to attend the national KAB conference.

The workshop is allocated two hours and offers topics relevant to current trends and issues effecting affiliate growth and ability to move programs forward. This includes legislative and enforcement updates pertaining to litter related issues.

#### **1.9.5 KNCB Tarp Awareness Program**

The Tarp Awareness Program began in 2009, when NCDOT had an innovative idea to educate drivers of small pickup trucks and trailers of the danger associated with litter being blown from uncovered or unsecured vehicles.

KNCB entered into a partnership whereas local KAB affiliates received and distributed tarps to individuals using recycling drop-off centers or landfills. Included with the tarps was an educational brochure outlining the importance of properly covering or securing loads which included language addressing litter laws and associated penalties as defined by G.S. 14-399.

Funding for the tarps was provided through NCDOT’s Litter Prevention Fund, which helps support statewide anti-litter efforts. The revenue source for this fund was generated by a portion of the sale of “Litter Prevention” specialty license plates. Upon depletion of those funds, KNCB received grants from United Parcel Service, the Wal-Mart Foundation, The Duke Foundation and PepsiCo to administer campaigns.

The program is now grant and/or sponsorship dependent. NCDOT remains a valuable partner for the tarp program by providing use of their tarp contract to ensure lowest price per unit and offers shipping to designated affiliates in conjunction with scheduled deliveries to local NCDOT maintenance yards. This allows for the greatest number of tarps per campaign.

#### **1.9.6 KNCB Community Clean-up Efforts**

KNCB affiliate members and their volunteers worked in partnership with local businesses, nonprofit and civic groups, government agencies, schools, colleges, and members of the faith communities and others to accomplish a variety of tasks during the 2021 KAB GAC™, resulting in thousands of saved tax dollars in improved community environments.

**Table 1-3. KNCB Summary Measure**

<b>Events/Volunteers/Communities:</b>	
Cleanup, beautification, waste reduction and recycling events	65
Number of volunteers	1,760
Number of participants	540
Number of volunteer hours	24,650
<b>Clean-Up:</b>	
Pounds of litter and debris removed	61,808
Number public spaces cleaned and improved	217
Acres parks, public lands, playgrounds and trails cleaned and improved	1907
Miles of rivers, lakes, shores, wetlands and underwater cleanups	53
Miles of streets, roads, and highways cleaned and beautified	426
<b>Beautification and Greening:</b>	
Number new or maintained gardens, greenspaces and gateways	
Number of trees planted	
Number of plants, shrubs, flowers and bulbs planted	
<b>Waste Reduction and Recycling:</b>	
Pounds of litter and debris recycled	3,496
Pounds of single stream/comingled recycled collected	1,020
Pounds of beverage containers collected and recycled	215
Pounds of mixed paper collected and recycled	50
Pounds of electronics recycled	
Pounds of Other Recyclables	990
<b>Education:</b>	
Number of educator workshops held	
Number in attendance at educator workshops	
Number community workshops held	
Number attendees at community workshops	
Number of public and private schools reached	
Number youth reached	
Number of youths educated	
<b>Monetary Benefits:</b>	
Total Benefit to Local Communities	\$634,356

## 2.0 Anti-Litter Education/Prevention

### 2.1 North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

#### 2.1.1 Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service

The Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) conducts two campaigns to reinforce recycling behavior and to encourage North Carolinians to properly manage their discarded materials at home, work, school, and on-the-go. These programs are described briefly below:



#### Recycle Guys

The Recycle Guys campaign is intended to reach elementary and middle school children with videos, activity books, stickers, pencils, temporary tattoos, and other promotional materials to encourage recycling behavior. Of the most used Recycle Guys videos, one specifically addressing litter (developed through a partnership with NCDOT) is consistently among the highest accessed links on the [www.recycleguys.org](http://www.recycleguys.org) website



#### Recycle Right NC

In 2021, DEACS continued the promotion and use of Recycle Right NC, a statewide anti-contamination campaign to increase and improve the quality of recycling. The campaign makes available free outreach toolkits for local governments to customize and distribute to their residents. Since its launch in the fall of 2019, likes on the Recycle Right NC Facebook page have increased from 665 to 4,339. Staff provide ongoing technical support regarding recycling via the comment threads on social media.

