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BOAT

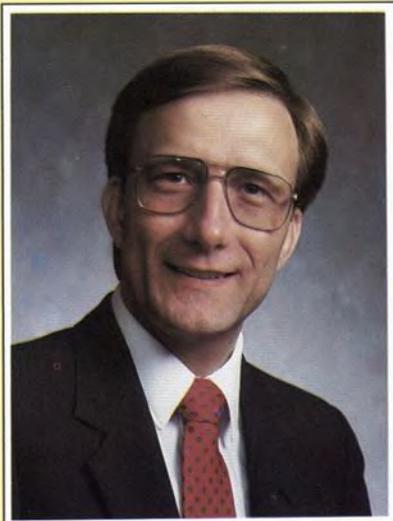
Pennsylvania

The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine



Viewpoint

The Clean Vessel Act



John Simmons
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Bureau of Boating
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

To dump or not to dump. That is the question. With all due respect to Shakespeare, the disposal of human waste in our nation's waterways is becoming a national concern. Efforts have been made to address the issue from major sources such as sewage treatment plants and malfunctioning private systems. Governor Casey's Pennvest program has provided millions of dollars to municipalities to upgrade their systems to meet the new, more stringent guideline of the federal Clean Water Act. These efforts have been very successful, and we are experiencing major successes in the cleanup of Commonwealth waters.

Even though pollution from boats is not usually considered to be much of a problem, it is nonetheless a concern as we attempt to address even minor sources of pollution. If you think about it, each day during the summer months, thousands of Pennsylvanians take to the water for relaxation and family fun. Answering the call of nature is a byproduct of these activities. It is something that, while we don't necessarily like to talk about it, is a natural occurrence. Pollution does occur and is amplified when it occurs in coves and backwaters with little turnover of the water.

What do people do with their waste? Most people find shoreside facilities to use. Others have their boats equipped with porta-potties or marine sanitation devices that either hold waste for disposal onshore or treat waste before disposal overboard. Others simply deposit waste directly into the water, assuming that their deposits will be diluted and cause no problem.

Unfortunately, it does cause a problem. Discharge of untreated waste introduces disease-carrying organisms that contaminate aquatic environments. It also impairs recreational value of the water. People are put at risk by eating shellfish taken from affected bodies of water, and they are also at risk from swimming in affected waterways. Decaying wastes can reduce oxygen levels in the water. Introduced nutrients can cause algal blooms that are not pleasant to swim in or boat on. Treating waste helps, but it does not completely eliminate the problems surrounding human waste. The only complete solution is to ensure that wastes are never deposited in our boating waters.

In 1992, Congress responded to the call to do something about the waste generated during boating activities. The Clean Vessel Act provided funding to the states to develop plans for the elimination of waste through the construction and operation of pump-out facilities and shoreside dump stations. Pennsylvania has been awarded a \$100,000 grant to develop a plan, an educational program, and to begin constructing facilities. The results of our initial surveys show that facilities for the disposal of wastes are not readily available on many of our popular boating waters. Boaters have told us that they want to keep their waters clean but facilities to dispose of wastes easily and conveniently are simply not available.

The Commission hopes to begin to address this need over the next several years. Current regulations permit the overboard discharge of wastes treated by a Type I or II marine sanitation device on most navigable waters of the state. Discharge of waste, whether treated or not, on inland lakes is not permitted. We plan to concentrate our initial efforts in the Coastal Zones of Lake Erie and the Delaware River. These two areas provide the greatest concentration of large boats that are most likely to be outfitted with marine toilets. We will then direct our attention to other areas of the state.

The prevention of overboard discharges from boats is a lofty goal—one with which each of us should agree. This will only be possible when facilities are available, convenient and usable. The Commission will work toward providing the facilities. It will be up to boaters to ensure that they are used.

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The cover

This issue's front and back covers, photographed by Tom King, suggest the fun you can have with the right equipment and a well-tuned and properly maintained rig. Along these lines, you acquire real purchasing power with the information in the articles that begin on pages 4, 7, 13 and 18. On page 22, bone up on the details of how to perform minor maintenance to reap big savings later on. On page 26, check out our eight-point reminder on how to make the most of your time and money at a boat show. On page 28, read up on the basic gear you need to make the most of those one-day paddling adventures, and on page 10, check out the sound advice on teaching a youngster to paddle.



Making a Splash!

by Jan Mundy



Skis, kneeboards, tubes, tow-behind inflatables, a boat and water—the perfect ingredients for a sizzling summer day.