



CAPE COD TIMES

New device helps keep litter out of Falmouth Harbor

By Jessica Hill / jhill@capecodonline.com

Posted Jul 12, 2020 at 8:44 PM

Updated Jul 13, 2020 at 5:24 AM

With one piece of trash at a time, Falmouth Harbor is getting cleaner each day with the help of what appears to be a yellow bucket floating next to the Island Queen's dock.

FALMOUTH — With one piece of trash at a time, Falmouth Harbor is getting cleaner each day with the help of what appears to be a yellow bucket floating next to the Island Queen's dock.

The Island Queen ferry line recently invested in a Seabin, a floating trash collector from Australia that sucks in debris and microplastics, in an effort to clean up the harbor.

Mike Reposa, manager of the Island Queen, was doing research last summer on ocean trash, as he and his staff often use a pool skimmer to remove rubbish from the harbor. He sees more garbage during the summer as more visitors arrive and boats become more active.

Reposa came across the Seabin Project, which was started in 2015 by two surfers in Australia who got tired of finding trash while they were surfing. He researched the bins for a couple of months and asked the owner of the Island Queen if they could buy one. The owner agreed.

Reposa found a place in Canada that carries them and bought one for \$5,600, with \$1,000 in shipping costs. The ferry line received the device in February but kept it in the garage until summer.

For the last three weeks, the Seabin has been collecting debris, from large items like plastic jugs to microplastics as small as 2 mm.

“One of them is not going to solve the problem in Falmouth Harbor,” Reposa said, “but it’s solving our little area right now. The more, the better.”

The Seabin floats on the surface and sucks in water through a pump, passing it through a net inside the device. The water is then pumped back into the marina, leaving litter and debris trapped inside the net.

Todd Bidwell, general manager of the Island Queen, compared it to a vacuum for the water.

“What it does is it basically draws surface water towards the unit, which has a good size net, and a pump is continually working and drawing the water towards it, so it collects down to 2 mm microplastics as well as larger things like coffee cups and water bottles.”

Bidwell said he believes Island Queen is the first on Cape Cod to have a Seabin.

Each Seabin has the ability to catch 90,000 plastic bags, 35,700 disposable cups, 16,500 plastic bottles and 166,500 plastic utensils per year, according to the Seabin Project’s website.

The Seabin holds up to 45 pounds of trash at one time. Currently there are 860 of them in the world capturing a total of 7,965 pounds of trash per day, according to the project’s website. Since its founding, the devices have collected 2,219,652 pounds of trash and microplastic.

Staff at Island Queen empty it about twice a day, Reposa said.

It took a little while to find the best spot on the dock where it would collect the most trash, Reposa said. For the last few weeks, the Seabin has been collecting a lot of baggies, bottle caps and other small items, as well as larger gallon jugs. The current from the Seabin draws the large items toward it, allowing staff to remove it easily, Reposa said.

Lately the Seabin has been collecting a lot of seaweed, Reposa said, so they have to separate that from the trash. He thinks soon, however, less seaweed will be coming into the harbor.

Reposa hopes other companies, and possibly town officials, invest in Seabins to make a bigger impact. The town could apply for grants to buy them, Reposa said.

“I think overall it’s just healthier for everyone to just clean up the harbor,” Reposa said. “And from an aesthetic point of view, it’s good for our customers to not see a bunch of trash floating around.”

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