

Poarch Band of Creek Indians leverage GAP to build robust recycling program



Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Project Description

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians started its solid waste recycling program prior to 2008 using EPA funds to pay for a truck, a lift, and two balers. GAP funds were used to host four events for the collection of both household hazardous waste and electronics recycling. In 2012, the Environmental Department was able to start hosting events using revenue gained from fiber recycling and supplemented by tribal government funding.

The tribe collected approximately 80 tons of general recycled materials (cardboard, paper, and mixed paper), more than 6.5 tons of household hazardous waste, and more than 5.8 tons of electronics in 2017. Currently the program includes 40 pick-up locations, serving areas both on and off the tribe's reservation lands. Recycling events are now entirely self-funded. The revenue generated through the tribe's recycling program funds the collection events, with additional funding provided by the tribal government. The tribe continues to focus on growth of the recycling program and intends to use its GAP funding to grow into other recycling streams.

Project Details

In the years since the recycling program began, it has grown significantly. This growth enabled the tribe to hire one environmental technician that could be dedicated full-time to implementing the program. Until the fall of 2017, the environmental staff worked on

the recycling program as time allowed, and they were not able to grow the program.

Recently, the tribe began the rehab and building of a new recycling facility in Atmore. The facility houses three balers (one horizontal and two vertical) and processes six waste streams: cardboard, mixed paper, ink cartridges, batteries, aluminum, and appliances. This new facility has allowed the program to grow more than it previously had due to space limitations. The previous facility had only a small space for bales and material storage, preventing the program from growing beyond the collection of paper and cardboard.

In 2012, the Environmental Department used GAP funds to develop an Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan. In that plan, a blueprint for the expansion of the recycling program was laid out. It was only with a change of leadership within the Department and Division that the plans were able to be moved forward and the program expanded.

Additionally, the tribe conducts semi-annual household hazardous waste and electronics recycling events. The tribe has also partnered with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to support the program, borrowing a large recycling container for the 2017 Tribal Powwow, which aided in the collection of over 529 pounds of recyclable material.

Project Time Period (FY2008– FY2019)

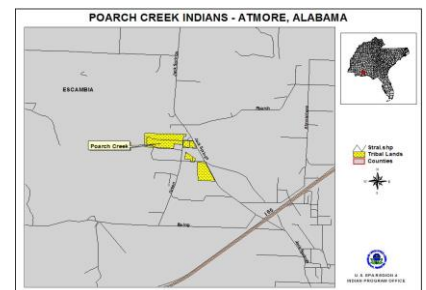
- **Tribal Contact:** Kristi Weatherford, Environmental Director
- **GAP Project Officer:** Suzanne Armor, EPA Region 4
- **Media:** Solid Waste
- **GAP Funded Results:**
Outreach & Education
Program Development (Core Competencies)

Atmore, Alabama



Sustainable Recycling

Despite limited resources, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians continued to look for ways to make their waste management program more sustainable and aid in the prevention of illegal dumping activities.



Map of Tribal Boundaries

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians reservation is located eight miles northwest of Atmore, AL, in rural Escambia County. There are approximately 3,000 tribal members. About 1,000 members live on or near the Poarch community. The tribe has approximately 230 acres of trust land.

Community Response

The tribal recycling program currently serves 40 regular pick-up locations, and the tribe has seen community participation in its semi-annual household hazardous waste and electronics recycling events grow exponentially. In just four years, from 2014 to 2017, the number of participants increased from 70 to nearly 190. All community members that attend the events are thankful that the department provides this service. The tribe regularly conducts community outreach and education on the benefits of recycling and its capabilities and services, including at its 2017 Powwow.

Innovation

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians began the program when little to no recycling was being done on the reservation. The Environmental Department was able to use a combination of funding from EPA, the tribal government, and other federal grants to put together a base program that has grown over the years. Thanks to GAP funding and more support from tribal government over the last couple of years, the program has increased significantly. New staff joining the program has resulted in new ideas on the direction and activities that also enabled it to expand.

Next Steps

The tribe continues to use its GAP funding annually to support and grow its recycling program. It intends to expand both the waste streams it collects and the areas it serves. In addition to picking up the materials from the local offices and businesses, there are plans to establish a community drop-off area for recyclable materials. The tribe is also hosting a waste characterization training for all other federally recognized tribes in Region 4 and plans to conduct a waste characterization study on its waste streams in the near future.



Waste Management Growth

Recently, the tribe began the rehab and building of a new recycling facility in Atmore, which houses three balers (one horizontal and two vertical) and processes six waste streams: cardboard, mixed paper, ink cartridges, batteries, aluminum, and appliances.

