



**Campaign Sign Recycling  
Pilot Projects**

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection**

*March 2007*

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### **Legislative Authority**

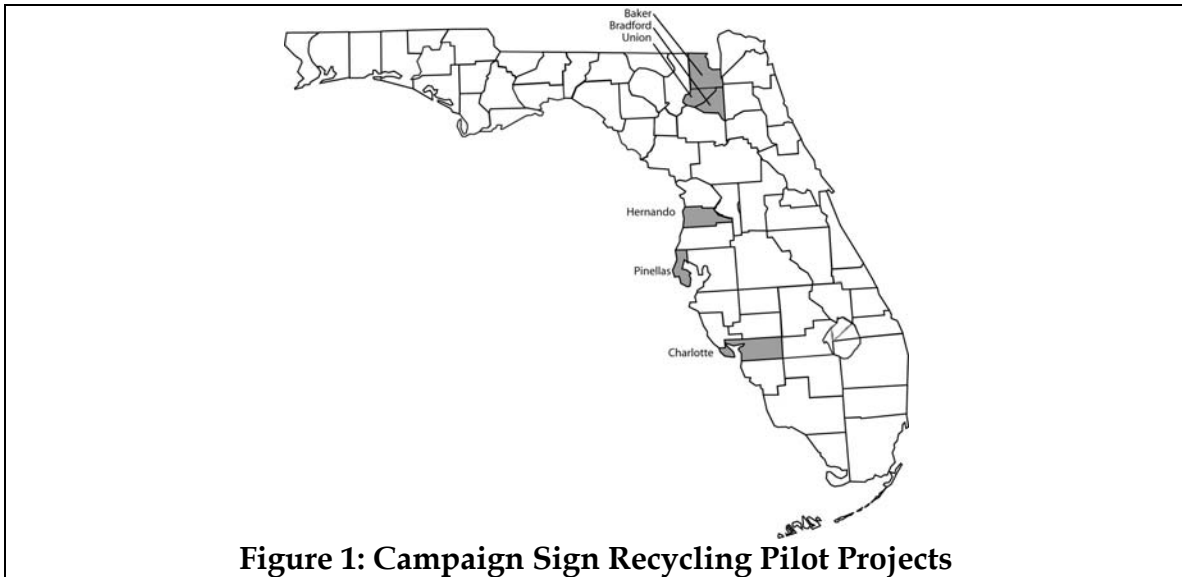
In 2005, the Florida Legislature passed House Bill 1031 (Chapter 2005-201, Laws of Florida), which states:

The Department of Environmental Protection shall design a pilot project for implementation in 2006, to encourage the reuse or recycling of campaign signs. At a minimum, the department shall identify two large counties and two small counties, based on population, to establish central depositories for used campaign signs and to make such signs available, at no cost to the receiving entity, to schools and other entities that may have a use for them and to companies that can recycle the materials from which the signs are made into new materials or products. As part of this pilot project, the department shall submit details of the program along with a budget request for use of funds from the Solid Waste Management Trust Fund to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, prior to the start of the 2006 Regular Session of the Legislature.

In order to implement this legislation, the Department of Environmental Protection (Department) used the same definition of large and small counties as the Florida Legislature uses in determining the distribution of grants from the Solid Waste Management Trust Fund (SWMTF). Large counties have a population of over 100,000, while small counties have a population of less than 100,000.

House Bill 1031 directed the Department to prepare a budget request to implement at least four pilot projects that encourage the reuse or recycling of campaign signs. The pilot projects were ultimately funded with existing SWMTF funds from the Department's operating budget.

## Pilot Projects Participants



In August 2005, the Department surveyed all 67 counties in the state to determine which counties would be interested in participating in the pilot projects and how much funding would be required for implantation. At that time, only four counties expressed an interest. Many of the counties who were not interested believed the volume of campaign signs was too small and the collection periods too infrequent to make a pilot project worthwhile.

