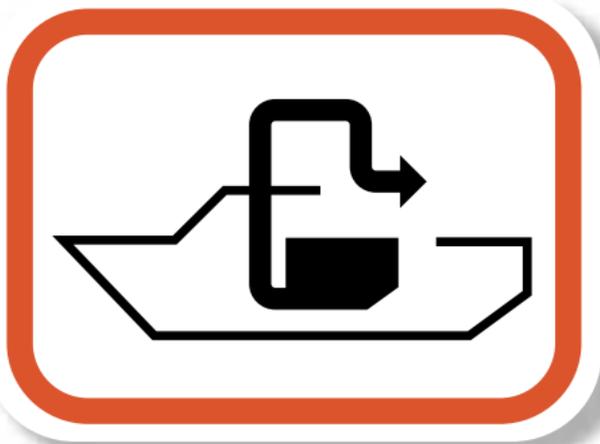


# The Clean Vessel Act

*Keep Our Water Clean—  
Use Pumpouts*



## What Is the Clean Vessel Act?

Congress passed the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) in 1992 to help reduce pollution from vessel sewage discharges. The Act established a five-year federal pumpout grant program administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and authorized \$40 million from the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund for use by the States. Federal funds can constitute up to 75% of all approved projects with the remaining funds provided by the States or marinas.

Reauthorized in 1998, Congress extended the pumpout grant program through 2003, providing \$50 million to continue to provide alternatives to overboard disposal of recreational boater sewage.

## What Happens When You Dump

Raw or poorly treated sewage can spread disease, contaminate shellfish beds and lower oxygen levels in water. Waterborne diseases including hepatitis, typhoid, and cholera can be transmitted by shellfish. Organic matter in sewage is decomposed in the water by bacteria. During this process, the bacteria use oxygen. As a result, sewage in the water may deplete the water's oxygen level, causing stress to fish and other aquatic animals.

Shellfish are filter feeders that eat tiny food particles filtered through their gills into their stomachs, along with bacteria from sewage. Shellfish can convey nearly all waterborne pathogens to humans.

Sewage contamination is measured in terms of fecal coliform levels—bacteria found in the intestines of all warm-blooded animals. Test results are expressed as the number of bacteria per 100 milliliters (ml) of water. Shellfish beds are closed when the coliform count reaches 14 per 100 ml of water. Public beaches are closed to swimmers when the coliform count reaches 200 per 100 ml of water.

Steve Farrell



In February 1995, The Journal of the American Medical Association reported that, for outbreaks of Norwalk Virus Gastroenteritis in 70 persons in Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland and North Carolina, who had eaten raw oysters, the source was a remote oyster bed in Louisiana. The journal concluded that the outbreak was traced to a specific commercial oyster harvester who disposed of his untreated sewage directly overboard into the oyster bed. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration was able to trace the cause to one individual because all of the Norwalk Virus tested had identical DNA sequence.

Areas most likely to be affected by sewage discharge are sheltered waters with low flushing rates, waters with significant recreational value, areas set aside for shellfish harvesting, State and Federally designated significant habitats such as those in Coastal Zone programs, as well as waters designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as “No Discharge Areas.”

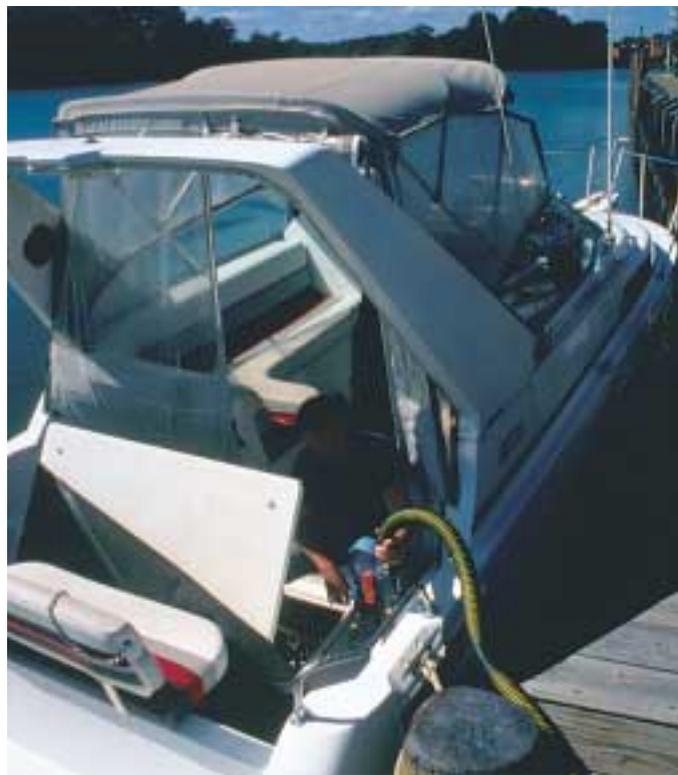
Currently, vessels use four types of sewage disposal systems. Many people on small boats use portable toilets which can be drained at dump stations, however, vessels over 26 feet in length typically have Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs). MSDs are available in three forms all of which can hold waste for disposal at a pumpout station.