Recycle Right NC campaign materials can be accessed through the campaign website:

<https://www.recyclomorenc.org/>

The following provides a description of the activities of DEACS's three outreach programs in 2021:

- Continued usage of social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for the campaigns.
- Coordination with NCDEQ communications team to promote messaging about proper recycling and litter reduction on NCDEQ Facebook and Twitter accounts.



- DEACS developed new “[Do Your Part](#)” anti-litter and anti-contamination outreach materials related to the proper disposal of coronavirus related personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks and gloves.



- DEACS co-promoted anti-litter messaging with the CRA that produced social media posts to encourage proper disposal of personal protective equipment, like single-use masks and gloves.

- Reposted NCDOT Anti-Litter Campaign social media posts to the NCDEQ social media accounts.
- Promotion around national events such as Earth Day and America Recycles Day (ARD).
- Promotion in coordination with the CRA around ‘greening up’ events.
- Production of promotion materials distributed directly to the public or through local government recycling programs. DEACS also distributes NCDOT anti-litter stickers and posters.
- Training of recycling and solid waste staff, teachers, and environmental educators on recycling and outreach methods.
- Encouragement of Away-From-Home recycling best practices that include proper trash and recycling bin selection and siting to reduce contamination and litter issues.
- Continued emphasis on keeping coronavirus related PPE items out of the recycling bin, such as single use masks and plastic gloves.

### **Continued Focus on Recycling Education in 2021**

During 2021, the NC DEACS Recycling Office provided graphic support and technical assistance to promote proper recycling with a specific focus on materials that do not belong in the recycling bin. More than 50 local governments received graphic design support from DEACS in 2021. Specific focus areas include:

- DEACS and Waste Reduction Partners developed a series of posts, “Recycling Means Business,” to highlight the findings of the NC Recycling Employment Study and the NC recycling businesses that help provide markets for recyclable materials that, if improperly managed, could otherwise end up as litter.



- DEACS provides graphic design support for local governments seeking to educate their citizens about proper management of plastic bags, which incorporate the “no plastic bags in recycling” and “return to retail” message. Nearly 50 local governments received graphic design support from DEACS in 2021.
- DEACS developed outreach materials about other items that are considered contaminants in the recycling process and should not be placed in recycling bins. Outreach focuses on plastic bags and other common problematic materials: scrap metal; textiles; cords, hoses and strings that could tangle equipment; food waste; and hazardous or medical waste. Messaging includes instruction on proper disposal methods to discourage releases into the environment. DEACS offers posters, signs and social media toolkits which are all available for any North Carolina government, agency, business, or resident to use.

### **Other Participation from DEACS on Littering Issues in 2021:**

- DEACS presented to the annual meeting of the KNCB affiliates and provides ongoing support of local chapters of KNCB in their recycling education, away-from-home recycling, and litter prevention efforts.
- DEACS collaborates with the NC Solid Waste Enforcement Officers Association (NC SWEOA) to encourage proper materials management and expand recycling programs and community efforts to reduce illegal dumping.
- DEACS collaborates with the NC Marine Debris Symposium to support and present the organization’s annual conference to educate, inform, and provide action on ways to eliminate and reduce marine litter in our environment.
- DEACS functions as NCDEQ’s customer service center and handled numerous inquiries in 2021 on littering and illegal dumping issues.
- DEACS also oversees the state of North Carolina’s recycling efforts, which includes technical assistance to local government recycling programs across the state. Through regular communication in email newsletters, workshops, conference sessions, and other settings, DEACS staff provided information to communities about littering issues, opportunities for anti-litter initiatives (such as the tarp program) and the management of illegal dumping.

## **2.2 North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission**

North Carolina Wildlife law enforcement officers often come across numerous littering violations while out on patrols in the performance of their duties. They often set up patrol details targeting littering along waterways, boating and fishing access areas and game lands. Officers address littering violations on NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) managed property, state highways, state waterways, private property, and public property.

## 2.3 NCDOT – Litter Management Programs

In 2021, NCDOT's Litter Management Programs promoted litter prevention awareness through its website. Each year, Keep Gastonia Beautiful Inc., of Gastonia provides access to their Beautification and Environmental Education Programs. Their entire curriculum is posted on a website which allows an easy download for classroom usage. The link is carried on NCDOT's Litter Management website.