In September 2006, the following four organizations, which cover six counties, agreed to participate in the Campaign Sign Recycling Pilot Projects (Figure 1):

- **Baker/Bradford/Union Counties** (population 67,117): *New River Solid Waste Association*, an independent district organized by those counties to manage their solid waste.
- **Charlotte County** (population 154,030): the County solid waste department.
- **Hernando County** (population 150,784): the County solid waste department.
- **Pinellas County** (population 947,744): *Keep Pinellas Beautiful*, a nonprofit organization recommended by the County solid waste department.

## **Summary of Pilot Projects**

### *Design*

To allow for a wide variety of experimentation and to encourage creativity, the Department did not specify project design standards for the pilot projects. However, the projects did have some similarities in design. All projects incorporated radio, newspaper and public service announcements to promote and publicize the collection events. Letters were also mailed to candidates and project staff worked with local Supervisors of Elections to encourage the recycling of signs.

Three of the four pilot projects established drop off locations for the County to collect the signs. The fourth project, conducted by Keep Pinellas Beautiful (KPB), contained a component where high school students would collect and dismantle the campaign signs. However, the local Code Enforcement department, because of its rules for disposition of removed signs, collected the signs before KPB or the students had a chance to pick them up. Fortunately, Code Enforcement officials did agree to take the signs to KPB for dismantling and recycling.

### *Results*

The total weight of campaign signs collected as part of all four pilot projects was 6,256 pounds (3.128 tons). All four counties had hoped to see more signs collected and recycled. While these signs are a relatively minor part of the waste stream, campaign signs are very visible to the public, so recycling or reusing them has a larger symbolic impact. It was encouraging, though, to see the local media and editorial boards supporting this effort, which happened in the following counties: Baker/Bradford/Union (New River Solid Waste Association), Charlotte, Hernando, and Pinellas.

Finding markets and uses for the campaign signs and materials varied due to the different locations of the pilot projects and amount of material collected. Hernando County found it difficult to find an end market for the plastic parts of the signage materials, as did the New River Solid Waste Association. Hernando County also found it was cost prohibitive to ship the plastic out of the local market. Meanwhile, Charlotte County and Keep Pinellas Beautiful had no problem finding an end market.

Although the Department budgeted approximately \$60,000 for all four of the pilot projects, Hernando County did not seek reimbursement because the costs of its pilot project were minimal. The other counties requested considerably less funding than anticipated because their costs were less than expected.

### *Lessons Learned*

Three of the participants felt that if they had started their public promotional efforts earlier, they would have collected and recycled more campaign signs. However, the New River Solid Waste Association, which covers a very rural and sparsely populated area, concluded that promotional publicity should not begin until the day following the election, because the potential for supporters of candidates to begin removal of other candidates' signs is greatly reduced.

All participants agreed that a Presidential election year would result in more campaign signs.

### *Future*

Charlotte County, Hernando County and Keep Pinellas Beautiful indicated they would be interested in continuing to collect and recycle campaign signs regardless of the availability of state money for assistance.

Conversely, the New River Solid Waste Association stated that for their area, they thought staff hours, equipment and funds would be better utilized in other recycling efforts that yield a higher volume and return. Therefore, they do not plan to continue campaign sign recycling during future elections.

### *Recommendation*

Provided adequate funding exists, this effort to recycle and reuse campaign signs should be repeated and broadened to include other local Keep America Beautiful affiliates. Groups like this might have more interest in this type of project than traditional local solid waste departments who are more oriented towards disposal.

**Table 1**

Campaign Sign Recycling Pilot Projects									
County	Population <sup>1</sup>	DEP Funding		Collected Campaign Signs		Percent of Collected Campaign Signs Recycled	Municipal Solid Waste <sup>2</sup>		
		Allocated	Actual	Pounds	Tons		Generated Tons	Recycled Tons	Recycled Percent
Baker/Bradford/Union <i>(New River Solid Waste Association)</i>	67,117	\$30,000	\$14,949.75	430	0.215	100%	57,604	13,162	22.8%
Charlotte	154,030	\$9,000	\$1,332.37	3,080	1.540	100%	241,186	52,649	21.8%
Hernando	150,784	\$9,807	\$0.00	900	0.450	18%	251,067	54,856	21.8%
Pinellas <i>(Keep Pinellas Beautiful)</i>	947,744	\$11,050	\$6,517.56	1,846	0.923	100%	1,943,415	585,562	30.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,319,675</b>	<b>\$59,857</b>	<b>\$22,799.68</b>	<b>6,256</b>	<b>3.128</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>2,493,272</b>	<b>706,229</b>	<b>28.3%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2005 Population Estimates, Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

<sup>2</sup> Source: 2004 County Annual Solid Waste Management Reports (to Department).

