

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY:

JUNK CAR ABATEMENT PROGRAM



Jurisdiction:	Perquimans, Chowan and Gates counties
Best Management Practice:	Junk Car Abatement
Purpose:	To remove junked and abandoned vehicles from residential neighborhoods, public property and illegal dumping areas.
Ordinance:	Chowan County: Chapter 6-3 (http://scc036.sips.state.nc.us/www/webdocs/chowan/ch6-3junkcars.pdf) Perquimans County: Ordinance #39 (http://www.co.perquimans.nc.us/zoning/Junk_vehicle_ordinance.htm)
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DESCRIPTION

As a result of decreasing scrap metal prices in the late 1990s, vehicle owners who were used to selling their junked cars for a few dollars had to pay to have their cars removed. Eventually, these vehicle owners instead stored the cars on their own property, becoming health and safety hazards as well as decreasing neighborhood aesthetics and pride. In response, Perquimans, Chowan and Gates counties formed the Junk Car Task Force to assist in the removal of junked vehicles from the Albermarle region. In addition to concerned citizens, the task force was comprised of town and county managers, law enforcement officers, personnel from inspections and planning, solid waste management, and regional health departments.

Although two of the three counties had ordinances requiring the removal of junked or abandoned vehicles, compliance and enforcement had been ineffective. Therefore, the Junk Car Task Force began a voluntary removal program, picking up and towing the vehicles at no cost to the owner. The vehicles were collected and processed and eventually recycled by a scrap metal company.

IMPLEMENTATION

The first phase of the program was a campaign consisting of fliers, brochures, door hangers, newspaper coverage and

presentations to educate the public on the negative aspects of having junked cars on the property. Residents were offered free towing as an incentive to remove the vehicle and encouraged to voluntarily participate.

To begin moving vehicles, each county designated one or two enforcement agents from the planning and inspections departments, the health department or the sheriff's department. Residents (or neighbors) could call and report a vehicle, and an agent would come to the property. Depending on if the landowner owned the vehicle, a title transfer was completed, granting the county ownership of the vehicle. If the landowner did not own the vehicle, the vehicle was still towed, but kept separate for 30 days for a vehicle identification number (VIN) search to be completed to identify and contact the owner.

Private companies were hired to tow the vehicles, which were taken to the Perquimans Chowan Gates Solid Waste Management Facility (PCG), a transfer station and closed landfill. PCG employees processed the vehicles by removing fluids (gasoline, oil, antifreeze and transmission fluid), batteries and trash. The waste oil and batteries were then recycled, and a scrap metal recycling company removed the tires and gas tanks, flattened the vehicles, and transported them to a scrap metal recycling mill. PCG chose a scrap metal recycling company that could pick up and recycle not only the vehicles but also white goods and other scrap metal.



The task force began with an initial budget of approximately \$30,000, but with contributions from their local governments the budget reached \$55,000. Program expenditures were primarily towing costs and advertising materials, since the scrap metal recycling company did not charge for the vehicles.

RESULTS

A total of 538 junked and abandoned vehicles were removed at an average cost of \$41 per vehicle, exceeding the original goal of 230 vehicles at an average cost between \$50-\$75 per vehicle. Perquimans County towed 189 vehicles, Chowan County towed 199, and Gates County towed 150. An added

benefit was that the vehicle recycling company's ability to process scrap metals and white goods, which allowed PCG to begin collecting scrap metals at the convenience centers, adding greatly to its annual recycling tonnage.

The task force additionally drafted a model junk or abandoned vehicle ordinance and made recommendations to the N.C. General Assembly regarding the development of a statewide program.

The program continues with local government funding. It is no longer strictly voluntary, but includes vehicles on which enforcement action is taken.



The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and education on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Call DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or (800) 763-0136 or e-mail nowaste@p2pays.org, or visit DPPEA's Web site at www.p2pays.org for assistance with issues in this case study or any of your waste reduction concerns.
