

# Focus on: Puget Sound No Discharge Zone Guidance for Commercial Vessels, Port Authorities and Terminal Agents



Cargo vessel in Puget Sound

## Puget Sound is a No Discharge Zone

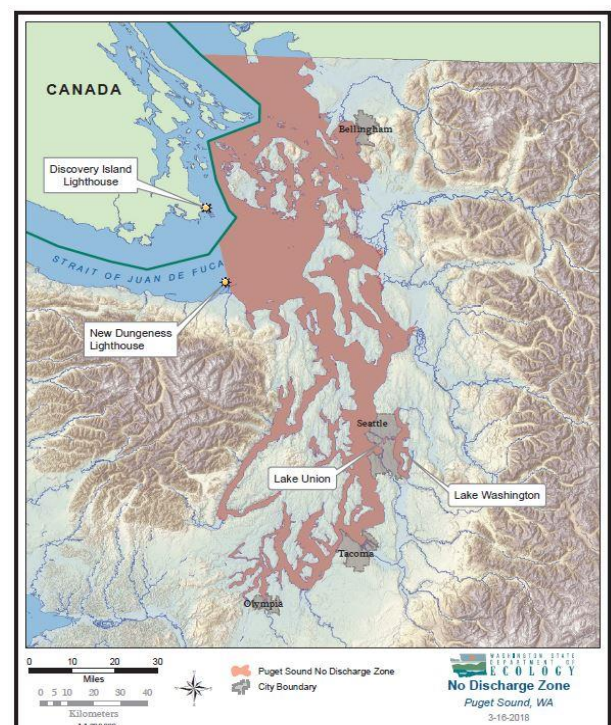
In May 2018 it became illegal to discharge treated or untreated blackwater (sewage) into Puget Sound (WAC 173-228). This means vessels must store their sewage until they can safely dispose of it at an onshore or mobile pumpout facility, or hold it until it can be discharged in the open ocean beyond three miles from shore. The No Discharge Zone (NDZ) does not affect graywater discharges.

A small group of vessels: tug boats, commercial fishing vessels, small commercial passenger vessels (<249 overnight passengers), and NOAA research and survey vessels have until May 10, 2023 to comply with the NDZ. The NDZ is effective now for all other vessels, including recreational vessels and (non-fishing) commercial vessels.

### Vessels, Ports and Agents Play a Key Role

All individuals involved in getting commercial vessels, such as cargo/container vessels, into and out of a Puget Sound port need to know about the NDZ and how to manage vessel sewage. Planning for proper sewage management and disposal *before* entering the NDZ is vital. This focus sheet includes tips to help commercial vessels like cargo/container vessels, and people who work with them in Puget Sound, to comply with the requirements of the NDZ.

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 and to Puget Sound.



## Tips for Vessels:

### While in Canadian waters or west of the New Dungeness Lighthouse:

- Check your blackwater tank capacity and the approximate daily volume generated.
- Secure your vessel's Type I or II MSD to prohibit the discharge of sewage in the NDZ. To do this, lock the seacock in the closed position (with a padlock or zip tie) or lock the toilet door.
- Maximize your vessel's holding capacity for sewage by pumping out Type III holding tanks or discharging while in the open ocean (beyond 3 miles from shores and outside any NDZ).

### Before proceeding to a port facility:

- Contact the port authority to determine how long you should expect to wait before accessing the terminal. Multi-day waits are common, especially in the summer months.
- Based on that and your holding tank capacity, you may need to employ a pumpout service (e.g., barge) before entering the port.
- If you have enough tank capacity to make it to the terminal, consider hiring a land-based pumper truck to alleviate capacity concerns for the time it may take to unload and leave the NDZ. At some terminals, pumper trucks can only access vessels during Longshore Labor breaks, which significantly limits how much they can pump out during your stay.
- Terminal agents can help arrange pumpouts.

## Tips for Port Authorities:

Ports can help ensure vessels using their facilities know the environmental regulations. Port staff can:

- Provide basic training and information on NDZ requirements to port staff and agents
- Provide information to vessels about the NDZ rule and how to comply. Staff can also refer vessels to [ecology.wa.gov/NDZ](https://ecology.wa.gov/NDZ).
- Install NDZ signage at terminals and other port facilities. Ecology offers free NDZ signs.

## Tips for Terminal Agents/Servicing Companies:

Agents have direct interactions with vessels, so it is important that agents understand the NDZ and help vessels when possible. Agents can:

- Provide basic training and information on NDZ requirements to staff
- Remind vessels about the NDZ and how to comply
- Coordinate pumpout services for vessels

## Why is Puget Sound a No Discharge Zone?

The NDZ helps prevent vessel sewage pollution from harming shellfish beds, beaches, and water quality. The Puget Sound NDZ is just one of over 90 NDZs across the United States.

Puget Sound is a unique and sensitive environment. While multiple sources of pollution exist, vessel sewage is one known and preventable source of bacteria and nutrients. Vessel sewage is concentrated and mobile, so it could have a big impact if discharged over a sensitive area like a shellfish bed.

## Report Illegal Discharges

Please report all illegal discharges in the NDZ to Ecology. Call 206-594-0000 or email [nwroerts@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:nwroerts@ecy.wa.gov) and provide as much information about the vessel as possible. Reports can be anonymous.

## Related Information

- [NDZ Commercial vessel webpage](#)
- [List of pumpout options for commercial vessels](#)

### Contact information

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### ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6600 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341