

## Monofilament Recycling and Recovery Program

Manatees, turtles, dolphins, birds and fish sightings are something most folks enjoy while recreating near the water. But did you know that a large percentage of animal rescues are the result of entanglement in monofilament line? Every five manatee rescue is a result of entanglement in fishing line. In a five year period, 163 turtles, 35 dolphins, and countless birds and fish were found entangled in monofilament line. Most monofilament is non-biodegradable and lasts about 600 years. Because it is difficult to see by most wildlife, they may swim or fly into it and get tangled up. Other animals may accidentally eat it. The line does not digest and will eventually kill the animal that ingests it. It is unfortunate that so many animals suffer and die each year as a result of mankind's disregard for their environment.

There is something that you can do to help. The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors a Monofilament Recycling and Recovery Program (MRRP). You can get involved in saving animals from entanglement in many ways. The simplest way is simply to deposit your used fishing line in the MRRP bins located in many areas of Highlands County.

The MRRP program takes used fishing line and sends it to the Berkley Conservation Institute in Iowa. Berkley melts the line down into raw plastic pellets that can be made into other plastic products including tackle boxes, spools for line, fish habitats, and toys. So not only does the program save wildlife, it recycles this potentially dangerous line into useful items.

The MRRP Program was initially funded by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. They provided a one year grant to get the program started. The program is still going strong, but additional funding to expand and keep it going is needed. So far, over 1,000 pounds of monofilament line has been recovered from outdoor recycling bins, dive cleanups, shoreline cleanups and collected at tackle shops.

The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to be part of this worthy program, but we need your help. If you have some time and want to help protect these marine animals, we have a job for you! Volunteers are needed to collect the monofilament line from the 9 locations in Lake Placid, 5 bins in Avon Park, 8 Sebring locations and 6 recycling bins in the Istokpoga area. So if you live in any of these areas and can spare a couple of hours a week, you can be part of the solution. If you're interested and want to find out more, please call us at (863) 402-6545.

Everyone can help by following a few simple steps. Don't leave your line behind when you do go fishing. Store it safely and securely until it can be placed in a recycling receptacle. Never leave fishing line unattended. Cast your line with care; avoid trees, utility lines, bridges, reefs, wildlife and other people. If your line does get snagged or breaks, make every effort to safely retrieve it. Collect discarded line, debris and other abandoned fishing gear when encountered. Do not feed wildlife as it encourages animals to approach fishing boats and anglers. Participate in a monofilament recycling program or local cleanup efforts. Obtain and adopt a recycling bin for your favorite fishing/boating area. If you must throw your fishing line in the trash instead of a monofilament recycling bin, cut it into short lengths (6-12"), because once it arrives at the landfill it could be scavenged by animals trying to use it to build nests or ingest it.

Fishing line is a high density plastic and requires a special recycling process. It cannot go into most regular recycling bins. If you can't get it to one of our bins, spool the line at home and take it to a tackle shop that recycles it or you can send it directly to Berkley (call 1-800-BERKLEY). If you do happen to see an entangled animal you can report it to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922).

Here's your chance to help wildlife, get involved with your community and feel good about yourself. We need folks from every area in the county to help us out with the collection of monofilament lines from these bins. You can go on our website at [www.highlandswcd.org](http://www.highlandswcd.org) to find out where the bins are located. It won't take up too much of your time, you'll be getting out to these beautiful sites and best of all, and you'll be saving the lives of countless animals. Call us today to find out how to volunteer for this worthy program.