

Smith Mountain Lake Vessel Pump Out and Education Program 2025 Final Report



**A cooperative program provided by:
Smith Mountain Lake Association
Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission
Virginia Department of Health**

Final Report Prepared by: Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission

Introduction

In late 2024, the Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission (TLAC) was asked by the Smith Mountain Lake Association (SMLA) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to once again partner with their organizations for the administration and operation of a vessel pump out program on Smith Mountain Lake in 2025. The proposed program would continue to rely on the use of two trucks to handle the vessel pump outs. TLAC accepted this invitation to partner with the two agencies to handle the administration and personnel portions of the program for the 2025 boating season. TLAC subsequently entered into an agreement with the SMLA, and a separate agreement with the VDH for the management of this program.

Overview

The 2025 program began on June 20. The approved budget included five workers. Two individuals completed the application process, were hired and began work on June 20th manning the equipment and providing the pump out services. These employees worked each Friday and Saturday. Educational materials were given to each boat owner at the time of pump out service and were distributed to other boaters housed at several Smith Mountain Lake marinas. Additional educational materials were made available at marinas for interested boaters and visitors to pick up. Boaters were also provided with educational materials using an email distribution list.

Weekly sewage collection and operations data were provided to the TLAC Vessel Pump Out Committee and Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Safety & Waterborne Hazards. The TLAC Vessel Pump Out Committee was made up of three SMLA representatives and two TLAC office staff members. The administration, oversight, and recordkeeping for the program were handled by TLAC office staff. The weekend oversight of the pump out operations was handled by SMLA representatives from the Vessel Pump Out Committee.

Financial

In December of 2024, TLAC submitted a grant proposal to the VDH to secure funding for the 2025 pump out program. This proposal was approved and provided 75 percent of the funding required. A grant reimbursement request was submitted by TLAC to VDH at the end of the program. VDH's grant included a 75 percent share of costs for the administration of the program. TLAC contributed the local match of 25 percent for program administration. Office staff tracked all hours utilized for program oversight and recordkeeping. The SMLA contributed the local match of 25 percent required for the program operations. The initial contribution of \$2,089.35 was provided to TLAC in July 2025. SMLA is responsible for a second contribution for 25 percent of remaining actual program expenses.

The total known expenditures for this year's Pump Out Program are \$19,131.65. VDH's 75 percent of the approved grant costs were \$14,348.74. The SMLA's 25 percent of the approved grant program operation costs was \$1,581.11. Initially SMLA provided \$2,089.35 for anticipated expenses, and their overpayment of \$508.24 will be credited towards future program expenses. TLAC's 25 percent of administration costs were \$3,201.80. VDH was responsible for truck storage in the amount of \$1,800.00.

It is important to note that 2025 expenses were much less than anticipated because of difficulty in hiring adequate staff to man the program. The 2025 calendar called for starting the program on May 17th for thirty-four workdays. Upon hiring minimal staff, the program started on June 20th and operated for sixteen days.

Equipment and Operations

The equipment utilized for the program included two Chevy Silverado trucks equipped with 125-gallon storage tanks plus three 25-gallon manual sewage pumps on carts. The three mobile collection tanks were newly purchased by Virginia Department of Health for the 2025 program. A new to the program 2012 Chevrolet Silverado truck replaced an older Ford F-150 truck that was used since 2013. The newer truck was equipped with a low-profile 150 gallon holding tank. A second truck was used as a back-up vehicle in the event of mechanical failure of the first truck. The second truck was also available if needed should the number of service requests require more than one truck on the road.

The two TLAC employees traveled to Bayside Marina at Smith Mountain Lake to board the truck and visit marinas each workday. The marinas to be visited were determined by appointments made by TLAC office staff through calls and emails for reservations received Monday through Friday. Additionally, the employees offered pump out services to other boaters at the marinas where they were already providing scheduled pump outs. If time permitted, the crew visited additional marinas to offer pump out services. The 2025 pump out program serviced boaters at 7 of 12 participating marinas. Experience over the years is that the number of marinas participating can fluctuate for assorted reasons. It appeared that contributing factors during the summer of 2025 were: boats moving from one marina to another, change in ownership/management of marinas, and customers moving their boats to other lakes.

