

Marine and Boat Wrap Film Recycling

Michigan is covered with lakes, with one hundred and eighty-nine in Barry County alone; it's no surprise that Michigan holds the second-place spot for the number of boat registrations nationwide. Being in Michigan, though, we can't use our boats year-round. We have to store them over winter, usually with marine plastic boat wrap. As you can imagine, that equates to a lot of plastic. But did you know those plastic boat wrap covers can actually be recycled?

As the weather warms, it may be tempting to try and stuff your boat wrap into your trash can or the dumpster at work or even burn it, but first, consider the consequences. Michigan law prohibits burning plastic due to the air pollution produced, which may lead to adverse immediate and long-term health effects and environmental damage. Second, they're bulky. Boat wrap takes up a lot of space in your bin, the trash truck, and the landfill. Since it's light, boat wrap could easily get blown away in the wind during transport, polluting nearby areas and waterways. So what should you do?

Unfortunately, bulky plastics like boat wrap cannot be recycled in your curbside recycling bin or at your local recycling drop-off site. You can, however, recycle boat wrap through special collections.

The Michigan Recycling Coalition has partnered with Dr. Shrink, a Northern Michigan shrink wrap supplier, to offer a marine and boat wrap recycling program. To join, visit www.michiganrecycles.org/ag-plastics/ to register and purchase bags. Registrations are due on June 1, 2023. This program is aimed at businesses; however, they do have options for individuals. If registering with less than five boat covers, you may be eligible for free bag drop-offs at participating locations - see the website for details.

Eaton County's Agricultural Film Plastic Recycling program also accepts boat covers. You must make an appointment and "remove buckles, vents, polyester lining, and straps, leaving only the plastic left. (and) bundle in a disposal bag if possible." See their website for more information www.eatoncounty.org/1069/Agricultural-Film-Plastic-Pilot-Program.

We love boat season in Michigan, and we also love our lakes. You can help protect them by recycling and reducing plastic boat wrap waste. To reduce the need for recycling, consider finding indoor or outdoor covered storage for your boat. If that isn't a viable option, you can reduce by reusing old covers or switching to a more durable canvas cover. Happy boating Barry County!

Rachel Frantz serves as Barry County's Recycling Coordinator and writes columns to answer commonly asked recycling questions. Have a question about recycling or a topic idea for this column? We want to hear from you! Email recycle@barrycounty.org or visit www.barrycountyrecycles.org for more information and to get all your recycling questions answered.