## Pilot Projects

### *Baker/Bradford/Union Counties (New River Solid Waste Association)*

#### *Design:*

- An advertising campaign targeting the proper handling of campaign signs.
- Drop-off locations for each county utilizing existing solid waste and recycling centers.
- Ten - eight cubic yard front loader cans were purchased and placed at each location.
- Members of 4-H clubs in Bradford and Union Counties and the Future Farmers of America club in Baker County collected signs from public right-of-ways and transported them to drop-off locations.
- New River Solid Waste Association (NRSWA) employees collected the signs from the drop-off locations and transported them to the Recycling Processing Center.
- Each sign was dismantled and the various elements were processed for recycling or reuse.
- Letters were mailed to candidates to encourage campaign sign recycling (Appendix A).
- County staff worked with the local Supervisor of Elections to promote the project.

#### *Results:*

- Total weight of signs collected was 430 pounds.
- Approximately 200 signs made of Coroplast (a PVC) material were collected, but are not reflected in the totals above. This material was taken to ShowCase Advertising in Starke, Florida, who specializes in signage and will reuse the material on future projects.
- Metal stakes were recycled with other scrap metals from the NRSWA Regional Landfill.
- Wooden stakes were mixed with clean yard waste collected at the NRSWA Regional Landfill and ground for use as mulch material around the landfill property and blended with daily cover.
- Cardboard signs totaling approximately 289 pounds were sold to SP Recycling Corporation.
- Vinyl printed sleeves used on some campaign signs will be delivered to the Alachua County Reuse Center for distribution to teachers for use in classroom projects.



*Lessons Learned:*

- Promotion and advertising to the public should not begin until the day following the election. The potential for supporters of candidates to begin removal of other candidate's signs is greatly reduced.
- In comparison to other materials, the number of campaign signs that end up in the waste stream is an extremely small amount and does not impact landfill capacity as do many other materials.
- Staff hours, equipment and funds diverted to coordinate, promote, collect and process campaign signs for recycling would be better utilized in other recycling efforts that yield a higher volume and return.

*Future:*

- New River does not plan to continue collecting campaign signs for recycling.

*Contact:*

- Daryl O'Neal  
New River Solid Waste Association  
Email: [doneal@nrswa.org](mailto:doneal@nrswa.org)  
Phone: 386-431-1000

## ***Charlotte County***

*Design:*

- An advertising campaign consisting of radio public service announcements and newspaper ads.
- Letters were sent to all local political candidates to solicit their participation (Appendix B).
- Drop-off locations were set up at the Mid County Mini-Transfer/Recycling Facility and West Charlotte Mini Transfer/Recycling Facility.
- County staff worked with local Code Compliance, Supervisor of Elections and Teachers Supply Depot to help implement and promote the project. (The County does not have an ordinance requiring the removal of signs after elections.)
- The County dismantled the signs and marketed and/or distributed the sign materials for reuse.

*Results:*

- Total weight of signs collected was 3,080 pounds.

*Lessons Learned:*

- Starting promotional efforts earlier should result in collecting more signs.

*Future:*

- Charlotte County plans to continue collecting campaign signs for recycling during subsequent elections.

*Contact:*

- Barbara Kula  
Charlotte County  
Email: [Barbara.Kula@charlottefl.com](mailto:Barbara.Kula@charlottefl.com)  
Phone: 941-764-4388

***Hernando County***

*Design:*

- An advertising campaign consisting of radio public service announcements and newspaper ads.
- Letters were not sent directly to local political candidates to solicit their participation.
- County staff worked with local Code Compliance, Supervisor of Elections and the County to promote and implement the project. The County's website was used to promote collection locations and provide additional project information.
- Three drop-off locations were set: East Hernando Transfer Station, West Hernando Transfer Station and Northwest landfill.
- The County promoted the reuse of the sign materials to the Hernando County School Board and other appropriate local agencies.
- The County dismantled the collected signs and sorted the materials for recycling, reuse and disposal.

