



LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY:

SWAP SHOPS: A REGIONAL APPROACH

Jurisdiction:	Albemarle Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (serving Perquimans, Chowan, Gates, Currituck, Dare, Hyde, and Tyrrell counties)
Best Management Practice:	Swap Shops
Purpose:	Reuse through swap shops is a cost-effective way that communities can reduce the amount of materials disposed of in a landfill. In order to maximize program efficiency, ARSWMA placed the swap shops in different counties across the region.
Ordinance:	None
Contact:	Anne Blindt, alb@ppcc.dst.nc.us, (252) 338-4458

DESCRIPTION

The Albemarle Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (ARSWMA), located in the northeastern corner of North Carolina, instituted a swap shop program at staffed convenience centers in four of the region's seven counties. ARSWMA purchased four commercial sheds to be used as swap shops and installed the sheds at convenience sites in Currituck, Perquimans, Chowan and Gates counties. All of the swap shops are clearly labeled with signs that indicate acceptable items and appropriate procedures for both dropping off and picking up merchandise. The swap shops accept most household items with the exception of clothing, mattresses and box springs, tires, broken items, paint, chemicals or any type of liquid product. The contractors who work at the convenience sites are responsible for maintaining the sheds to ensure only acceptable items are kept.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2000, ARSWMA purchased two commercially made sheds for use as swap shops in Currituck and Chowan counties. The total cost of both sheds including all appropriate signage was \$9,200 or \$4,600 per shed. Due to "carport" type attachments, the first two sheds were more expensive than the second set. In 2001, ARSWMA purchased the second set of commercial sheds, which were installed in Perquimans and Gates counties. Including signs, the second set cost \$6,400, or \$3,200 each. Signage for all four sheds indicates appropriate procedures citizens should follow to participate

in the program. Appropriate procedures include only dropping off acceptable items and stocking the items in the correct places in the shed, as well as only taking three items per family per week. ARSWMA advertised the program through brochures, fliers and newspaper articles, as well as via advertisements in the yard sale section of the newspaper classifieds.

All four swap shops are located at staffed convenience centers. The staff member on site is responsible for maintaining and cleaning out the swap shop. This involves periodic monitoring of the site to ensure only acceptable items are kept and all unacceptable items are removed and disposed of properly. County staff must occasionally be available to assist when unacceptable materials are too large for disposal at the convenience center by the on-site staff member. After a certain period of time, merchandise not taken is discarded to make room for newer items.

Overall the maintenance time for each swap shop is minimal, consisting of approximately two hours per week. The main challenges associated with the program occur when improper procedures are followed and unacceptable items are dropped off, creating a burden for staff members who are responsible for the removal of such items.

RESULTS

Despite a few inevitable challenges, overall the swap shops have been a success and are very popular among citizens. It is evident that the swap shops have experienced a high rate of exchange since implementation. ARSWMA has observed



that citizens are definitely utilizing the swap shops to acquire materials, thus keeping them empty a good part of the time. In response to the extremely high rate of pickup, the policy of three items per family per week was added to ensure that all citizens had an equal opportunity to take advantage of the program.

ARSWMA has received positive feedback from the occasional survey of citizens utilizing the swap shops. In fact, in one county, citizens have actually voluntarily adopted the shed and have helped to maintain and organize it on their own. In addition, ARSWMA has found that the swap shops can also provide convenient places to have organized “paint swap” events where citizens can trade their reusable paints.



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