

Marine Debris Awareness Gets Second Symbol

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

It's been about a year since Ophelia, the marine debris octopus, was built by Kodiak High School art students. The sculpture, which now resides in the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward, was constructed using items collected from Kodiak beaches by Island Trails Network employees. She's become a mascot for marine debris clean up, and a vivid example of how much flotsam and jetsam is circulating the world's oceans. But she won't be the only example for long. As KMXT's Brianna Gibbs reports, Kodiak's young artists are at it again.

Ophelia's new friend is basically made of her leftovers, or better yet, her hand-me-downs. Plastics, portions of fishing nets, and other marine debris that wasn't used on the 400 pound octopus, is now scattered about the art room at Kodiak High School. For the past month, students have been using the materials to construct Kodiak's second sea-inspired sculpture — a giant fish.

-- (Salmon Sculpture 1 :03 “There's an aluminum armature underneath all the plastic. And that's lightweight and it's strong and it won't rust.”)

That's art teacher Bonnie Dillard, who said the dad of one of her students built and donated the fish's aluminum frame. Students in Dillard's art classes drilled holes in various debris items, and then wired dozens of them onto sheets of chicken wire.

-- (Salmon Sculpture 2 :16 “So this is a panel and you can see, so we take the wire and we put it around here and then we just twist it around the back, like so. And this is what makes a lovey, dovey panel.”)

Junior Sonja Reed-Vigil said the panels, which are arranged in shades of blues, greens and whites, were then attached to the fish's frame.

-- (Salmon Sculpture 3 :21 “OK, so right now I'm taking these two wires together and making them here. I'm going to stick it all the way through and wrap it around both of the wires to connect them. And you want to wrap it around. And then you take the thing you use to twist it, it's a metal tool, and you twist it around, like so.”)

-- (Salmon Sculpture 4 :10 “What I really want to take from this is I really hope it sends a message to everyone that our consumption really is affecting everything and that they really think about it and stop using so much.”)

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 (Salmon Sculpture 5 :08 “l’ve noticed that the more we do this I keep trying to fit as much plastic everywhere, because hopefully the more plastic we use, it will be in here instead of out there.”)

-- (Salmon Sculpture 6 :36 “As far as the students, when you tell them that all the materials they’re working with were found on local beaches or in the ocean, what are they’re reactions? Well they’re very surprised, and especially when we had those huge bags that had even more. I mean right now we’ve just got the leftovers from last year. And then as elementary students would come into the classroom to see the process, they were shocked. What is that made of? It’s all, you know, trash from the ocean. There’s that much in the ocean? They are shocked.”)

The fish doesn’t have a name yet, but Dillard said it’s in the works.

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 (Salmon Sculpture 8 :22 “So is that the list of names over there? So Dory, of course. And then they played around with the words, and came up with Plash. Like plastic and splash. And Garbish, Garbish and fish. So we’re still deciding on the name.”)

Another option – the Alutiiq word for salmon.

-- (Salmon Sculpture 9 :01 “Alutiiq pronunciation...”)

This new sculpture, whatever they decide to call it, won’t be joining Ophelia in Seward. Instead, the salmon will remain in Kodiak, and serve as a local reminder to be good stewards of the environment.

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 (Salmon Sculpture 10 :13 “It’s not just a cool piece of art. It’s a piece that once you get up and start looking at it, you see items that we all use in our everyday lives. And hopefully make the connection that we really need to be aware.”)

-- (Salmon Sculpture 11 :09 “Well of course all art you do has a meaning, but I’ve never really done one purposely to send a message. So I’m really happy I’m a part of this.”)

If all plastic drilling and wire twisting goes according to plan, Dillard said the hope is to unveil the completed sculpture this Saturday, as part of the 2013 Kodiak Crab Festival.

Reporting in Kodiak, I’m Brianna Gibbs.

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