Sea Grant
Washington

NEWS RELEASE

All Pumped Up: Boaters Set New Record for Protecting Local Waters

Pumpout boats, public education, and collaboration with marinas divert 8 million gallons of onboard sewage to onshore treatment in 2015.

In 2014, Pumpout Washington, a joint project of Washington Sea Grant and Washington State Parks, helped divert a record 6 million gallons of raw sewage from Puget Sound, Lake Washington, and other state waterways. Now the 2015 numbers are in and they blow 2014's record away. More than 8.3 million gallons that would previously have been dumped into vulnerable waterways were instead collected for safe onshore treatment, thanks largely to training, outreach, and federal funds provided by the pumpout program.

A strong economy and low fuel prices may have contributed to the surge by encouraging boaters to spend more time (and produce more waste) afloat. But Al Wolslegel, the Washington State Parks Clean Vessel Program's manager, also sees other reasons. "Our educational outreach has increased awareness of the impact on the environment," he says, "and pumping out has become the correct thing to do. Boaters are taking advantage of the increase in the number and reliability of pumpouts."

Wolslegel notes that "marina owners and managers are more aware of federal grant funds to install pumpouts and the operation and maintenance assistance that goes with them."

He and Washington Sea Grant Boating Specialist Aaron Barnett each visited 60 to 70 marinas last year to educate operators about the program. Year round they reach out to

boaters at boat shows, yacht clubs, maritime festivals, and other venues, educating them about importance of pumping out and the threat that dumped sewage poses to marine life and human health. Barnett and Sea Grant volunteers have distributed hands-free adapters, which make pumping out cleaner and easier, to more than 9,000 of the state's 20,000 boaters with onboard loos.

Collections have also gotten a boost in the last two years from the launch of pumpout boats at marinas in Tacoma, at Semiahmoo, and on the Snake River. A free roaming pumpout service launched in September 2013 on underserved Lake Washington has been especially successful. Last year it collected 210,000 gallons from 1,031 boaters. Private pumpout operators on Lake Union and Portage Bay, who feared losing business to this sponsored free service, have instead seen their volumes grow, thanks apparently to Pumpout Washington's education efforts.

"Boaters want to pump out if they're given the opportunity," says Wolslegel. Washington Sea Grant works with State Parks to provide that opportunity. In 2016, they hope to divert 10 million gallons of sewage.

The Clean Vessel Program is supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sportfish Restoration Fund from special taxes on recreational boats, fishing gear, and boat fuel. See pumpoutwashington.org for a Google map showing all 150 CVA pumpout locations in Washington.

If your yacht club or other organization would like hands-free, spill-free pumpout adapters for its members, contact Washington Sea Grant's Aaron Barnett at 206.616.8929 or aaronb5@uw.edu. Lake Washington boaters may schedule pumpouts at terryandsonsmobilepumpout.com, 206.437.6764.