Other items available through NCDOT's Litter Management website include previous Litter Reports, the litter law, Swat-A-Litterbug, AAH and SAH Program information, and Litter Sweep details including related forms. In addition, the cleanup safety videos are provided. A *Litter Activity Book* with litter prevention lessons and activities for students through third grade is available to print. There are also a variety of links to other sites supporting litter prevention.

Anti-litter characters Ava and Oliver, encourage actions to create a healthy, clean environment. Linnie, the Litter Bug, is not such a good role model. These characters are displayed on bookmarks, stickers, and activity/color sheets. Wooden rulers are available with the message "Measure Up! Don't Litter" or "Clean Water Rules" along with NCDOT's Highway Stormwater Program logo.

NCDOT's Litter Management programs also distributed thousands of car litter bags and other litter prevention handouts, fliers and brochures through Visitor and Welcome Centers, Earth Day events, and upon request, to numerous groups. The car litter bag's graphics promote the message that littering is illegal. NCDOT Litter Management's website offers an option to order teacher kits online.

**NCDOT Anti-Litter Messages:** In 2021 NCDOT greatly enhanced its public education program related to Anti-Litter messages with new social media posts, press releases, and new creative public service announcements (PSAs, videos, and radio broadcasts). NCDOT partnered with Country Music Star Luke Combs and various NC Athletic Organization coaches and mascots to develop these PSAs to help educate and encourage NC residents to not litter, secure their loads, and work together to keep NC clean. NC Athletic Organization coaches and mascots that participated in NCDOT PSAs included:

- UNC Women's Lacrosse Coach Jenny Levy,
- UNC Women's Field Hockey Coach Karen Shelton,
- NC State's Mr. and Mrs. Wuf mascot,
- NC Wesleyan's mascot The Battling Bishop,
- Durham Bulls' mascot Wool E. Bull,
- UNC Pembroke's mascot Bravehawk,
- UNC Chapel Hill's mascot Ramses,
- UNC Asheville's mascot Rocky the Bulldog,
- Western Carolina University's mascot Paws the Catamount,
- Fayetteville State's mascot Mr. Bronco,

- Mars Hill University's mascot the Mars Hill Mountain Lion, and
- Charlotte Knights' mascot Homer the Dragon.

**Adopt-A-Highway Program:** The AAH program began its 33rd year of operation in 2021. Each year the AAH groups are recognized for their consecutive years of service beginning with 10-years and at years 15, 20, 25 and 30. In 2021, 148 AAH groups received awards for their years of volunteer service to the program. Additionally, NCDOT recognized some AAH groups via social media.

**Other Litter Prevention Initiatives, Meetings, and Presentations:** The Litter Management office continued to promote the use of NCDOT trash bags. The bags are orange on the outside and reversible to blue on the inside for items to be recycled. The bag also has a draw string for safe and easy closure. The bags display the NCDOT logo and a "Do Not Litter" message. These bags are available at NCDOT maintenance yards for volunteers and are available for AAH coordinators to order as needed.

**Swat-A-Litterbug Program:** This program is administered by the Litter Management office in conjunction with the State Highway Patrol and is intended to educate motorists that littering is illegal. In 2021 NCDOT developed a new Swat-A-Litterbug phone application to make it easier for the public to report litterers from their mobile phones. Motorists observed littering can be reported through the mail, by calling toll free 1-800-331-5864, or using the Swat-A-Litterbug online reporting mechanism on NCDOT's Litter Management website. Reports include information regarding the offender's vehicle license plate number, time of observance, date, street, city, county, and a description of the littering offense observed. The cards include the Swat-A-Litterbug logo.

When reports are received, a letter, signed by the Colonel of the State Highway Patrol, is mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle reported. The recipient is informed of the littering offense observed, that littering is illegal and that it's a fineable offense upon conviction. There are no citations or warnings issued from these reports. The program is totally anonymous, and no record is kept regarding who submits a report or receives a letter. Approximately 5,000 Swat-A-Litterbug letters were mailed in 2021. Due to database issues and a delay in securing the new Commander's signature, letters were not created and mailed for part of 2021.

