

No Discharge Area For ALL of Rhode Island's Marine Waters

Under the federal Clean Water Act it is illegal to discharge untreated (raw) sewage from a vessel within 3 miles of shore (the territorial waters) of the United States, the Great Lakes and navigable rivers. On August 10, 1998 the state of Rhode Island took a step toward ensuring better water quality in marine waters by designating their coastal waters as a No Discharge Area (NDA). The Rhode Island waters include territorial seas within three miles of shore, including all of Narragansett Bay. A No Discharge Area is a designated body of water in which the discharge of *treated* and *untreated* boat sewage is prohibited (this does not include greywater or sink water).

Health Protection:

Sewage wastes discharged from boats may degrade water quality by introducing microorganisms, nutrients, and chemical products into the marine environment.

- Microorganisms, which include pathogens, and bacteria, may introduce diseases like hepatitis, typhoid fever and gastroenteritis to people in contact

with the water, and can contaminate shellfish beds.

- Nutrients are necessary for the growth of microscopic plants and larger plants (seaweeds and eelgrass). However, when nutrients become too abundant they stimulate algae blooms which leads to depletion of oxygen in the water. Depletion of oxygen in water (called Hypoxia) can stress and even kill fish and other aquatic animals.
- Chemical products can be toxic to marine and estuarine life and could pose a problem in areas where boats congregate and where there is little tidal flushing.

Complying with vessel sewage discharge laws and regulations, and using pumpout facilities, are a necessary step to protect public health, water quality, and the marine environment.

Marine Sanitation Devices (Boat Toilets):

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

Type I MSDs discharge treated effluent having a fecal coliform bacterial count not greater than 1000 per 100 milliliters of water and no visible floating solids.

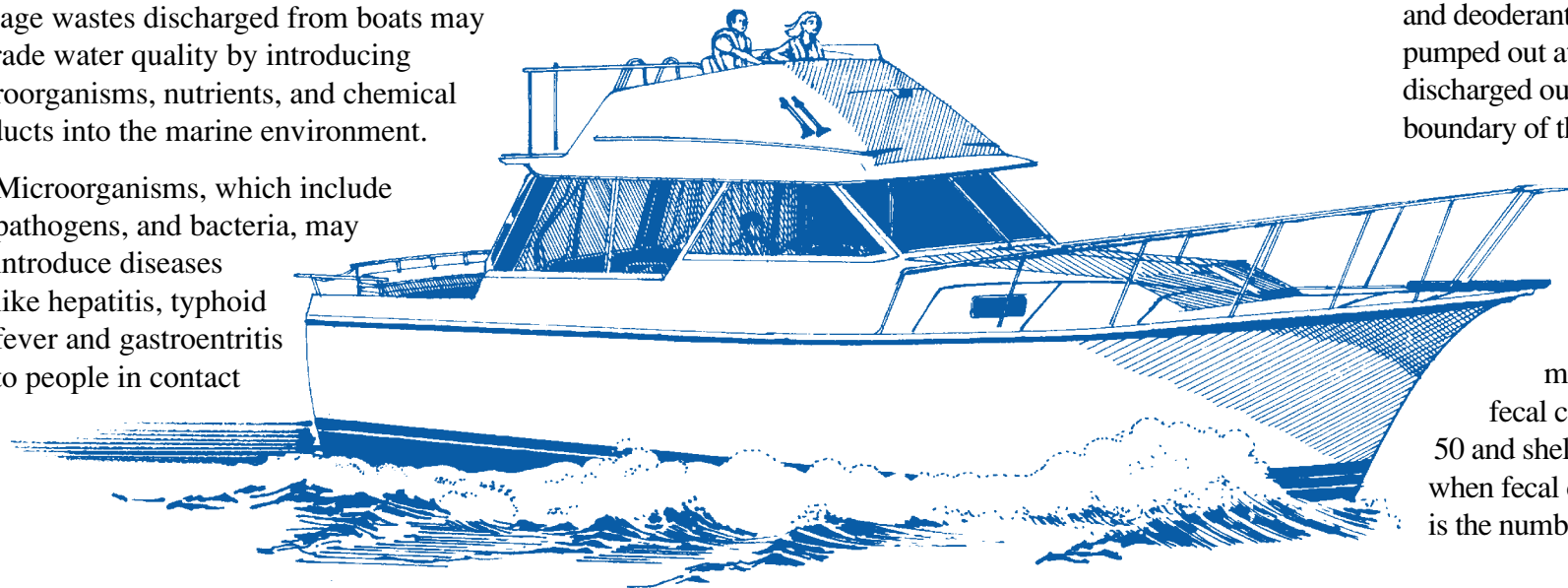
Type II MSDs discharge treated effluent having a fecal coliform bacterial count of less than 200 per 100 milliliters and suspended solids not greater than 150 milligrams per liter.

Type III MSDs are devices designed to store sewage (usually with disinfectants and deodorants added) until it can be pumped out at a pumpout facility or discharged outside the territorial seas boundary of three miles from shore.

these are commonly known as holding tanks.

