

BUSINESS

Monroe-area boat clubs to arrange for recycling of boat shrink wrap

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Monroe Boat Club is hoping to keep at least 17,000 square-feet of plastic out of local landfills this spring.

The club is working with the Michigan-based program Recycling Run to recycle shrink wrap covers from boats.

"Each winter, many boats are covered with plastic shrink wrap when they are put away for the winter," said David Ryan, president of the Monroe Boat Club Association (MBC-A)." Come springtime, all that plastic is cut apart and thrown away, generating waste and adding to the area landfills."

MBC-A is the Monroe Boat Club's non-profit entity. It was formed to create clean-water harbor communities.

This spring, the MBC-A partnered with the Michigan Recycling Coalition and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy to bring the shrink wrap recycling service to Monroe County. Recycling Run has been offered in Michigan for 10 years, and the program is growing.

“In 2019, about 940 bags (of plastic shrink wrap) were collected in Michigan. In 2021 we collected about 1,620 bags,” Katie Fournier, project coordinator at the Michigan Recycling Coalition, said. “With an average weight of 40 lbs. (in each bag), that’s about 32 tons of plastic. We had 38 businesses, marinas, boat storage facilities and clubs of varying sizes participate in the program last year. There are around 500 to 600 marinas in the state of Michigan total.”

A Monroe-based boat club tried the program at one time.

“Trout's Yacht Basin has tried the program in the past, but has not had a lot of interest in recent years,” Ryan said.

MBC-A is hoping to change that. It's spreading the word to area boaters and has included several other Bolles Harbor marinas in this year's recycling effort.

“Not only does this reduce disposal costs for the marinas, but it keeps our neighborhoods and the Great Lakes clean and waste free,” Ryan said. “Participation is better than expected. Trout’s Yacht Basin is participating this year, as customer demand supports it. Terry Gerin owns the newly opened Big Daddy's Boat Yard and says he is ‘all in’ with the recycling program.”

Harbor Marine also is taking part. That’s dozens of local boats and lots of plastic kept out of local landfills.

“MBC has 135 docked boats, plus more in the storage yard. About 45 use plastic shrink wrap covers,” Ryan said. “There are approximately another 250 boats in the Trout's Basin, Harbor Marine and Big Daddy's Boat Yard, plus many more along the LaPlaisance waterway. We are planning to collect 20 bags of plastic this year, each holding up to 850 square-feet of plastic, so at least 17,000 square-feet of plastic. Each recycled bag represents a savings of 13.5 gallons of oil, 115 kwh of energy and 16-20 cubic-feet of landfill space.”

Other area boat clubs and individual boaters also can take part.

“We can take 15 bags in addition (to ours). The state will pickup 35 from MBC by early June,” Ryan said.

All shrink wrap must be placed in the special recycling bags.

“MBC can only accept shrink wrap that is already in the special recycling bags. It must be the plastic only, no strapping, wood or foam,” Ryan said.

The MBC-A is selling the bags for \$5. The association also is covering the cost of shipping the bags to Monroe. The regular cost is \$7 per bag.

The filled bags will be picked up by early June.

“Monroe Boat Club is registered with the State of Michigan to serve as a pick-up location for these bags, and the Michigan Recycles organization will pick up and haul them away by June 6,” Ryan said. “For our boat club to register for the program with the state of Michigan and have the state come and pick up the bags, bale all the plastic and recycle it into new products has no cost (to us).”

The collected shrink wrap will be used to make new products, such as decking.

“Once collected, the plastic is baled and recycled to fuel the economy of Michigan. Recycled plastics from this program are used by the manufacturer Trex Decking to give the plastic new life as composite decking planks,” Recycling Run said.

Shrink wrapping boats for winter storage is a long-time practice.

“John Gagne Sr. of Monroe runs the Shrink Wrap Service Inc. business, and he says he has been shrink-wrapping boats since 1986,” Ryan said.

Most of this plastic material ends up in landfills. Occasionally it finds its way into the water.

“Nearly all boaters are conscious of the environment and do not want to spoil the areas they enjoy. Boaters do make the effort to minimize debris, but as boat work is done outdoors, strong spring winds can blow light plastic pieces away from even the most careful people,” Ryan said.

On the Net: www.michiganrecycles.org