
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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A Boaters Guide to Sewage Pumpout Discharge Regulations and Pumpout Stations

One of the biggest water quality issues we face concerning surface water is controlling the amount of nutrients entering them. There are many sources of nutrients, ranging from manure on farms to failing sewage treatment plants, among others. Boaters that illegally discharge human sewage directly overboard contribute to the nutrient problems found in New Hampshire waters.

The discharge of excessive nutrients to the water can create a series of chemical and biological events that impact water quality. Algal cell growth accelerates, which results in murky water. Once the cells die, bacteria use the oxygen to decompose the cells. The decomposition of raw sewage by microorganisms also depletes life sustaining oxygen. Once the oxygen is depleted, aquatic animals begin dying off or moving to areas that can sustain life.

What Does the Law Say About Boat Discharges?

Through the provisions of RSA 487.2, it is illegal to discharge raw sewage and gray water (shower and sink waste) from a boat in New Hampshire inland waters. New Hampshire enforces this law through the DES Boat Inspection Program. Boats with installed toilet facilities on the major lakes, especially Lake Winnepesaukee, are inspected to ensure sewage cannot be discharged through the hull. Boat sewage can only be removed via an onshore pumpout facility for boats operating in New Hampshire's fresh waters.

States may apply to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to prohibit all boat sewage discharges, whether treated or untreated sewage, in areas that require greater protection than the current law provides. New Hampshire's coastal waters were designated as a "No Discharge Area" in 2005. **All boat sewage discharges to the water within the three nautical mile state boundary are now prohibited.**

You are not required to have a toilet on your boat. There are several options, however, if you wish to. If you want to retrofit your boat, read about marine sanitation devices in DES fact sheet WD-WMB-2. This fact sheet provides guidance about type and plumbing arrangements best for you and our New Hampshire waters. Recent articles in national boating magazines and on boating websites will also help.

Federal law states that if you have a MSD with a holding tank for untreated waste with a Y-valve, it must be secured in the closed position while operating inside the three-mile coastal limit. Boats that contain Type I or II MSDs and are operating in a designated No Discharge Area must secure the system so that discharges cannot occur.

Many marinas in New Hampshire now offer pumpout services. A list of pumpout stations can be seen at http://www.des.nh.gov/wmb/cva/dir_map.htm. Marinas and towns interested in installing new pumpout facilities or replace old, failing systems may apply for funds through DES. These funds are provided to states through the federal Clean Vessel Act, and signs are provided to Clean Vessel Act-funded marinas to indicate pumpout availability.



Advice on Marine Sanitation Devices from Marina Operators

There are many methods of runoff diversion and retention that fall under the umbrella of LID. They are:

1. If, when pumping out, the hose nozzle does not lock to the deck fitting, hold the nozzle in place during the pumpout.
2. If you have any questions about the use of pumpout facilities, ask marina personnel for assistance.
3. Regularly maintain and clean the boat's plumbing and venting systems.
4. Don't let the waste accumulate in holding tanks all summer before pumping out. It may compact and be much harder to remove.
5. Pump out before you haul out your boat for the winter.

For More Information

For more information go to <http://www.des.nh.gov/wmb/cva/> or contact the Clean Vessel Act Program, NH Department of Environmental Services, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2963.