



EarthWatch

Rhode Island



Topic: DEM Encourages Anglers to Recycle Used Fishing Line to Protect Aquatic Wildlife from Entanglement

Date: August 28, 2009

Location: Wyoming Pond, Hopkinton

Background

DEM is encouraging anglers to recycle their used fishing line in order to protect aquatic wildlife from entanglement. The Department has long recognized the danger that discarded fishing line poses to wildlife, and has been encouraging anglers to keep fishing areas free of fishing line and other debris, and to take particular care in disposing of monofilament fishing line.

Monofilament fishing line is by far the most dangerous debris item encountered by wildlife. We sometimes find dead birds entangled in fishing line; live ones are often hard to catch to remove the line. Ospreys and gulls, as well as other birds, collect line for nesting material, causing hazards for their young and themselves. The prevalence of monofilament fishing line can be seen in osprey nests throughout Rhode Island. Most nests contain monofilament and/or plastic that has been scavenged, and the birds can easily be entangled in it.

The good news is that fishing line can be recycled. Recycled monofilament line can be turned into such things as polyester yarn for carpet, filler for clothing and packaging, artificial fish habitats, tackle boxes, and other plastic fishing-related products.

There are currently fishing line recycling boxes at over a dozen of the state's 80 fishing access sites. Anglers can deposit used line in the small brown drop boxes that are attached to posts or trees at several state fishing areas. The drop boxes, constructed by Eagle Scouts, provide a safe repository for the used monofilament line, which is then collected by DEM staff to be sent to a fishing tackle manufacturer for recycling.

The following state fishing sites have fishing line recycle boxes:

Beaver River, Richmond

Silver Spring, N. Kingstown

Wood River areas;

Deep Pond, High Bank, Blitzkreig Trail, Exeter

Hope Valley - Frosty Hollow

Exeter Breakheart Pond, Exeter Barberville Dam, Exeter Dow Field, (little league field), Hope Valley

Barbers Pond, S. Kingstown

Bradford Landing, Ashaway
Quonochontaug Breachway, Charlestown

If it is impossible to recycle the line because it is badly tangled, it should be cut into strands about six inches long before it is deposited in the angler's home trash.

If a fishing line recycling box is not available, it is the anglers' responsibility to "carry out - what they carry in" and not discard any type of litter that can entrap and kill wildlife. Although monofilament line is the greatest hazard, hooks, lures and weights are often left behind at fishing sites and consumed by fish and wildlife, causing serious injury or illness. The fishing line must be cut up in small pieces before being discarded in the trash. Fishing line, being of a light weight can be blown out of a trash can by the wind, or end up near a trash can that is tipped over and blow around. Sometime fishing line gets caught in trees when someone casts their line - they need to make every effort to retrieve it - it will entangle birds. We sometimes find dead birds entangled in fishing line; live ones are often hard to catch to remove the line.

And if anglers spot some fishing line that others have abandoned, properly dispose of that, too. It's the responsible thing to do.

In addition to its own efforts, DEM has partnered with the Audubon Society of RI on the "Hold the Line" campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of recycling used fishing line. As part of this year's 24th International Coastal Cleanup, Audubon has created new fishing line boxes for DEM fishing access areas in central RI including Silver Spring Lake, Belleville Pond, Potowomut Pond, and Rome Point in North Kingstown.

A list of stocked ponds and other information of interest to anglers can be found on DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov, by clicking on "Fish and Wildlife" under "Offices and Divisions," then choosing "Freshwater Fisheries," then "Trout Stocked Waters."

Interviewee:

Christine Dudley, supervising biologist of freshwater fisheries in DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife, discussed the importance of recycling fishing line to protect aquatic wildlife and gave an overview of DEM's efforts to assist anglers recycle their used fishing line.