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BY RAYVIN BLEU | ULSTER COUNTY

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While a record number of cargo ships are sitting in the Pacific Ocean waiting to unload their goods, Captain Sam Merrett and the crew of the "Apollonia" are moving right along on a trip powered exclusively through wind power. It's part of a push to ship products along the Hudson River in an eco-friendly way, with the only issue being the forecast.

After a five-month shipping season, the crew is getting the Apollonia ready for dry docking for the winter. The 64-foot steel-hulled schooner was built in the 1940s and has been transporting goods to New York Harbor since April.

"Historically, everything moved on sailboats up and down the Hudson River. That's not a new idea at all. But I think a lot of us had sort of just thought this was a historical way to do things, that didn't realize it could have like modern day relevance," says Merrett.

The ship made the 120-mile trip up and down the Hudson five times this year, carrying a variety of products from hot sauce to pumpkins. It is capable of carrying 20,000 pounds of cargo and makes several deliveries along the way.

Merrett believes using sail power to transport goods is not only environmentally smart, but a good teaching tool as well.

"This shirt. How did it get to me? I can guess and I can tell you a lot of stories of what I believe happened, but it's really hard. And so the nice thing about what we're doing is every product that we move from the producer to the person who's consuming it, we can tell you the entire transportation story," says Merrett.

He says while there will always be some kind of disruption in shipping, such as the situation in the Pacific, using sail freight is one way to avoid delays in delivery.

"The nice thing is that, in our route, we are we're delivering in Kingston right now. And so there could still be another schooner delivering in Poughkeepsie at the same time, and that wouldn't be interfered by another schooner delivering to Milton and another one delivering the Beacon, so I do really think the more decentralized it all is, the more robust and resilient it ends up,"

says Merrett.

He and his crew will spend the winter season doing maintenance on the Apollonia and refining their shipping process. Each Apollonia run takes about two weeks, depending on wind conditions.

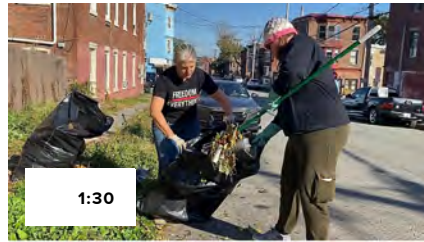
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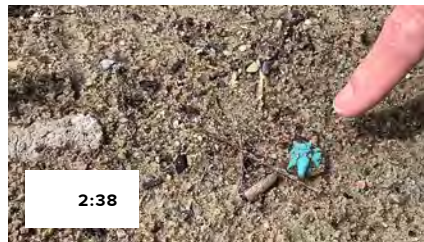
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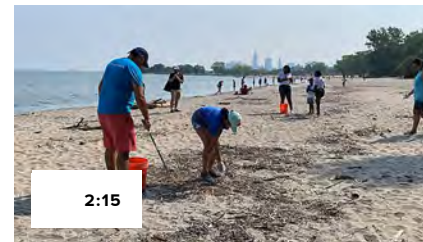
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