

# Focus On: Graywater and Sewage Discharges from Recreational Vessels



## More information

The No Discharge Zone protects shellfish beds, beaches, public health and overall water quality from bacteria in vessel sewage.

<http://www.ecology.wa.gov/NDZ>

## Contact information

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## Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6831 or visit <http://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

## What is Graywater and Blackwater (sewage)?

Graywater is wastewater from galley drains, dishwasher, laundry, sinks, and showers onboard a vessel. Graywater is different than raw sewage, or blackwater. Blackwater is liquid or solid waste from toilets.

## State Water Quality Standard

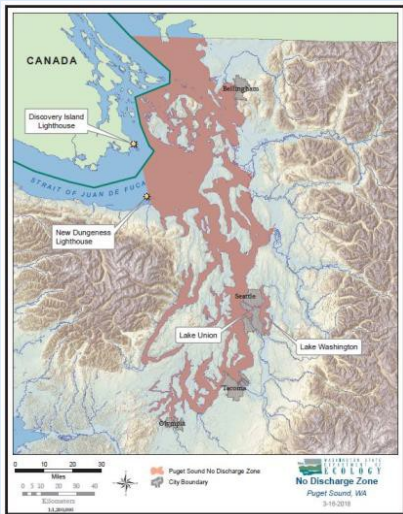
Recreational vessel operators must follow requirements for disposal of graywater while in Washington waters. Graywater discharges are regulated under the federal Clean Water Act, the state Water Pollution Control Act, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 90.48.080, and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-201A.

## Graywater: General recommendations for vessel operators

- Minimize the production and discharge of graywater while nearshore, in shallow water, or in a bay.
- Reduce the impact of graywater:
  - Don't drain cooking or kitchen oils to your graywater system.
  - No oil should be discharged in quantities that violate water quality standards or cause a visible sheen, film, sludge, or emulsion on the water, in the water, or on the shoreline.
  - Scrape and wipe food and oil residue from dishes as much as possible before placing in wash or rinse water that will be discharged with graywater.
  - Use only phosphate-free and non-toxic soaps and detergents.
  - We strongly encourage you to move farther than one nautical mile from shore (or as far as is safe for your vessel, up to one nautical mile) before discharging your graywater overboard.



The NDZ includes marine waters of Washington State inward from the line between New Dungeness Lighthouse and the Discovery Island Lighthouse to the Canadian border, and fresh waters of Lake Washington, Lake Union, and the connecting waters between them and Puget Sound.



For a larger map:

<http://www.ecology.wa.gov/NDZ>

Find pumpout stations at:

<https://pumpoutwashington.org/>

## Pollution regulations and what to watch for if discharging graywater

State law forbids discharges which cause pollution. This includes creating an oil sheen, film, sludge, or foam. Bacteria and nutrients in a discharge, such as phosphorus or nitrogen, could also cause noncompliance with state water quality standards.

WAC 173-201 is the overall state standard for marine and fresh water quality. Discharges of graywater or sewage must not adversely affect water uses, the most sensitive marine life dependent upon those waters, or public health. Learn more at [www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/index.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/index.html).

## Reporting violations

If your discharge causes an oily sheen or sludge to form, you must contact:

- Washington Emergency Management at (800) 258-5990 or (800) OILS-911, **AND**
- U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center at (800) 424-8802

## Puget Sound is now a No Discharge Zone (NDZ)

It is now illegal for any vessel to discharge treated or untreated blackwater (sewage) into Puget Sound. The rule is effective as of May 10, 2018. For disposal of sewage, use [sewage pumpouts](#), portable toilet dump stations, or mobile pumpout services.

## How to manage vessel sewage in the NDZ

### Type I or Type II treatment devices

Vessels with these treatment Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs) must secure the devices to prohibit the discharge of treated sewage while in the NDZ. Acceptable methods include:

- Closing the seacock and removing the handle;
- Padlocking the seacock in the closed position;
- Using a non-releasable wire-tie to hold the seacock in the closed position; or
- Locking the door to the space enclosing the toilets with a padlock or door handle key lock.

### Type III holding tanks

Use stationary pumpouts, mobile pumpouts, pumping services (such as barges or trucks), or follow discharge requirements outside the NDZ.

### Without Installed toilets

Vessels without installed toilets must dispose of any collected sewage from portable toilets or other containment devices at facilities in a manner that complies with state law (ashore in a proper facility).

## Clean, Green Boating information

Ecology's [Clean, Green Boating](#) campaign encourages boat owners and operators to be good stewards of our environment.