

Bay State Banning Boat Sewage!

By Anne Donovan, CZM

The solution to pollution is prevention, not dilution. This is the tried-and-true theory behind No Discharge Areas, or NDAs—designated bodies of water where the discharge of all boat sewage, whether treated or not, is prohibited. And Governor Deval Patrick has set the goal of designating all coastal waters of Massachusetts as no discharge.

Boat sewage can contain bacteria and viruses, nutrients, and chemicals that can be harmful to water quality and public health. Even small quantities of microorganisms from boat sewage can introduce diseases like hepatitis to people in contact with the water, and can contaminate shellfish and make them unsuitable for human consumption. Boat sewage, even when treated by on-board sanitation devices, also contains high quantities of nitrogen. Nitrogen fuels the growth of algae—creating water quality and clarity problems in sensitive coastal waters. Finally, the chemicals used in some boat heads are toxic to marine life.

A statewide NDA directly addresses these human health and environmental concerns. To help make this coast-wide boat sewage ban a reality, CZM is working with coastal communities to increase boat pumpout facilities so that proper sewage disposal is more convenient for the boating public. In addition, CZM is coordinating efforts among municipal officials, harbor masters, and nonprofit organizations as they develop applications to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for no discharge status of their coastal waters.

See www.mass.gov/czm/nda for details on NDAs, and for more on where you can find a boat pumpout facility, see www.mass.gov/czm/nda/pumpouts.

3. **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES** - Known by many names—nuisance species, exotic species, non-indigenous species, or pests—these plants and animals, including purple loosestrife and the European green crab, have forever changed the ecology and economy of Massachusetts. To address these threats, a variety of state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations have formed the Massachusetts Aquatic Invasive Species Working Group. With leadership from CZM, this group works to prevent

new introductions, monitor for new invasions, and quickly respond to invasive species that show up in Massachusetts waters before they spread out of control. For more, see www.mass.gov/czm/invasives.

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO TREAD LIGHTLY ON COASTAL HABITATS

1. **GO NATIVE** - Whether landscaping your sandy, shore-side property or inland lot, use native species whenever possible. These hardy plants are adapted to the sometimes-extreme growing conditions of New England, and often require much less watering and fertilizer than exotic alternatives. Also, many of these species provide food and cover for local wildlife, providing sanctuary from suburban sprawl. For more, see www.greenscapes.org and www.massnativeplants.org.
2. **SLOW AND STEADY** - Bay State beaches are crowded places, providing very little real estate for shorebirds and other animals to call home. When walking through these areas, stay on the paths and off sensitive dunes and vegetation. And when driving, slow down and watch for animals, particularly the threatened Piping Plover, whose well-camouflaged chicks like to hunker down and hide in tire tracks on the beach.
3. **DON'T LET THOSE CREATURES GO** - Although exotic animals can be great pets and ornamental plants can make beautiful decorations, many of these species are invasive. In fact, some of the characteristics that make these species desirable, like hardiness and rapid growth, are the same characteristics that allow them to out-compete native plants and animals in the wild. So never release aquarium pets or bait into the water. Also, use native plants and animals in water gardens, since predators like the Great Blue Heron often carry water-garden residents to neighboring habitats. For more on what you can do, see www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/prevent.