



FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

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# Bulletin

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bob Pacific 703-358-2156

## NEW FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM TO HELP KEEP WATERWAYS CLEAN

A new Federal grant program established under the Clean Vessel Act will soon make it easier for boaters to dispose of human waste in an environmentally safe manner.

The 5-year Federal Aid grant program to be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide boaters more places to get rid of waste by awarding money to the states for construction of pumpout and dump stations. Pumpout stations are used to pump waste out of recreational boat holding tanks. Dump stations are used to empty portable toilets.

The funding will come from the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, commonly referred to as the Wallop-Breaux Fund. That fund results from a 10-percent excise tax on fishing equipment and a 3-percent tax on electric trolling motors and sonar fish finders, a portion of the Federal fuels tax, and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats.

The Service will publish draft technical guidelines during April in the Federal Register. The proposed guidelines will outline instructions on developing surveys, education programs, and planning for the construction of pumpout and dump stations at marinas. They will also identify the waters most likely to be affected by sewage from vessels, define what constitutes adequate and reasonably available facilities, and outline appropriate types and locations of facilities for construction. There will be a 45-day public comment period on the proposal.

Not only does the new program benefit boaters who will have more numerous and convenient facilities to use, but also the general public. Discharging waste into waters introduces disease-carrying microorganisms which contaminate aquatic environments and significantly impair their recreational value. People are put at risk by eating shellfish taken from, and by swimming in, affected bodies of water.

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In addition, decaying wastes can reduce oxygen levels in the water, making it difficult for fish and other marine species to breathe.

During the 5-year program, a total of \$40 million will be available for grants with \$5 million available this year. The Federal Government's share is 75 percent. When the technical guidelines become final in June 1993, states can begin applying for grants. The grants will be awarded competitively, with all states eligible to apply for construction grants as well as education programs. Coastal states can also apply for grants to conduct surveys and develop plans for installing pumpout and dump stations. Priority will be given to those coastal states constructing pumpouts in accordance with an approved plan. Because nearly 80 percent of U.S. marinas are privately owned, priority also will be given to states proposing public/private partnerships and innovative approaches to increasing the availability and use of pumpout and dump stations.

Information on the program can be obtained by writing to: Chief, Division of Federal Aid, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Room 322 ARLSQ, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203 or by calling 703-358-2156.