

FACT SHEET 4 - CLEAN BOATING

As a boater, you are well aware of the care your vessel requires. In order to keep your boat safe, reliable, and attractive, you must clean and maintain it. As you do so, minimize environmental impacts by following the recommendations listed here. Caution is necessary because your choice of products and activities can have serious impacts on water quality and aquatic life. For example, if paint chips from a hull are not contained, they may end up in the water. The heavy metals in the paints chips may then be consumed by oysters, clams, worms, and other-bottom dwelling creatures and passed up the food chain to fish, birds and humans.

METHODS:

Clean Carefully

- Wash frequently with a sponge or nonabrasive pad and plain water. This approach is very effective at removing salt. Additional “elbow grease” is required to remove stains.
- When detergents are necessary, use soaps that are phosphate-free, biodegradable, and non-toxic. Any soap should be used sparingly because even nontoxic products can be harmful to wildlife. For example, detergents will destroy the natural oils on fish gills, limiting their ability to breathe.
- Wax your boat, if appropriate. A good coat of wax prevents surface dirt from becoming ingrained.
- Clean teak with a mild soap and abrasive pads or bronze wool. This method is safe for the environment and better for the boat than the solvents in standard teak cleaners which tend to eat away at the wood and damage seam compounds.
- Avoid detergent that contain ammonia, sodium hypochlorite, chlorinated solvents (bleach), petroleum distillated, and lye.
- Try some of the alternative cleaning products listed in the table below.

Maintain Mindfully

- Collect all paint chips, dust and residue. Dispose in regular trash.
- Share leftover paint and varnish.
- Use less toxic propylene glycol antifreeze.
- Avoid overkill. Select a bottom paint developed for the mid-Atlantic region.

Recycle Regularly

- Recycle used oil, oil filters, and antifreeze.
- Bring used solvents and waste gasoline to local hazardous waste collection days.
- Visit the web site www.deq.state.va.us/recycle/r-coord.html to locate contacts for recycling information in your area.

Be A Conscientious Consumer

- Read product labels. Labels convey information about the degree of hazard associated with a particular product. For example, DANGER equates to extremely flammable, corrosive or toxic; WARNING indicates that the material is moderately hazardous; and CAUTION signals a less hazardous product. Select products that contain no warnings or, at the most, a CAUTION.
- Be wary of unqualified general claims or environmental benefit, i.e., “ozone friendly”. A better, more meaningful label would read, “This product is 95% less damaging to the ozone layer than past formulations that contained chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)”.
- For additional information about environmentally responsible products, contact Green Seal. Green Seal is an independent, nonprofit organization that sets environmental

standards for consumer goods. Products that meet their criteria are awarded a “Green Seal of Approval”. You may search Green Seal’s database of Green Seal certified, environmentally responsible products at www.greenseal.org or call (202) 588-8400.

ALTERNATIVES TO TOXIC PRODUCTS

While baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, and vegetable oils are far less harmful than bleaches, scouring powders or detergents, they are still toxic to marine life. Use cleaning products sparingly and minimize the amount discharged into the water. Never dispose of any cleaning products down the thru-hull drain; dispose of them on shore.

Product -- Alternative

- Bleach Borax--Detergent & Soap Elbow grease
- Scouring Powders-- Baking soda. Or rub area with ½ lemon dipped in borax, then rinse
- General Cleaners-- Baking soda and vinegar. Or lemon juice combined with borax paste
- Floor Cleaner-- One cup vinegar + 2 gallons of water
- Window Cleaner-- One cup vinegar + 1 quart of warm water. Rinse and squeegee
- Aluminum Cleaner-- 2 Tbsp. cream of tartar + 1 quart of hot water
- Brass Cleaner-- Worcestershire sauce. Or paste made of equal amounts of salt, vinegar, and water
- Copper Cleaner-- Lemon juice and water. Or paste of lemon juice, salt & flour
- Chrome Cleaner/Polish-- Apple cider vinegar to clean; baby oil to polish
- Stainless Steel Cleaner-- Baking soda or mineral oil for polishing; vinegar to remove spots
- Fiberglass Stain Remover-- Baking soda paste
- Mildew Remover-- Paste consisting of equal amounts of lemon juice and salt, or white vinegar and salt
- Drain Opener-- Disassemble or use a plumber’s snake. Or flush with boiling water + ¼ cup baking soda + ¼ cup vinegar
- Wood Polish-- Olive or almond oil (interior walls only)
- Hand Cleaner-- Baby oil or margarine
- Head & Shower-- Baking soda; brush thoroughly
- Rug/Upholstery Cleaner-- Dry corn starch sprinkled on; vacuum