

Focus on Proposed Puget Sound Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone

What is a No Discharge Zone?

A No Discharge Zone (NDZ) is a designated body of water where the discharge of toilet sewage (black water) from boats, whether treated or not, is prohibited. There are 90 NDZs in 26 states. Washington state has none. Consistent with the state's [Puget Sound Action Agenda](#) to restore the sound, the Department of Ecology is considering filing a petition requesting a NDZ for Puget Sound, Lake Washington, and their connecting waters.

Why no discharge for Puget Sound?

Puget Sound is a unique, sensitive water body. Its limited tidal flushing makes it prone to poor water quality conditions. Parts of Puget Sound are listed for bacterial pollution and low dissolved oxygen problems. These lead to restrictions on harvests of vast shellfish resources and harm to aquatic life.

Vessel sewage is one of many Puget Sound pollutant sources Ecology addresses. Marine sanitation devices (MSDs) typically do not meet state standards for water quality and public health protection. And, unlike pollution sources on land, vessels move throughout Puget Sound, creating the potential of discharges over or near sensitive areas such as shellfish beds and beaches. A NDZ can address this source of preventable pollution.

Ecology works to address all pollution sources, including stormwater runoff, failing septic tanks, combined sewer overflows, industrial and sewage treatment point sources and agricultural runoff.

What is the status of the Puget Sound NDZ?

For four years, Ecology has examined whether a NDZ would be appropriate and feasible for protecting water quality and public health in all or part of Puget Sound. In 2014, Ecology provided a draft of a petition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a 60-day public comment period and received more

WHY IT MATTERS

Sewage is pollution that harms water quality and public health.

Bacteria can put shellfish and public health at risk and harm aquatic life.

Ecology's NDZ website:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/nonpoint/CleanBoating/nodischargezone.html

Ecology completed a public comment period in April 2014. All input will be considered in a final decision on whether to proceed with a NDZ and under what terms with a potential final petition to EPA expected March 2016 at the earliest.

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Special accommodations

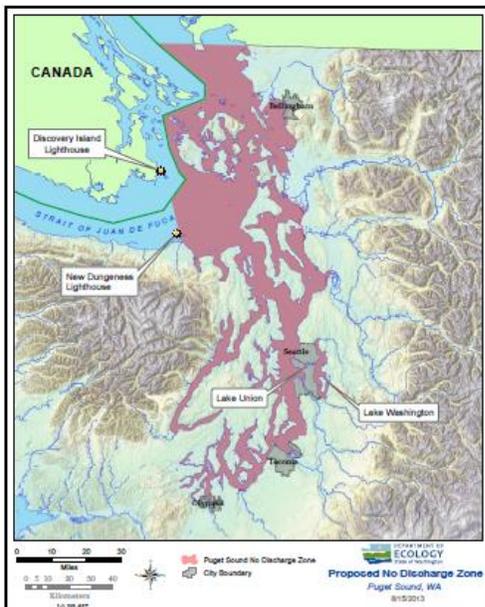
If you need this document in a format for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at [reception phone number].

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

than 25,000 e-mails and letters in support and about 550 identifying concerns. Ecology prepared a [response](#) to these comments.

Puget Sound has more than 115 stationary and mobile recreational pump-out stations and 15 commercial stationary pump-outs, with work in progress to add more pump-out stations for commercial vessels. Ecology is looking at a phased timeline for certain commercial vessels that currently rely on limited treatment systems and would need complex retrofits to holding tanks. All research and input will be considered in a final decision on whether to proceed with a NDZ and under what terms with a potential final petition expected March 2016 at the earliest.

The 2014 draft NDZ petition applied to all recreational and commercial vessels. It included Washington's marine waters from the New Dungeness lighthouse inward, Lake Washington, and all the water bodies that connect the lake to Puget Sound. The draft NDZ identified a boundary line drawn between the lighthouses at New Dungeness east of Port Angeles and Discovery Island east of Victoria. The NDZ would include Washington waters east of that line (*see map, below*).



What is the NDZ Process?

A state can petition the EPA to establish a NDZ under the [Clean Water Act](#) (Section 312 (f)(3)), using one of three approaches: 1) the water body requires greater protection and has adequate pump-out facilities; 2) protection and enhancement of a water body requires a NDZ; pumpout capacity is not required under this approach; 3) there is a drinking water intake. Ecology's draft included plans to apply under the first approach by verifying that adequate pump-out facilities exist.

Ecology conducted a detailed four-year evaluation process that has produced [ten reports](#) on vessel populations and sewage management, Puget Sound conditions and modeling,

pumpouts, cost/benefit, and implementation strategies. This work coincided with extensive stakeholder outreach and public input.

Under the Clean Water Act, EPA reviews any final petition, and, if it is accepted, a Puget Sound NDZ proposal would be published in the Federal Register for formal comment prior to a final determination.

How does a NDZ affect boaters and vessel operators?

Recreational boaters with existing holding tanks would need to continue to hold their sewage (black water) within the NDZ. They would either use pump-out facilities or discharge outside of the NDZ and beyond three miles. Recreational boaters with a Type I or Type II MSD would need to add a holding tank and not discharge any treated or untreated sewage in the NDZ.

Commercial vessels would also need to hold their sewage, treated or untreated, while in the NDZ and either use a pump-out facility or discharge outside of the NDZ and beyond three miles or outside of the NDZ with a certified Type II MSD.

What about graywater?

The NDZ does not affect graywater discharges. Ecology’s [Clean Green Boating website](#) has information on best management practices and requirements for graywater as well as other boat and vessel activities such as fueling, bilge care and hull cleaning.

NDZ timeline



A potential final petition is expected in March 2016 at the earliest.