

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY:



# WILSON COUNTY/CITY OF WILSON PAINT REUSE PROGRAM

Jurisdiction:

Best Management Practice:

Purpose:

Ordinance:

Contact:

Wilson County and City of Wilson

Paint Reuse Program

To improve waste reduction programs available to residents and to provide for the proper disposal of unwanted and unusable paint.

None

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## DESCRIPTION

Wilson County, located in eastern North Carolina, is a diverse county with both rural and urban/suburban populations. The county's overall population is 75,374 and the city of Wilson has a population of roughly 46,000. Twice yearly (spring and fall) Keep Wilson County Beautiful (KWCB) sponsors a one-day paint swap. Initiated in 1998, the program was originally offered once per year. In 2001, the KWCB began offering the program semi-annually.

Paint swaps currently occur in the parking lot of the local Lowe's Home Improvement Center®. Lowe's does not charge for use of the parking lot and provides a 10 percent discount on supplies needed for the event. Most needed supplies, such as 5-gallon buckets with lids, plastic sheeting, kitty litter, rags and hardware cloth (to screen paint) are purchased by the city or the county. Tents, tables, paint tarps, tools, mixing tub and the trailer are provided. KWCB is responsible for providing volunteers to staff the event.

Although demand for paint seems to remain constant from spring to fall, the supply of paint brought in during the spring event generally exceeds that of the fall. During the April 2003 paint swap, done in conjunction with a household hazardous waste collection, significantly more paint was dropped off, while the amount given away remained steady.

One-gallon containers are most popular; however, 5-gallon and quart containers are not uncommon. Once received, paint is inspected and (if acceptable) poured into 5-gallon buckets for blending and distribution. The organizers initially distinguished between interior and exterior grade paints, but have reverted to blending only by color; off-white and pastels are more frequently given out. Very dark colors are left in original containers until the end of the event or for special requests, at which point they may be blended.

Unusable paint and paint with bad odor is blended with kitty litter and properly disposed, as are empty paint cans. No data is available on the amount or percentage of paint disposed during each event. All paint remaining at the end of the event is taken to the Wilson County Landfill where residents can pick it up at any time. Event organizers have discussed donating leftover paint to local not-for-profit agencies, but to date have not taken this action.

## FUNDING

The paint swaps are designed to be low-cost events. The use of a free facility and volunteer labor has helped keep costs very low. The city and the county pay for the majority of the needed supplies. Although hard data was not provided, event organizers estimate that each event costs approximately \$200. Most of this cost is associated with the purchase of 5-gallon buckets for the distribution of paint and kitty litter.

## IMPLEMENTATION

During the events residents can drop off leftover latex paint.



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## RESULTS

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Event organizers feel the program is very successful. They cite the cost of buying 5-gallons of paint vs. receiving 5-gallons for free as a major reason. Furthermore, the amount of paint recovered each year has grown from 50 gallons in 1998 to 533 gallons in 2003.

Since the program's inception, Wilson County KAB has recovered 1,182 gallons of paint and distributed 543 gallons during the events. Event-day distribution represents 65 percent of the paint received (not including the HHW event). It is unknown how much of the paint is picked up after the event occurs.

Participants average approximately 0.37 gallons of paint per container brought in, and each participant brings in an average of 4.6 containers. It should be noted that the number of

containers per participant has grown each year from 2.6 containers per person to 5.7 containers per person in 2003.

The number of volunteers and volunteer hours needed has also grown dramatically. During the first three years of the event, roughly 10 volunteers were needed and total number of volunteer hours needed per event was 40 or less. During the program's most successful event (with HHW collection) in April 2003, 29 volunteers worked a total of more than 150 hours.

Although the spring events have been very successful, events held during the fall have not seen the same level of participation. Organizers believe that scheduling during the North Carolina State Fair or football weekends at major North Carolina universities result in decreased participation. Organizers now schedule the events to avoid such conflicts.



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](mailto:nowaste@p2pays.org), or visit DPPEA's Web site at [www.p2pays.org](http://www.p2pays.org) for assistance with issues in this case study or any of your waste reduction concerns.