NCDOT receives many complaints via online and by phone stating trash collection trucks are not secured and litter is flying out all over the roadsides. Litter Management office personnel contact these trash collection companies directly to discuss the complaints and to remind trash collection companies to secure their loads.

**Litter License Plate:** The NC General Assembly approved the "Litter Prevention" specialty license plate in 2001. Ten dollars of each plate renewed is diverted to the "Litter Prevention Fund" on a quarterly basis. The funds are used to help support statewide anti-litter efforts.

## **2.4 NCDOT – Litter Related Signage**

NCDOT has “Keep NC Clean & Green” litter prevention signs posted along state roadways and at various Rest Areas and Welcome Centers. In addition to the "Keep NC Clean & Green" signs, there are "Littering Is Illegal" signs posted across the state.

### 3.0 Litter Law Enforcement

#### 3.1 North Carolina Department of Public Safety

In 2021, the NC State Highway Patrol issued 429 citations for littering (G.S. 14-399 and local ordinances) and 662 citations for failing to properly secure a load (G.S. 20-116 (g)), for a total of 1,091 citations. The State Highway Patrol also partnered with NCDOT by participating in the Spring Litter Sweep and focused on citing motorists that either littered or failed to properly secure and/or cover their loads. Troopers issued 17 litter and 54 load securement citations during the Spring 2021 Litter Sweep. Due to coronavirus protocol, North Carolina State Highway Patrol units did not partner with businesses in their respective Districts for group litter sweep efforts in 2021, but hopes to restart those partnerships in 2022. The NC State Highway Patrol did not participate in the Fall 2021 Litter Sweep. State Highway Patrol citations for past years are shown in the tables below.

**Table 3-1. State Highway Patrol Recap of Litter Charges**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Litter Charges</b>
2020	None reported
2019	481
2018	662
2017	541
2016	740

**Table 3-2. State Highway Patrol Recap of Improper Loading/Covering of Vehicle**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Charges</b>
2020	None reported
2019	743
2018	611
2017	673
2016	735

#### 3.2 NCDEQ, Division of Parks and Recreation

NCDEQ, Division of Parks and Recreation sponsored educational programs and community events that serve as a proactive approach to litter prevention and law enforcement. In addition to these educational measures, state park rangers issued 8 littering citations in 2020.

#### 3.3 NCDEQ, Division of Marine Fisheries – Marine Patrol

In 2021, Marine Patrol officers issued 4 citations and 0 warnings for littering violations. Marine Patrol officers attributed 314 hours to this effort.

The NC Marine Patrol concentrated its litter enforcement on the coastal waters and had a decrease in littering violations this past year. The Marine Patrol's efforts have been concentrated on the gill net fishery and protecting endangered sea turtles.

**Table 3-3. Marine Patrol Citation Recap**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Littering Citations</b>	<b>Littering Warnings</b>	<b>Time Spent (hours)</b>
2021	4	0	314
2020	6	2	334
2019	5	5	300
2018	3	0	240
2017	7	6	176

### **3.4 North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission**

#### **3.4.1 2021 Littering Report for NC Wildlife Resources Commission**

North Carolina Wildlife Enforcement Officers are always on the lookout for littering violations and often set up special details to target littering violations in problem areas along waterways, boating and fishing access areas and game lands. In 2021, under NCGS 14-399, 175 citations were issued. Possible fines for all citations issued is a total of \$43,750. Possible court cost for all citations issued is a total of \$31,500. There were 3 littering citations given on NCWRC Boating or Fishing Areas under NCGS 113-264 15ANCAC 10E.0104(d). Possible fines for all citations issued is \$300 and court cost for citations issued is \$540. There were 11 citations issued for littering on Game Lands under NCGS 113-264 15A NCAC 10D.0102(c). Possible fines for all citations issued is \$1,100. Possible court cost for all citations issued is a total of \$1,980.

NOTE: Fines and cost are either paid prior to the court date or are assigned by the District Court Judge.

The Land and Water Access Division combined efforts in litter cleanup. The Land and Water Access Division spends countless hours maintaining boating and fishing access areas along with game lands. Within their time maintaining these areas they are picking up litter and emptying trash receptacles that are located on these areas. With 251 boating access areas, 222 public fishing access areas, 536,560 owned state game lands and over 2 million acres of managed game land areas, the NCWRC has installed signage for these areas that deal with littering and how it impacts the environment.