Education

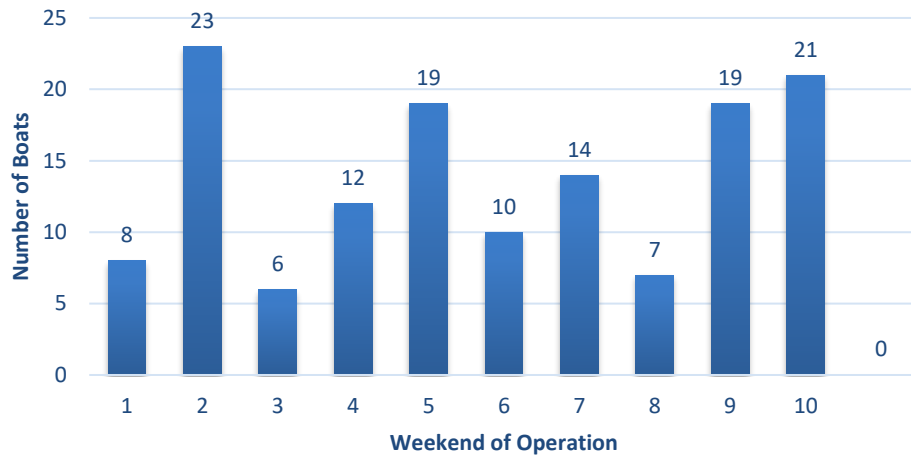
One of the program goals was for pump out staff members to visit with boaters and distribute program information, promotional items, and pump out service schedules. During the program, 180 people were recorded as being present on the boats at the time pump out service took place. Also, pump out educational materials were distributed to boaters at the participating marinas prior to the beginning of the program. Displays at Smith Mountain Lake Association Membership meetings in 2024 and 2025 were presented as well..

TLAC staff wrote, designed and bundled educational literature for distribution to those utilizing the vessel pump out services. The prepared literature included a 2025 SML Pump Out Guide, a handout describing the pump out program's contact information and schedule, as well as informational brochures about No Discharge Zones and boat head basics. Visitors to TLAC website at www.tricountylakes.org can view extensive information about the Smith Mountain Lake Pump Out Program. In cooperation with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, a Vessel Sewage No-Discharge Zone Fact Sheet and signage were distributed to all marinas on Smith Mountain Lake.

