
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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The NHDES Boat Inspection Program

Keeping Sewage and Greywater Out of New Hampshire Lakes

The NHDES Boat Inspection program is currently suspended and is anticipated to return in the future.

The inspection verifies compliance with no discharge regulations and helps to ensure all boats on New Hampshire's lakes are not polluting by discharging wastewater.



What can you do until the program returns?

- Make sure you are pumping out your holding tanks regularly at pumpout stations. There may be no means of overboard discharge, either directly or indirectly (RSA 487:2).
 - Check out [NHDES' map of pumpout stations in New Hampshire waters](#).
- Check to see that your wastewater drains to a holding tank by flushing toilets and running water in sinks and showers. Have a friend watch outside the boat to see if any water drains to the lake.
- Check all your plumbing Y-valves to ensure they are disconnected. A Y-valve is a switch that allows boats to discharge wastewater either to a holding tank or overboard. Boats on the coast often have Y-valves for offshore disposal but they are not allowed in New Hampshire's inland lakes.
- Ask a marine professional to verify that your plumbing is set up in a way that directs wastewater to the holding tank and does not discharge to the lake.



History of Boating Wastewater Regulations

The state of New Hampshire has regulated boat sewage for over 60 years. Concerns about potential health risks and water quality degradation caused by boats discharging untreated sewage into state waters prompted the New Hampshire Legislature to enact a law to require treatment devices on marine toilets in 1957. While these macerator/chlorinator devices reduced fecal bacteria levels, they did not remove nutrients and organic material, which can degrade water quality over time. **The law was amended in 1967 to prohibit any sewage discharge from boats** (currently RSA 487:2, Marine Toilets and Disposal of Sewage from Boats). The law also contained provisions for enforcement by water pollution inspectors.

Since many boats are still manufactured with overboard discharge systems, New Hampshire sought special status under the federal Clean Water Act to designate all of the waters of the state as a "no-discharge" zone. In 1975, **New Hampshire was the first state to have this status granted**, establishing more stringent requirements for vessels brought to our lakes.

To prevent further degradation of water quality, the state passed an amendment to prohibit the discharge of sink and shower waste (greywater) as part of the “no-discharge” standard. The amendment also added the provision that **“no person shall knowingly launch into fresh waters of the state any boat which is not equipped in compliance with the provisions of this chapter.”**

Program Goals

Educate the boating public about proper disposal of human waste and greywater. Since the “no-discharge” law applies to all boats, regardless of the state where they are registered, educating both in-state and out-of-state boaters about New Hampshire’s strict “no-discharge” law is critical to the protection of the state’s fresh waters. NHDES encourages marinas, boating clubs and groups, and the boating fraternity to help spread the word about proper management of boat wastewater and its importance for protecting water quality.

Maintain excellent water quality in New Hampshire’s lakes. New Hampshire takes pride in the high quality of its lakes; however, improper disposal of boat waste is a significant threat to lake quality. Boat wastewater contains nutrients that promote the growth of cyanobacteria and algae while providing the necessary elements to increase native and invasive aquatic plant growth. Keeping our lakes free from these sources of pollution is an important goal of the Boat Inspection Program.

Provide for public health by ensuring that discharges from boats are not occurring in lakes. In addition to deteriorating lake quality, the discharge of human waste and greywater to lakes creates a significant health hazard. A number of diseases including cholera and hepatitis are water-borne and can be transmitted from human waste to those recreating in the waters. Similarly, greywater from sinks and showers may also contain harmful concentrations of microorganisms.

Let’s all do our part to keep New Hampshire’s lakes clean!

Please contact NHDES by email at CVA@des.nh.gov or by phone at [\(603\) 271-8803](tel:6032718803) if you have any questions about this or other related programs. For more information on the inspection program and other related topics, visit [the Clean Vessel Act program's webpage](#).

For more information on the federal No Discharge Zones visit the [EPA's website on the federal No Discharge Zones](#).