### **3.5 North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts**

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) provides a 2021 recap of statewide littering charges by offense code and by law enforcement agency. There were 2,643 charges and 848 convictions in 2021. Littering charges and convictions are also shown by offense code and by each county in a detailed table at the end of this section.

As in previous years, the Conference of Chief District Court Judges continued to provide an alternative to first time offenders charged with littering of less than 15 pounds. On execution of written waiver of appearance and trial, and plea of guilty/responsible, an offender may have the

court appearance waived. The fine for intentional littering is \$250 plus costs and \$50 plus costs for unintentional littering. This was adopted by the Conference of Chief District Court Judges on October 20, 2021, pursuant to NC G.S. 7A-148, and applies to any new offenses on or after December 1, 2021.

Calendar year 2021 data on charges and convictions, including the number of charges disposed and the manner of disposition are tracked for the eleven offenses listed in Table 3-4. Table 3-5 shows the following data provided from the NCAOC's Automated Criminal/Infraction System for 2021. The number of charges, convictions, and dispositions represents totals from district and superior court. Some of the defendants have other charges in addition to a littering offense. It is possible for a defendant to be charged in one calendar year and convicted in the next. Thus, for any given calendar year, the defendants convicted are not necessarily the same defendants charged in that year.

**Table 3-4. List of Offenses**

<b>Offense Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Reference</b>
4425	Improper Loading/Covering of Vehicle	§ 20-116(g)
5370	Commercial Littering	§ 14-399(e)
5371	Littering Hazardous Waste	§ 14-399(e)
5372	Littering not more than 15 pounds	§ 14-399(c)
5373	Littering more than 15 but less than 500 pounds	§ 14-399(d)
5374	Littering more than 500 pounds	§ 14-399(e)
5375	Unintentional Littering not more than 15 Pounds	§ 14-399(c1)
5376	Unintentional Littering more than 15 but less than 500 Pounds	§ 14-399(d1)
5377	Unintentional Littering more than 500 Pounds	§ 14-399(e1)
5378	Second or subsequent offense of littering not more than 15 lbs	§ 14-399(c)
5379	Second or subsequent offense of unintentional littering not more than 15 pounds	§ 14-399(c1)
6248	Litter Gameland/Access Area	§ 113-264(a)
8514	Littering Beer/Wine Container	local ordinance

**Table 3-5. Statewide Littering Charges and Convictions  
Calendar Year 2021**

The following data are from the NCAOC's Automated Criminal/Infraction System for calendar year 2021. The number of charges, convictions, and dispositions represents totals from district and superior court. Some of the defendants have other charges in addition to a littering offense. It is possible for a defendant to be charged in one calendar year and convicted in the next. Thus, for any given calendar year, the defendants convicted are not necessarily the same defendants charged in that year.

Offense Code	Charges	Convictions	CHARGES BY CHARGING AGENCY								Charges Disposed	METHOD OF DISPOSITION				
			ABC	ALE	DMV	Police	Sheriff	SHP	WRC	Other		Guilty Plea	Trial: Guilty	Trial: Not Guilty	Dismiss	Other
4425	843	312	0	0	0	152	41	649	0	1	903	38	0	0	571	294
5370	7	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	1	0	7	3	0	0	1	3
5371	11	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	1	1	18	6	0	0	10	2
5372	1405	430	2	32	0	460	222	378	248	63	1452	197	9	3	966	277
5373	128	41	0	0	0	43	36	8	13	28	138	37	0	1	91	9
5374	44	1	0	0	0	4	34	0	1	5	34	7	0	0	16	11
5375	87	30	0	1	0	26	8	42	7	4	71	4	0	0	47	20
5376	7	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	2	7	0	0	0	5	2
5377	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5378	14	6	0	0	0	4	2	4	4	0	18	5	1	0	12	0
5379	6	2	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	13	2	0	0	10	1
6248	32	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	30	1	41	5	0	0	21	15
8514	59	4	1	0	0	35	3	18	1	1	58	4	0	0	52	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2643</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>1102</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2760</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1802</b>	<b>636</b>



## Appendix A: Contacts

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