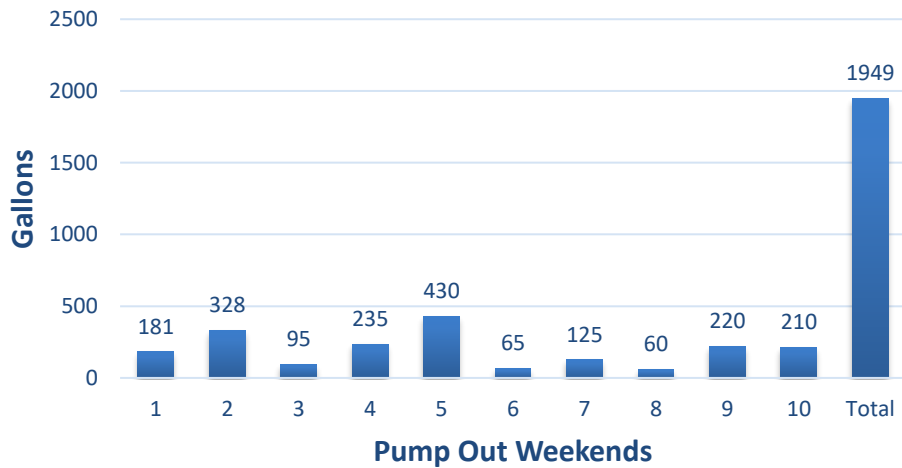
Program Totals

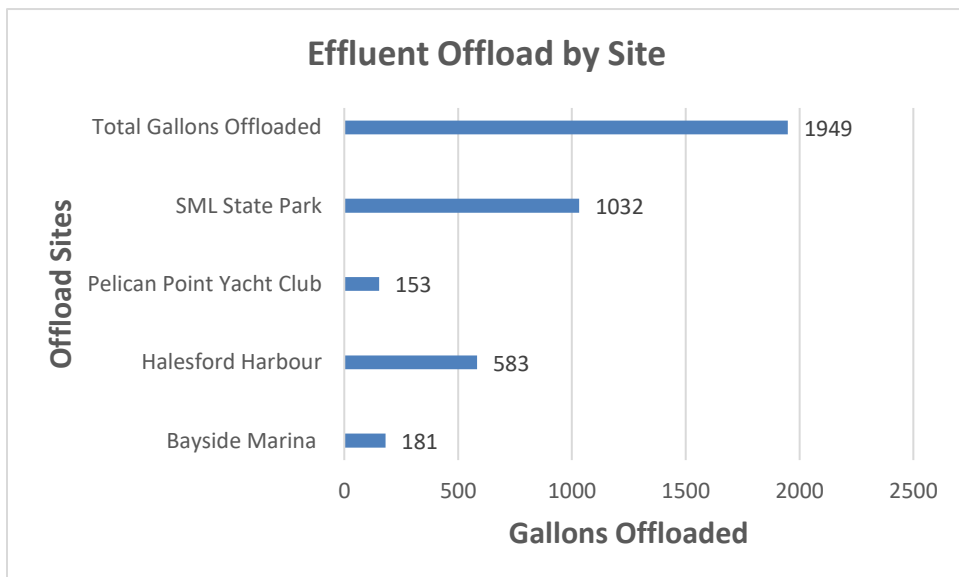
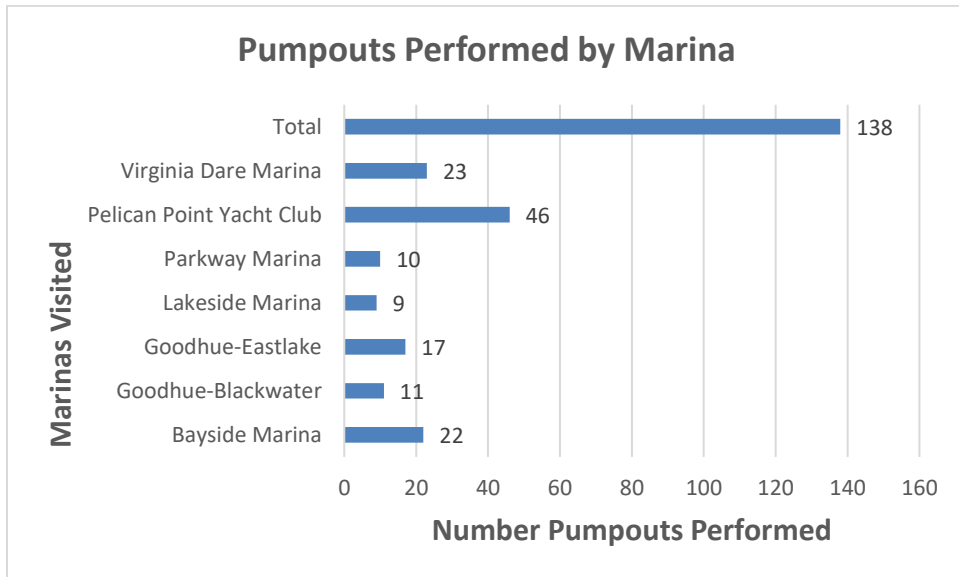
The program operated for 10 weeks during the 2025 boating season for a total of 16 days. During the boating season 1,949 gallons of sewage were pumped from vessels through this program, with an average of 14 gallons per pump out. Sixty-two unique boats were pumped out multiple times for a total of 138 pump out services performed. Overall, gallons pumped for 2025 were less than previous years due to fewer number of pump out days worked; a staff of two workers serviced reservations first and were not able to add on a significant number of non-reservation boats; and, reduced staff meant only one mobile cart was in operation when visiting a marina. The new mobile carts, hoses and fittings prevented down time due to equipment failure.

