

## **FLORIDA KEYS NO DISCHARGE ZONE FACT SHEET**

On June 19 2002, state waters within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary will become a No Discharge Zone for sewage from all vessels. This designation was made by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act, at the request of local government and Gov. Jeb Bush.

### **What is a No Discharge Zone?**

A NDZ is a geographic area where discharge of sewage (black water), whether treated or not treated, is prohibited from all vessels. Designation of all State waters within the FKNMS as a NDZ will mean that it will be illegal to discharge sewage from all boats into State surface waters.

### **Where are waters of the State in the FKNMS?**

Waters of the State extend to three miles from land on the Atlantic Ocean side of the Florida Keys and nine miles from land on the Gulf of Mexico side of the Florida Keys. About 65 percent of the sanctuary is State waters. Dry Tortugas National Park is not part of the Sanctuary; however discharge of all waste is prohibited within the Park.

### **Is discharge of gray water illegal in a No Discharge Zone?**

No. Only sewage is prohibited from discharge to surface waters in a NDZ. Gray water is galley, bath, shower, and wash-down water. Discharge of gray water is not prohibited in a NDZ.

### **Why are we doing this?**

The biological resources of the FKNMS – especially corals -- depend upon clear, low nutrient waters. The treatment provided by marine sanitation devices disinfects waste but does not remove nutrients. It has been documented that nutrients that are being introduced into near shore waters have resulted in water quality degradation. Sources of these nutrients include illegal cesspits, septic tanks, stormwater runoff, boats and live-aboard vessels. The No Discharge Zone was first proposed by the Sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee, and won unanimous support from the Monroe County Commission. Gov. Jeb Bush requested EPA designate state waters in the Sanctuary as a NDZ.

Transient and live-aboard vessels currently discharge wastewater directly into surrounding waters with little or no treatment. Designation of State waters as a no NDZ will require all boats to store their sewage in a holding tank and have that holding tank pumped out at an approved facility. Wastewater collected from pumpout facilities will be treated at a wastewater treatment facility to the same standards as required for other sources of wastewater.

### **What is a pumpout facility and how many are there in the Keys**

A pumpout facility is a service that removes wastewater from vessel holding tanks. They are located at marinas or on mobile barges and consist of a vacuum pump and hose that is placed in the holding tank of the vessel. Wastewater is pumped to a holding tank at the marina or pumpout barge and is taken to an approved sewage treatment facility.

There are currently twenty-nine pumpout facilities in the Florida Keys based at marinas and two mobile pumpout facilities.

### **What is being done to increase the availability of pumpout facilities in the Keys?**

Areas have been identified where additional pumpout facilities are required. Agency representatives are working with marina operators at those locations in preparing applications to the Clean Vessel Act program

for grant funding to cover installation costs for pumpout facilities. Grants are available up to \$50,000 per marina for installation of pumpout facilities.

**Why should a vessel install a Type III MSD (holding tank) and use a pumpout service? Isn't there adequate dilution of wastewater when it is discharged into surface waters?**

Vessel sewage is more concentrated than domestic sewage because people on boats use less volumes of water for sanitary purposes than do people on land. A single boat discharging the contents of its holding tank into waters may pose little human health risk or nutrient enrichment. However, the cumulative impact of many boats discharging their wastewater can cause significant degradation of water quality and biological resources. This is particularly true in enclosed harborages and marinas with little circulation or dilution.

**What is the cost of retrofitting a vessel with a Type III MSD (holding tank)?**

Many factors can affect the cost of retrofitting a vessel with a holding tank. However, costs have been estimated to be approximately \$600 for a simple installation.

**How much does it cost to have a holding tank pumped out?**

A marina that has received a Clean Vessel Act Grant to install a pumpout facility can not charge more than \$5 per pumpout for the first three years of operation, unless that requirement is waived by the State. A factor determining the cost of pumpout is the cost of hauling wastes from a pumpout facility to a sewage treatment facility. Marinas in the Keys have been surveyed and costs of having a holding tank pumped out range from \$5 to \$25 and are generally dependent upon the volume of material being pumped. Assuming that the average cost to use a pumpout is \$10 and one pumpout is required per week, the estimated cost per live-aboard vessel is approximately \$520 per year.

**How will the NDZ be enforced and who has the enforcement authority?**

The U.S. Coast Guard, or any other federal, state, or County government entity under agreement with the U. S. Coast Guard, has the authority to enforce the requirement that no sewage be discharged from vessels within the NDZ. In marinas and harbors with mooring fields, the marina or harbor manager will be responsible to ensure that all vessels docking or mooring in those locales be informed of the requirement to pumpout wastewater. We anticipate that vessel operators will understand the need to protect biological resources from nutrients and other pollutants in their wastewater and will voluntarily comply with the requirement to use pumpout stations. Enforcement action will be taken against vessels observed to discharge wastewater into surface waters and vessels that do not have adequate holding facilities for their transit through the NDZ.

**If the No Discharge Zone is adopted, can a vessel discharge wastewater in federal waters?**

Yes, the proposed rule is only for waters of the State in the FKNMS. However, many important biological resources are found in federal waters of the FKNMS. For that reason, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is currently pursuing the designation of federal waters in the FKNMS as a NDZ. If federal waters were to maintain their current status, vessels could leave waters of the State and dump wastewater directly on one of the biological resources that we trying to protect and restore in the FKNMS.