As a point of comparison, swimming is prohibited when fecal coliform counts exceed 50 and shellfish beds are closed when fecal counts exceed 14 (this is the number of colony-forming

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units of fecal coliform per 100 milliliters—or about one teacup of water).

Vessels 65 feet in length and under may install a Type I, Type II or Type III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet in length must install a Type II or Type III.

Portable toilets or “porta-potties” are not considered installed toilets and are not subject to the MSD regulations. They are, however, subject to the disposal regulations which prohibit the disposal of raw sewage within the 3 mile limit or territorial waters of the United States, the Great Lakes, or navigable rivers.

A Type III MSD and “porta-potties” are the only sanitary equipment that can be used in a No Discharge Area.

Managing Boat Waste in a No Discharge Area

When operating a No Discharge Area a Type I and Type II MSD must be secured in some way to prevent discharge. Closing the seacock and padlocking it, using a non-releasable wire tie, or removing the seacock handle (with the seacock closed) would be sufficient. Locking the door of the head with a padlock or door handle key lock is another acceptable method of securing the MSD while in a No Discharge Area.

Boats with Type I and Type II Marine Sanitation Devices may discharge treated effluent in coastal waters UNLESS they are in a No Discharge Area. A Type III MSD is the only type that can be used legally in a No discharge Area. In Rhode Island marine waters a Type I or Type II MSD must be secured.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

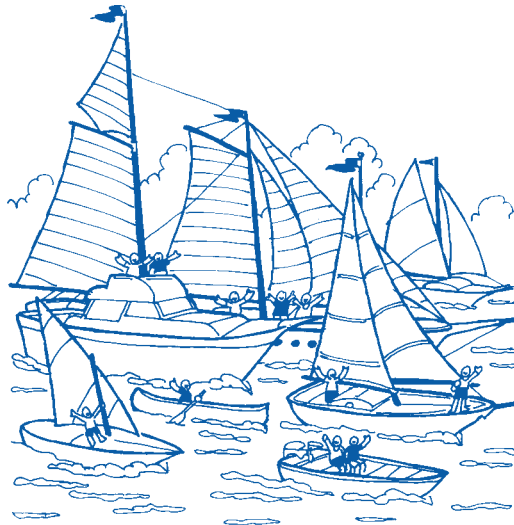
about RI’s No discharge Area designation **CONTACT:**

- Rhode Island Department of Environment Management (DEM) at **(401) 222-3961**
- your local marina or yacht club
- or the following websites:

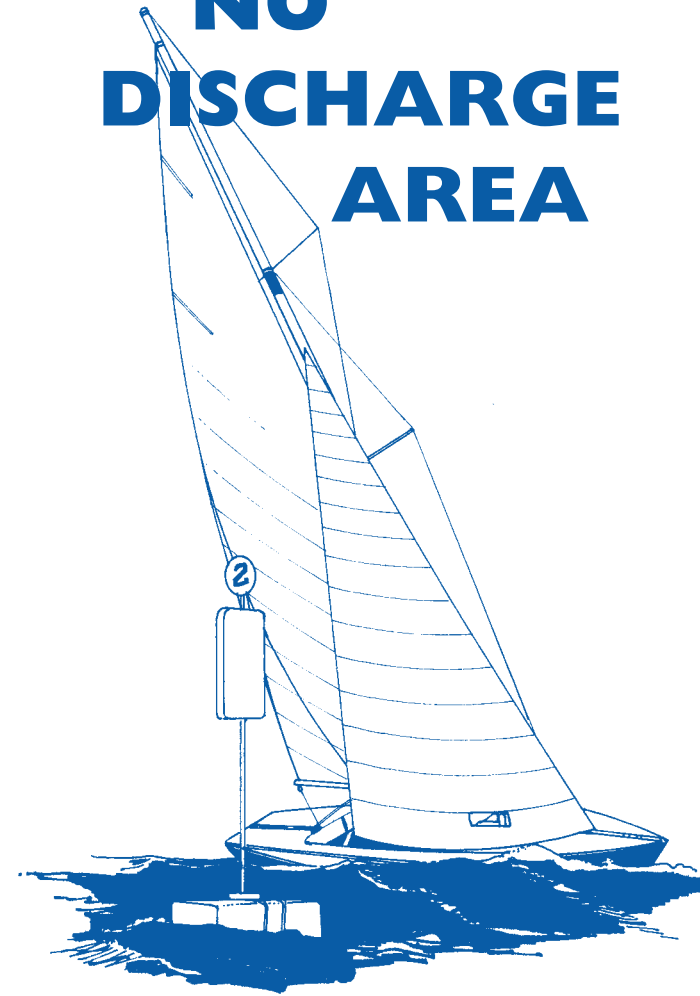
<http://www.state.ri.us/dem/pumpout/index.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/region01/eco/nodiscrg/index.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/oceans/regs/vesseldischarge.html>



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