Breakdown of 139 Boats Receiving Service



Gallons of Effluent Collected by Weekend





Outreach Initiatives 2025

Promotional Items were provided to boaters along with educational materials that were packaged in program tote bags.



Department of Health Promotional Items

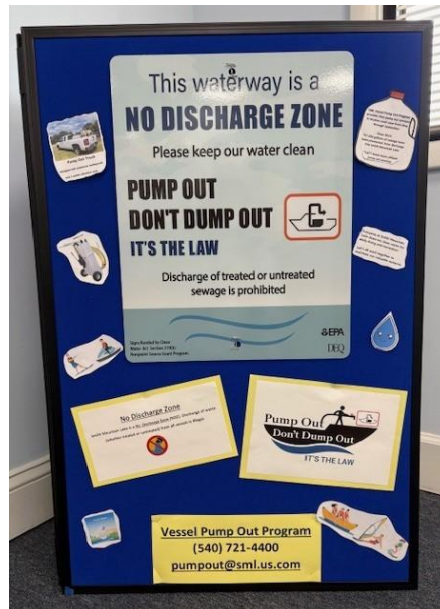


Vessel Pump Out Give Aways

Educational boards were displayed at local meetings. The displayed information often prompted conversations about the value and scope of the vessel pump out program and ongoing efforts to preserve Smith Mountain Lake water quality.



Displays utilized at the Smith Mountain Lake Association 2025 Annual Meeting



2025 Program Images



2025 Staff (left to right)
Pete Heyroth (Crew Supervisor), Joseph Jones and Jack Dubyk



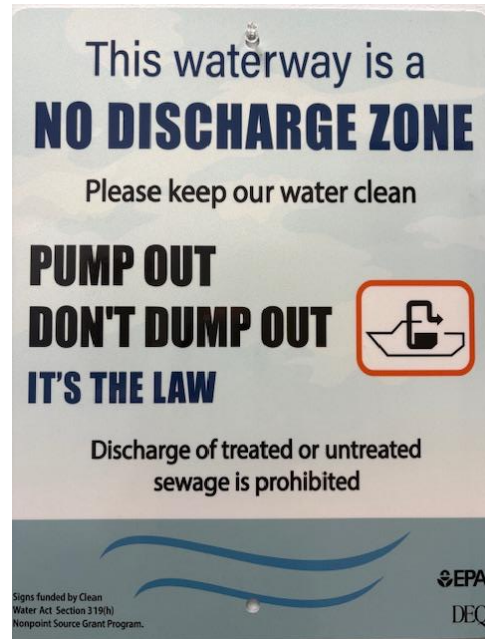
2012 Silverado Truck with
Low-profile Tank



Margaret Smigo and Jackie Friedman
Department of Health Representatives



New Mobile Pump Out Caddy



Recently distributed NDZ Sign

Summary

The 2025 Pump Out Program, with the partnership between the three agencies, TLAC, VDH and SMLA worked well even with the challenging circumstances of securing necessary program staff and a reduced operations calendar. The program is rightfully deemed a success in that it potentially prevented the release of 1,949 gallons of raw sewage into Smith Mountain Lake. Since the beginning of the current partnership in 2013, 68,503 gallons of sewage have been collected through the Smith Mountain Lake Vessel Pump Out Program. Boaters made effective use of this year's 10-week schedule, and they greatly valued the service provided. TLAC makes a concerted effort to collect data each season to assist the organizations involved to demonstrate the value of the program to boaters and the Smith Mountain Lake community.

