

marconews.com

Volunteers, anglers make monofilament recycling work

Bryan Fluech - Collier County Sea Grant Agent

Thursday, July 12, 2007

With his hands gloved, nine-year-old Zen Hauriel-Fank unscrews the cap to a monofilament recycling bin and pulls out a glob of used fishing line.

Mixed in with the line are a coke can, a diaper, and a plastic bottle. Zen and his five year old sister, Meadow, turn their noses to the unpleasant additions. Meadow shakes her head and shouts out that bin clearly states “No Garbage.”

Zen, Meadow and their mother Kim are members of Roots to Shoots, a nonprofit youth service-learning program started by the famous primate researcher Jane Goodall. They and 14 other families are helping to support the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP) by volunteering to monitor outdoor monofilament recycling bins around the county.

The MRRP is a statewide effort to educate the public on the problems caused by discarded monofilament line. It aims to decrease the amount of fishing line entering the environment through a network of recycling bins and drop-off locations, and increase the amount of monofilament line being recycled.

Collected monofilament line is sent to Berkley Pure Fishing in Spirit Lake, Iowa, using containers with postage paid by Berkley. Line is melted down and recycled into freshwater artificial habitats, tackle boxes, and other fishing-related items. It's not used to make new fishing line.

Improperly discarded fishing line wreaks havoc on sea turtles, manatees, dolphins, birds, and fish. These animals can mistakenly ingest it or become entangled in it resulting in permanent injury or death. Line can also become entangled in boat propellers, resulting in costly repairs for boat owners.

Since last June, several partners have helped expand the MRRP throughout Goodland, Marco Island and Naples. Collier County Parks and Recreation, City of Naples, Rookery Bay Reserve, and several marinas have assisted in the installation of 18 monofilament bins at popular fishing locations. Sunshine Ace Hardware has also provided funding to purchase educational signage to complement several of the outdoor bins.

Members of a local 4-H club have also volunteered their time to support the program by sorting monofilament line collected from bins and during clean up events. According to Louise Smith, the club's leader, “the kids never realized that fishing line could have such a negative effect on wildlife and wanted to help.”

Over the past year, volunteers have helped collect and clean an estimated 150 pounds of monofilament line. Of course this would not be possible without the help of the stewardship-minded anglers. Numerous anglers consciously make an effort to keep our coastal waterways clean every time they fish by properly disposing of their line. Without their efforts, the MRRP would not be successful.

However, despite the actions of these anglers and volunteers, discarded line continues to threaten marine life and foul up our coastal waters. It's up to every angler to take responsibility for his or her fishing line.

Line left behind is not only hazardous, but it is also unsightly. Anglers should always hold onto their old line and keep it secure until it can be properly disposed of. Even small pieces left over from retying a knot can harm marine life. All anglers can help by carefully picking up any line they encounter, even if it was left by someone else.

Hooks, bait, and other debris should be removed from the line before it is placed in the recycling bins. Although only monofilament line can be recycled, anglers are still encouraged to place braided line into the bins to keep it out of the environment. Volunteers will separate it from the rest of the line.

If there's not a monofilament bin near where you fish, take your used line to a tackle shop that collects used line. Local drop off locations include Sunshine Ace Hardware stores and Angler's Answer tackle shop. Keep in mind, the line must be cleaned before they will accept it. As a last result, cut the line up into pieces smaller than 12 inches and throw it away in a garbage can with a secure lid. Line left in open garbage cans still have the potential of being blown out in the environment.

As a reminder, household recycling will not take monofilament line.

To make clean-up less labor intensive, anglers should strive to be more precise in their casts to avoid getting it caught up in mangroves, utility lines, or other structures. If you do snag your line, make every effort to safely retrieve it all. Any line left dangling from mangroves poses a serious threat to birds, fish and other wildlife.

As a general precaution, always check the condition of your line before hitting the water. Check for frays or nicks that could compromise your ability to land a fish.

Finally, if you see another angler not recycling their line, let them know about the MRRP and encourage them to keep our waters clean.

If you know of an area that could use a monofilament bin or are interested in volunteering with the programs please contact Bryan Fluech, Collier County Sea Grant agent at 417-6310, ext 225.

Bryan Fluech is the Collier County agent for Sea Grant, a part of the University of Florida Extension Service that does research on coastal and marine resources. Contact him at 417-6310, ext. 225, or fluech@ufl.edu.

© 2007 Marco Daily News and NDN Productions. Published in Marco Island, Florida, USA by the E.W. Scripps Co.

http://www.marconews.com/news/2007/jul/12/volunteers_anglers_make_monofilament_recycling_work/