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Orleans hooked on fishing line recycling

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Receptacles for fishing line recycling have been in use along the Cape Cod Canal for several years.

Cape Cod Times/Paul Blackmore

By Susan Milton
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May 28, 2009

ORLEANS — First there were the mutt mitts, placed at Cape town landings and beaches to encourage dog owners to pick up after their pets.

Now there will be plastic recycling cylinders for fishermen to pick up after themselves — or at least to dispose of the old fish line that has no further use. "Fishing line is dangerous to birds and marine mammals," Lara Slifka of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association said. "Seabirds will pick at it or get their head stuck in it. If a hook is still attached, a bird may eat the hook. Such fishing line also has been caught around flippers of marine mammals and sea turtles," she said.

Orleans could be the first town on the Cape to join the national movement to recycle plastic monofilament line. Falmouth is also looking into the idea and fishermen have been recycling the fishing line for years along the Cape Cod Canal.

"Last year, we recycled close to 30 pounds of fishing line," Ranger Jonathan Dumais of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Tuesday. "It doesn't sound like much but, if you weigh out a pound, it's a lot."

Dumais inherited the recycling program seven years ago when he started working at the canal. Since then, he has added collection points all along the canal, a popular destination for fishermen.

The state of Florida is the hotbed of fishing line recycling and that's where Cecil Newcomb, vice chairman of the Orleans Waterways Improvement and Shellfish Advisory Committee, got interested.

"The conservation commission unanimously approved this and we're looking for your blessing as well," Newcomb told selectmen last week. "We hope to put 11 to 12 units around the town."

The cost of materials is roughly \$40 for each six-inch wide PVC recycling cylinder, Slifka said. The Orleans Pond Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to protecting the town's waterways, is picking up the tab in Orleans. As is the case at the canal, the Orleans recycling containers will be near popular fishing spots where aging monofilament line often breaks, usually with the biggest fish of the day on the hook. Under such circumstances, fishermen may curse and quickly attach another lure or baited hook to the remaining line. Once the recycling containers are in place, they could just as easily make sure errant line is disposed of properly.

The fishing line recycling effort, which started in Brevard County, Fla., has spread to several areas in the southeastern United States and California and Hawaii with help from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, according to a 2007 report from the federal agency.

On a smaller scale, the fishing line disposal effort is similar to the "Fish to Energy" program, which is recycling primarily bulky fishing gear such as long-lines, nets and lobster pots in Sandwich, Chatham and Provincetown.

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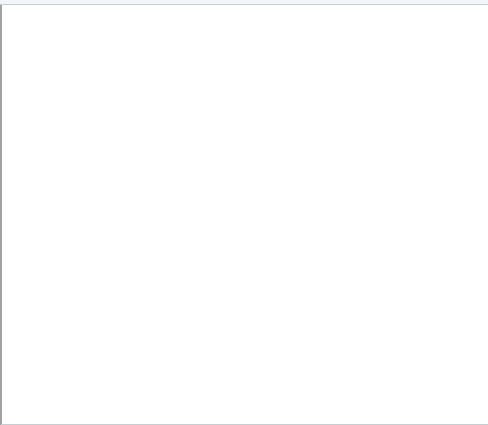
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