## What We are Doing to Educate Boaters

The Clean Vessel Act provides a portion of its total funding for educational outreach regarding the effects of boater sewage and the means by which boaters can avoid improper sewage disposal.

The first goal aims to inform boaters of the importance of proper boater sewage disposal. Launched in February 1995, the awareness campaign has reached thousands of boaters through magazines, newspapers and television. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service released its awareness campaign products, including the pumpout symbol and slogan.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service established partnerships with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, marine industry



Alexis Grant, MD DNR

Alexis Grant, MD DNR



organizations and others to assist with outreach efforts. All nineteen known pumpout manufacturers in North America have taken a voluntary pledge to place the national pumpout symbol on each unit produced in the future. Together, these agencies and organizations work with marine interests to distribute materials and educate boaters on the use of pumpout and portable toilet dump stations. Other agencies and marine community groups are encouraged to join this partnership effort.

The Service helps sponsor the Marine Environmental Education Foundation's annual National Clean Boating Campaign, a partnership of over 650 federal, state and local agencies, and marinas, boatyards, boat dealers, trade associations, environmental organizations, Sea Grant programs, and individuals dedicated to clean boating. The Clean Boating Campaign is distributing fact sheets, including one on boat sewage control, which are reproduced and distributed to thousands of boaters across the nation. The Service is also helping the Foundation to develop and implement a National Environmental Excellence Award program which will recognize marinas, boatyards, boat dealers, yacht clubs and others for operating clean facilities and clean boating educational efforts.

The second goal informs boaters and marina operators of sewage disposal problems, educates them on the use and advantages of pumpout and dump stations, where to best locate such stations, and the fact that discharging untreated sewage on all fresh waters and any salt waters inside the 3 mile territorial limits of the United States is illegal. This effort will complement and unify existing State programs, sending one clear message: "Keep Our Water Clean—Use Pumpouts."

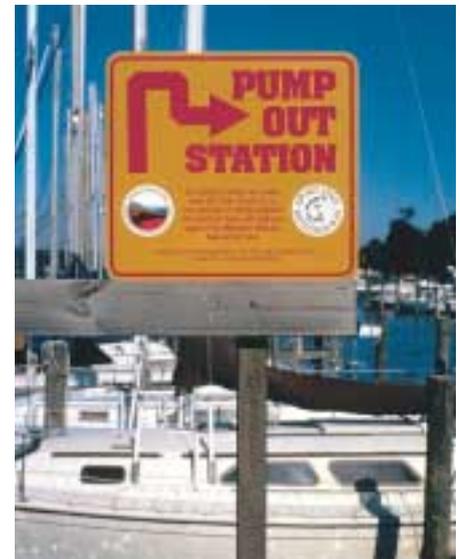
Major national CVA educational products include a poster distributed to more than 22,000 marinas, press and training packets, and various public service announcements for radio, television and print media. States are producing their own education products.

NOAA will mark pumpout and dump station locations on its nautical charts. Boaters and anglers, by calling 1 800/ASK FISH, a toll free number operated by the American Sportfishing Association, can find the location of pumpout and dump stations, and can report malfunctioning facilities.

## What the Act Does

The Act was created to provide a viable alternative to the overboard disposal of recreational boater sewage. All recreational vessels must have access to pumpouts funded under the Clean Vessel Act. The Act made grants available to the States on a competitive basis for the construction and/or renovation, operation and maintenance of pumpout and portable toilet dump stations. States may sub-grant to public and private marinas to install pumpouts. Since the Act's passage in 1992, grants have been awarded to install 2,800 pumpout stations and 1,700 dump stations. A maximum fee of \$5.00 may be charged for use of pumpout facilities constructed or maintained with grant funds.

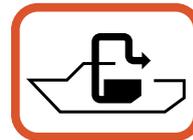
All Seasons Marina, a private marina in New Jersey, installed a new vacuum type pumpout system on its fuel dock in August of 1996. The Clean Vessel Act funded 75% of the cost and Owner Ralph Dilks reports, "There were as many pumpouts done over the next 30 days as had been done in the previous three years using a portable pumpout located on the inside of a marina. Our marina charges \$5 per pumpout, but customers don't ask



Alexis Grant, MD DNR

'how much'. They just say 'pump it out'. I really think that for my State to do this, it is a great thing. This program really works."

Massachusetts' Nantucket Island has seen customer attitudes to pumpouts improve over the years. Nantucket Boat Basin manager George Bassett Jr. has "found a huge change in the boater's attitude towards pumpouts. In the early years there was little demand, and I had to strongly urge it to be done. Now demand is high and they now expect it. If one boat is being pumped, the surrounding boats request a pumpout right then."



**KEEP OUR  
WATER CLEAN—  
USE PUMPOUTS**

On Lake Erie in Ohio, Battery Park has their CVA funded pumpouts located on their fuel dock. General Manager Carl Wolf said "Our dock staff does all the pumpouts, and likes the job. Boaters are so happy with our staffed service that they tip very well. Using that as an incentive to summer staff, I offer the pumpout station job mainly to the returning dock hand with the best work record from the previous year." Imagine getting pumped out by the best employee of the marina!

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Division of Federal Aid  
Room 140 ARLSQ  
4401 North Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703/358 1845**

**For information on pumpout and  
dump station locations, call  
1 800/ASK FISH**