*Results:*

- Total weight of signs collected was 900 pounds.
- Local schools and agencies were able to reuse some of the signs.
- For the remainder of the signs, the metal parts were recycled. The plastic parts were disposed due to lack of a market within a reasonable shipping distance.

*Lessons Learned:*

- Finding a market for the plastic parts of the signs was a significant challenge. While there is a local market for the metal parts of the signs, there is no local market for the plastic parts.
- Cost of shipping the plastic parts outside of the local market is prohibitive because it would exceed the revenue obtained by selling the plastic parts.

*Future:*

- Hernando County plans to continue collecting campaign signs during subsequent elections.

*Contact:*

- Scott Harper  
Hernando County  
Email: [sharper@co.hernando.fl.us](mailto:sharper@co.hernando.fl.us)  
Phone: 352-754-4112, ext. 119

***Pinellas County (Keep Pinellas Beautiful)***

*Design:*

- An advertising campaign consisting of radio announcements, newspaper ads and press releases.
- Letters were sent to political candidates (Appendix C) to solicit participation through three options:
  - Option A – Candidates elect to remove their own campaign signs and retain for future reuse.
  - Option B – Candidates elect to remove their own campaign signs and bring them to the drop-off location between November 8 - 26, 2006.
  - Option C – Candidates authorize Keep Pinellas Beautiful (KPB) to arrange for local high school student volunteers to remove signs and agree to pay a \$0.75 donation per sign, directly to the high school, based on records provided by KPB.
- KPB identified and informed high schools about the project and were offered an opportunity to participate in the project and earn funds.
- The KPB facility acted as both the point of campaign sign drop-off and the recycling work center for disassembly of sign components.
- KPB staff worked with local Code Enforcement and the Supervisor of Elections to promote the project.
- KPB notified all three local political party offices of the pilot project.

*Results:*

- Total weight of signs collected was 1,846 pounds (2,769 signs).
- 27 out of 86 candidates agreed to participate.
- Most signs were collected by Code Enforcement due to time restrictions.
- 1,900 aluminum double H wires were collected.
- 380 steel U wires were collected.
- 41 wood stakes were collected.
- 2,238 plastic signs were given to Recycled Plastic Man, Inc., located in Placida, Florida. 92 were retained for reuse by KPB.

- 84 plastic film signs were given to Recycled Plastic Man, Inc.
- 365 pressed signs plus seven boxes of paper campaign pamphlets were recycled with Southeast Paper Recycling Company, located in Largo, Florida.
- 2,180 metal stakes were recycled with Best Metals Recycling, Inc., located in Clearwater, Florida. 100 metal stakes were retained for reuse by KPB staff.
- All wooden stakes were retained by KPB staff to be used for cabinet making and construction of large dog houses and a walkway.

*Lessons Learned:*

- A project to recycle campaign signs should start no later than four months prior to an election.
- Support of the Supervisor of Election's office is a first priority.
- Information on a Campaign Sign Recycling Project should, when possible, be distributed as part of the candidate registering packet.
- Code Enforcement agencies should be an important part of any sign recycling project due to time requirements to have signage removed.
- High school students should not be used to collect campaign signs in major cities with major roadways.
- High school students working to dismantle, sort and package the campaign signs worked exceptionally well. It is important to have a large working area.
- Having candidates pay to have their signs removed should be considered. The majority of candidates appear to have tight budgets and are reluctant to make a commitment prior to the election. More participating candidates could lower the cost per sign and should be considered.
- Adequate containers for storage and movement are important.

*Future:*

- KPB plans to continue collecting campaign signs for recycling during subsequent elections.

*Contact:*

- Bill Sanders  
Keep Pinellas Beautiful  
Email: [stoplitter@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:stoplitter@tampabay.rr.com)  
Phone: 727-533-0402

## Appendix A

# NEW RIVER SOLID WASTE ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 647 Raiford, FL 32083

(386) 431-1000 FAX (386) 431-1099

Mr. Mike Griffis  
P.O. Box 545  
Glen St. Mary, FL 32040

Date: November 6, 2006

Dear Mr. <sup>Mike</sup> Griffis:

What to do with your campaign signs besides throwing them in the trash? RECYCLE them!

