

Eco-friendly Boating Tips

SeaKeepers Society's new guide helps keep waters clean.

By Bob Arrington



Southern states welcome an increased amount of boating activity every winter, as northern boaters seek to escape the cold and continue using their boats in the south's warmer temperatures. All boat owners can help keep the southern waters clean by following the SeaKeeper's *Guide to Green Boating*.

Founded in 1998, The International SeaKeepers Society began as a group of yacht owners who were concerned with the deterioration of our ocean and waterways. The society grew into a nonprofit organization dedicated to oceanographic research, conservation, and education through direct involvement with the boating community. The society's *Guide to Green Boating* provides boaters with tips and advice to help us minimize our impact on the water we love. Here are just a few of the helpful tips found in the guide.

Conduct periodic engine maintenance to ensure your vessel's performance is the most fuel-efficient; using less fuel is always best for the environment.

- ▶ Check fuel lines, tanks, and vents for any sign of corrosion or chafing. This avoids spilling contents of your fuel into the bilge, which can be pumped overboard.

- ▶ Use non-VOC solvents to wash engine parts and tools, and never dump waste oils, engine coolants, or other toxic chemicals on the ground or into storm drains or dumpsters near the water.
- ▶ Maintain and dispose of marine batteries safely to keep the battery chemicals from becoming loose in the environment.
- ▶ Keep your bilge clean so that excess water with spilled fuel oil or other toxic liquids will not be pumped overboard.
- ▶ A primary cause for oil and fuel entering the water is during a refueling. Prevent fuel from spilling into the water by making sure all fuel goes only into your vessel's tank, being careful not to drip fuel or have it backsplash out of the tank or discharge from the vent when filling.
- ▶ Wipe up any accidental spills and dispose of rags and fuel absorbent in proper hazardous waste containers.
- ▶ Notify the marina or fuel dock if you have a spill so that it can be cleaned up properly. Never use detergent or dish soap to make the spill disappear. Using dish soap dispersant does not get rid of the spill, it simply breaks it down into smaller droplets making the spill harder to clean and more toxic to marine life.
- ▶ Gray water from sinks aboard the boat is not as harmless as people think. If you have gray water tanks, use them and pump out at available facilities, rather than dumping it into the water.
- ▶ Never discharge black water in prohibited areas near shore or inland waterways. Black water discharge from your boat can impair water quality and affect aquatic ecosystems. Bacteria from blackwater can make boating and swimming unsafe along with closing waterways and shellfish beds.
- ▶ Never throw trash of any sort overboard, even food products that you think may biodegrade. All trash should be stored on board in proper containers and disposed of properly onshore.
- ▶ Wherever possible, boaters should try to avoid cleaners and soap that contains toxins or chemicals. Choosing eco-friendly cleaning products for your boat is one easy step you can take to keep our waters clean. Eco-friendly boat cleaning products are made of organic and phosphate free biodegradable soaps that will have the least impact on water and marine life.

For the complete guide, go to seakeepers.org/a-green-guide-to-boating. 📖