

Why we care

hazard

Animals eat debris and get caught in it. Clean up efforts in NC have found birds, fish, and even cats entangled in rope, bags, and nets. Broken glass and rusted cans can cut humans and animals.

pollution

Even organic debris can negatively affect a waterway by changing the nutrient composition. Many items that degrade over time, such as paper and metal, leach chemicals. Cigarette butts are a common offender and the increase in indoor smoking bans likely increases the number of butts deposited in the environment.

aesthetics

Litter is ugly. A littered place attracts more litter. In addition to the harmful impacts, this has economic consequences as people are not inclined to spend time (or money) in unappealing places.

MountainKeepers

Stop the Litter!

What we can do

learn

It is important for all community members to understand why litter is bad. Activities to help people learn range from K-12 programs to volunteer clean up days. To be successful, these activities require adequate funding, longevity, and appropriate messages for the specific community.

reduce reuse recycle

Generating less “stuff,” especially less disposable stuff, can decrease litter. Comprehensive recycling programs can keep recyclables from becoming litter.

regulate

Regulations are an effective way to reduce litter and communities have diverse options available. Examples include:

- Ban items commonly found in litter, such as plastic bags.
- Fine litterers from individuals to companies.
- Establish incentive programs, like bottle bills, to increase recycling and decrease litter.

Litter Data

In 2006 volunteers who participated in the Watauga County Big Sweep collected almost 4,000 pounds of litter.

250 million *cigarette butts* are littered each year in the US.

Between January and June 2005 there were 9 convictions in Watauga County of various kinds of littering.

There were 1392 convictions statewide.

There are 12 legal codes in North Carolina related to littering.

In Watauga County the *recycling* rate has *fallen* by about 11% since 2000.

Sources

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