



## DON'T DUMP IT, PUMP IT!

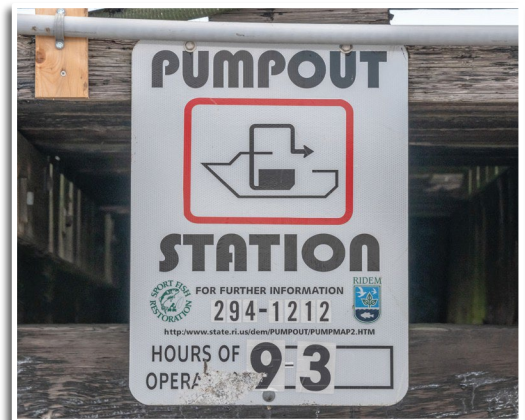
# MANAGING BOAT WASTE

## IN RHODE ISLAND'S NO DISCHARGE AREA

Rhode Island is a beautiful place and one of the best ways to enjoy our state is to spend time on, or in, the water – boating and fishing in Narragansett Bay and our coastal waters, and swimming at our magnificent beaches.

Clean water makes these recreational activities more enjoyable and healthy. Protecting water quality means guarding against pollution. One source of pollution is boat sewage discharges. No one wants to swim where there is sewage from boats, or eat contaminated shellfish, or sail through polluted waters. Properly managing boat sewage is something every boater can do – in fact, must do – to help protect the quality and health of Rhode Island's waters.

Since the 1970s, when the federal Clean Water Act was enacted, it has been illegal to discharge untreated boat sewage into inland, fresh waters, as well as the coastal waters of the United States. In 1998, Rhode Island took a bold step toward further protecting our marine waters by designating all of the state's coastal waters as a No Discharge Area. As result, the discharge of all boat sewage – treated and untreated – is prohibited in all of Rhode Island's inland, freshwaters, as well as the state's marine waters which extend seaward 3 miles from the shoreline and include all of Narragansett Bay.



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**HOW TO COMPLY WITH THE LAW**

• **Never discharge sewage in Rhode Island waters!**

However, discharge of greywater, a type of wastewater commonly from sinks, is permitted.

• **Ensure that you have a proper marine toilet:**

Recreational boats are not required to be equipped with a toilet, but if they are so equipped, the toilet must be a Coast Guard approved Marine Sanitation Device (MSD), either designed to hold sewage for shore-based disposal, or to treat sewage prior to disposal. There are 3 types of MSDs.

- *Type I MSDs* treat sewage by chemical means, e.g., maceration and chlorination.
- *Type II MSDs* treat sewage by biological means, e.g., bacteria.
- *Type III MSDs* have holding tanks, and are the most common type of MSD. They are designed to store sewage until it can be removed at a pumpout facility, and some also have the option to discharge overboard outside state waters (beyond 3 miles from shore which also extend out from the shores of Block Island).

Vessels up to 65 feet in length may have any type of MSD. Vessels over 65 feet in length must have a Type II or Type III MSD.

Portable toilets or “porta-potties” are not considered installed toilets and are not subject to the MSD regulations. They are fine to use, and particularly appropriate on small boats. If no other option is available buckets with secure lids are an alternative.

Only Type III MSDs and portable toilets can be used in Rhode Island waters. (Type I and Type II MSDs must be deactivated; see below.)

When operating or moored in Rhode Island waters (or any other No Discharge Area), MSDs must be properly secured or configured to prevent discharges at all times.

Type I and Type II MSDs must be secured to prevent use. Closing the seacock and either padlocking it or affixing a non-releasable wire tie or removing the seacock handle (with the seacock closed) are sufficient. Locking the door to the toilet is another acceptable method. Type III MSDs must be configured to ensure that all waste goes into the holding tank, and none goes overboard.

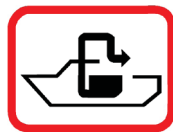
If your boat has no ability to discharge (i.e., no through-hull fitting), there’s nothing to worry about. However, if your boat has a through-hull fitting, allowing waste to be discharged overboard, the valve directing the flow of the waste must be pointed toward the holding tank and secured in place – by removing the handle, padlocking it, or affixing a non-releasable wire tie.

• **Ensure that your boat is compliant**

The RI No-Discharge Compliance Program, enacted as a state law in 2006, requires all boats with permanently installed marine toilets to be inspected and certified as being compliant with RI’s No-Discharge Law. In 1998 RI became the first state to make all its coastal waters (marine water < 3 miles from shore) a No-Discharge Zone. This is an EPA designation which prohibits the discharge of any sewage from boats/vessels, regardless of treatment. The RIDEM previously had an inspection and decal program to provide visual evidence of compliance with the no discharge requirements.

**Effective January 1, 2025, the inspection and decal requirements of vessels with permanently installed marine toilets was superseded by the distribution of educational materials regarding the proper securing of marine sanitation devices and compliance with RIGL § 46-12-39.1 at the time of boater registration.**

• **Use a pumpout facility**



Boats equipped with a holding tank (Type III MSD) or portable toilet may use any of the numerous pumpout facilities located throughout RI. To find the closest pumpout facility, visit [dem.ri.gov/nodischarge](http://dem.ri.gov/nodischarge).

**RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT COMPLYING WITH THE LAW**

In addition to impairing the quality of the waters that boaters use and enjoy—

The owner/operator of any vessel that discharges any sewage, treated or untreated, into RI waters, or fails to have a proper MSD, or fails to have the MSD properly secured, is subject to a fine up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Call the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management at 401-222-4700, scan the QR code below to visit [dem.ri.gov/nodischarge](http://dem.ri.gov/nodischarge), or contact your local marina or yacht club.



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