

FACT SHEET

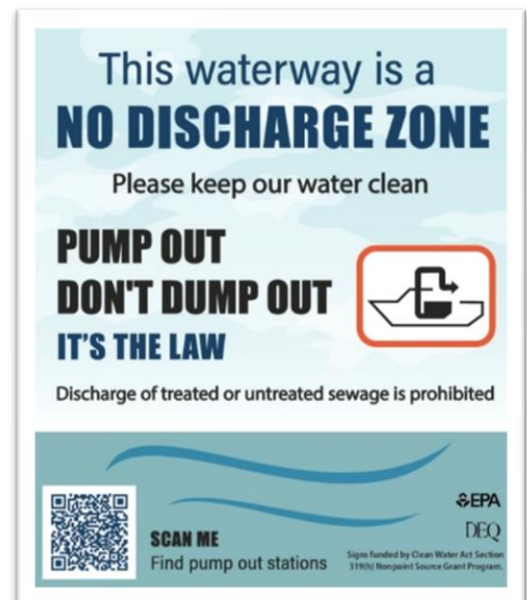
Vessel Sewage No-Discharge Zones

Overview

A Vessel Sewage No-Discharge Zone (NDZ) is a waterway where the discharge of both untreated and treated sewage from all vessels is prohibited under the federal Clean Water Act. This Fact Sheet describes what that means for vessel operators and for vessel sewage pump-out facilities. It also provides information about why and how waterways are designated as NDZs.

What does an NDZ mean for vessel operators and marina owners operating within an NDZ?

- Any through-hull fitting valves capable of allowing a discharge of sewage from a Marine Sanitation Device (MSD) must be secured in a closed position (ex. non-releasable wire tie, padlock to secure the seacock in a closed position, removing the y-valve handle, etc.). The method chosen must present a physical barrier to the use of the y-valve or toilet.
- Portable toilets or Type 3 MSDs (holding tanks) can continue to be used if valves capable of allowing discharge are secured in a closed position to prevent discharge.
- Treated and untreated sewage can be disposed of at an onshore pump-out facility or beyond three nautical miles from the U.S. coast.
- Gray water from showers and sinks may still be discharged.
- Sewage properly treated with an MSD Type 1 or Type 2 can be discharged outside of designated NDZs and beyond three nautical miles from the U.S. coast.
- Marinas within a designated NDZ are required by law to notify boat patrons leasing slips and display an NDZ sign. For more information about signs, please see contact information on the flip side of this Fact Sheet.



Why do we establish NDZs in Virginia?

- Virginia law (HB1774, HB1943) requires that all tidal creeks be designated as NDZs.
- Discharges of raw and partially treated sewage may introduce disease-causing microorganisms, nutrients, metals, and toxins to the marine environment. Ingesting contaminated water or shellfish can cause illness.
- Chemicals used in MSD treatment systems and additives used in holding tanks can be harmful to marine life.

- Sewage may also contain organic matter and nutrients that reduce the amount of oxygen in the water that is needed for marine life.
- Vessel sewage can have a disproportionately negative impact on water quality.
- A single discharge can be detected up to one square mile away.
- Shellfish beds, swimming areas, and fishing areas may be closed because of sewage contamination.

How can boaters help improve and protect water quality in Virginia?

- Use pump-outs and dump stations to empty your MSDs and portable toilets. Scan the QR code for pump-out facility locations.
- Report inoperable pump-out stations by calling the Virginia Department of Health Marina Program at 804-864-7467.
- Spread the word!



How is a waterway designated as an NDZ?

- Local stakeholders and the state of Virginia work together to apply to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the designation.
- The application must demonstrate environmental need, adequate vessel sewage pump-out facilities, and support for NDZ implementation.
- EPA reviews the application and seeks additional public comment before deciding to designate the NDZ.

Where are Virginia's NDZs?

- Middlesex County: Broad Creek, Jackson Creek, and Fishing Bay
- Virginia Beach: Lynnhaven River
- Gloucester County: Sarah Creek and Perrin River
- Bedford, Pittsylvania, Franklin Counties: Smith Mountain Lake

How is an NDZ enforced?

- Violations are considered a Class 1 misdemeanor.
- Public education is an important component of NDZ implementation and success.

For more information, please go to <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/water/water-quality/implementation/no-discharge-zone-program> or contact Anne Schlegel, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality at Anne.Schlegel@deq.virginia.gov.