

LOCAL

No dock, no problem: Hudson River sailboat captain bikes cargo from Newburgh to Beacon



An electric cargo bike after delivering a load of malted barley from Hudson Valley Malt to Hudson Valley Brewing in Beacon on May 19, 2021. The shipment of malted barley was brought to Newburgh aboard the Sloop Apollonia and delivered to beacon by electric cargo bicycles. *Patrick Oehler/Poughkeepsie Journal*

Mike Randall Times Herald-Record

Published 5:01 a.m. ET May 20, 2021 | Updated 6:39 a.m. ET May 20, 2021

[View Comments](#)



NEWBURGH — When Captain Sam Merrett is delivering supplies on his cargo sailboat, the Schooner Apollonia, he won't use any fossil fuels if he can possibly help it. That goes even if he's stuck on one side of the Hudson River and his customer is on the other.

That is why, at certain times Wednesday, you might have seen a pair of men pedaling cargo bikes laden with piles of 50-pound bags of barley malt across the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge.

Those bags were bound for the Hudson Valley Brewery on East Main Street in Beacon. Merrett called this the first full cargo run of what he hopes will be monthly trips, carrying product from Hudson Valley Malt in Germantown in Columbia County.

He started in Hudson, where he lives, and made his first stop in Poughkeepsie. After Wednesday's Newburgh-Beacon stop, he planned to move on to Brooklyn and then Ossining on the way back, making deliveries at each place.

But despite trying for months, he was unable to land a docking spot in Beacon.

"The dock I expected to use was not available," he said simply, not wanting to explain further.



From left, Lu Yoder from the Sloop Apollonia and Jon Miles of Revolution Rickshaws unload malted barley from Hudson Valley Malt to Hudson Valley Brewing in Beacon on May 19, 2021. The shipment of malted barley was brought to Newburgh aboard the Sloop Apollonia and delivered to beacon by electric cargo bicycles. *Patrick Oehler/Poughkeepsie Journal*

But that was no obstacle for someone who prides himself on a sustainable operation, with a carbon footprint that varies from low to invisible. Merrett already has those electric cargo bikes ready to go, because most breweries aren't right on the water, and the product has to be biked a short distance after docking.

This was just a longer last leg of the trip than usual — all the way from the marina on Front Street in Newburgh to the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, and then south to Main Street in Beacon, about 10 miles round trip.

Merrett said this part-time job — one of three he has right now, all of them having to do with the water — is about more than making money. It's about connecting communities along the river.

"Historically, the river was the connection," Merrett said. "But these days, in a lot of communities, access to the river is hard to get. Anything we can do to increase access is important."



The Apollonia is a schooner that transports cargo along the Hudson River. *Schooner Apollonia*



From left, Lu Yoder from the Sloop Apollonia and Jon Miles of Revolution Rickshaws unload malted barley from Hudson Valley Malt to Hudson Valley Brewing in Beacon on May 19, 2021. The shipment of malted barley was brought to Newburgh aboard the Sloop Apollonia and delivered to beacon by electric cargo bicycles. *Patrick Oehler/Poughkeepsie Journal*

[Newburgh: Mayor mum on fate of city manager's contract](#)

[Beacon: How two restaurants fueled an HBO production](#)

[Education: See school election results throughout Hudson Valley](#)

Dennis Nesel, the maltster and co-founder at Hudson Valley Malt, is excited to be working with Merrett.

Nesel said they're providing a connection between the local farms and the local breweries. He makes his malt the old-school way, and then Merrett will deliver it, also the old-school way.

"He's bringing back to the people of the Hudson Valley the way things used to be," Nesel said. "He's creating a smaller carbon footprint in the process. People are loving it. They think it's the coolest thing."

Merrett said if his operation becomes successful, he hopes it inspires others to do the same. He isn't afraid of a little competition. In fact, he's eager to see it.

"We would welcome another sail-freight boat on the river," Merrett said.



[View Comments](#)



The Apollonia is a schooner that transports cargo along the Hudson River. *Schooner Apollonia*