

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Using Green Energy to Protect Clean Water on the Pend Oreille River**

*Cusick and Washington State Parks' Clean Vessel Program install Eastern Washington's first solar-powered pumpout station.*

Washington's Northeast corner now has its first facility to pump out boaters' onboard holding tanks so the waste can be properly treated and disposed of. Eastern Washington, which has abundant sunshine and a fast-growing recreational boating community, now has its first solar-powered pumpout station. And the fishermen, water skiers, duck hunters, and others who flock to the Pend Oreille River have new assurance that the waters they enjoy will stay clean and healthy.

Later this month, the City of Cusick will start up its new all-solar pumpout station, funded by a grant from the Washington State Parks Department's Clean Vessel Act (CVA) Program. The facility is unusual not only for its off-the-grid power source but because it includes twin pumpout tanks to accommodate both boats and recreational vehicles, which require different fittings. Boaters will use it when they pull their vessels from the water; the sewage removed will go straight to Cusick's municipal treatment system.

"We wanted to kill two birds with one stone," explained Cusick Mayor Bob Spencer, who played a key role pulling the project together. "We're getting a lot more boat traffic up here." The new station will ensure that boaters aren't forced to discharge waste in the river, which would violate state and federal law and possibly endanger both water quality and human health.

"This is the first pumpout station we've done," said Dan Upton, co-owner of Brothers Electric & Solar in Spokane, which installed the system. Spencer and Al Wolslegel, Washington Parks' Clean Vessel Program manager, were nevertheless pleased at how smoothly the installation went. "Going solar is a good idea in a project like this, especially for remote locations," Upton added. "Sometimes bringing the grid to a remote area is much more expensive than a solar installation." With proper care, he added, the system's maintenance-free batteries should last 10 to 15 years. The solar panels themselves "should still have 80 to 90 percent of their function after 25 years."

The innovative new station is part of a broader expansion of Cusick's waterfront park facilities, including a new boat launch and ball courts. It's also a demonstration project for what Wolslegel hopes will be more state-funded, solar-powered pumpout stations in Eastern Washington.

Washington State Parks, in partnership with Washington Sea Grant, works statewide to help marina owners install and operate pumpout stations, inform them about clean marina practices, and educate boaters about the importance of proper waste disposal.

All this is funded by federal taxes on marine fuel, recreational boats, and fishing gear. Washington Sea Grant also distributes free adapter kits for cleaner, easier hands-free pumping. And it has used funds from the State Parks Clean Vessel Program to create a Google map showing all 146 CVA pumpout sites statewide, at [www.pumpoutwashington.org](http://www.pumpoutwashington.org). Yacht clubs and other organizations that would like free pumpout adapters for their members should contact Aaron Barnett at (206) 616-8929 or [aaronb5@uw.edu](mailto:aaronb5@uw.edu).

*Washington Sea Grant, based at the University of Washington, provides statewide marine research, outreach and education services. The National Sea Grant College Program is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. [www.wsg.washington.edu](http://www.wsg.washington.edu)*