New River Solid Waste Association (NRSWA) has joined the Department of Environmental Protection to conduct a campaign sign recycling pilot project that will run from election day (November 7<sup>th</sup>) through December 1, 2006. The recycling locations for Baker County will be at the following solid waste collection sites:

Sanderson Recycling Center  
Glen St. Mary Recycling Center  
Cuyler Recycling Center  
Macclenny South SR 228 Recycling Center

Once the signs are collected they will be brought back to our recycling center at New River Regional Landfill and disassembled. We have markets for each component of a political sign. Instead of adding to our costly landfill this is a great way to properly dispose of our campaign signs.

Your cooperation and participation will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or need any additional information, contact us at 386.431.1000.

Sincerely,

  
Darrell O'Neal  
Executive Director

## Appendix B

Nov. 2. 2006 10:23AM

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

No. 4253 P. 2



October 2, 2006

## ENVIRONMENTAL & EXTENSION SERVICES

25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 2, Port Charlotte, Florida 33980-2503

Environmental Service: Phone: (941) 764-4360 FAX: (941) 764-4399  
Extension Service: Phone: (941) 764-4340 FAX: (941) 764-4343

[www.charlottecountyfl.com](http://www.charlottecountyfl.com)

*"To exceed expectations in the delivery of public services"*

Dear Candidate:

Charlotte County Environmental & Extension Services will be recycling all campaign signs. Here's an opportunity to wrap up your campaign on a positive note. RECYCLE! Through a grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Charlotte County is offering the following program to all candidates:

Beginning November 8, 2006 you can take all of your campaign signs to two convenient locations:

- Mid County Mini-Transfer & Recycling Facility  
19675 Kenilworth Blvd., Murdock
- West Charlotte Mini-Transfer & Recycling Facility  
7070 Environmental Way, Englewood

The facilities are open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Take advantage of these two locations to recycle all your campaign signs FREE of charge. Help rid our roads of campaign signs and be an example to others by removing your signs. Do your part to keep Charlotte County beautiful.

Charlotte County Zoning Code Chapter 3-9-95 (h) (19) D states that "Signs shall be removed within fifteen (15) days after the earliest of the following events: (1) withdrawal of the candidate, (2) the candidate having been eliminated as a candidate, or (3) the date of the general election."

If you have any questions or need more information regarding the County's recycling programs, call 941-764-4360.

**DO YOUR PART FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, RECYCLE YOUR SIGNS.**

Thank you,

Barbara Kula, Solid Waste Resource Manager

Cc: Jim Thomson, Director Environmental & Extension Services  
Ron Hendricks, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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*Municipal Solid Waste Management -- Pest Management -- Natural Resources -- Extension Service*



## Appendix C

Exhibit 3-4



October 26, 2006

Dear Candidates;

***We need you help!!*** This is your last chance to participate in the 2006 Pilot Campaign recycling Project. We understand that this is a very busy time for you. ***To make this pilot program a success we need to hear from you.***

The 2006 Pilot Campaign Sign Recycling Project is being presented and managed by Keep Pinellas Beautiful, Inc., a non profit affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. This project is fully endorsed and partial funding from Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Enclosed is the 2006 Pilot Campaign Sign Recycling project details. If you would just a moment of time to look it over and choose an option it would be greatly appreciated. You can with call our office and speak with Terri at (727)533-0402 or email us at [stoplitter@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:stoplitter@tampabay.rr.com). All we will need to know from you is which option you would like and whether or not you would like your name to appear on our website.

***Please join with us to reduce the amount of discarded campaign signs that ends up in our Pinellas Solid Waste facility.***

Sincerely,

Bill Sanders  
Executive Director  
Keep Pinellas Beautiful, Inc.

Encl: PCSR Project Outline

727-533-0402

Fax : 727-533-0502

Email: [Stoplitter@Tampabay.rr.com](mailto:Stoplitter@Tampabay.rr.com)

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