

CLEAN BOATER TIP SHEET



Boat Maintenance and Operation

The general maintenance of boats can generate pollutants and waste products that can be harmful to the environment. Some of these potential pollutants include solvents, paints, lubricants, oil, anti-freeze, fuel, batteries, and bilge switches that contain mercury. Proper use, storage, and disposal are key to keeping these pollutants out of the environment. You, as a boater on Indiana water, can be an active steward of this valuable resource by implementing these practices:



Oil Filter Recycling Containers (Photo by Cathy Csatari, IDEM).

Managing and Preventing Potential Pollutants

- Recycle used oil, oil filters, antifreeze, and other fluids at your marina, or contact your solid waste management district or local automotive store to determine what recycling services they offer.
- Trade in used batteries when purchasing new ones. Many stores offer “core” credits towards the purchase of a new battery.
- Manage used compact fluorescent light bulbs, which may contain mercury, in an environmentally-sound manner. Contact your local solid waste management district for recycling and disposal options.



Use non-toxic or less toxic antifreeze.

- Share leftover paints, varnishes, and other chemicals with other boaters.
- If possible, purchase bilge switches that do not contain mercury.
- Use environmentally-friendly products such as antifreeze formulated with less toxic propylene glycol (instead of highly toxic ethylene glycol), water-based paints (instead of solvent-based paints), and low volatile organic compound coatings as long-lasting and non-toxic antifouling paint when possible.



Indiana Department of Environmental Management



Maintaining Your Boat

- If your marina allows do-it-yourself boat maintenance on site, perform repairs and maintenance activities in designated areas and follow your marina's "yard rules."
- Routinely check your engine for fuel leaks and your fuel lines for signs of wear.
- Use drip pans under engines when performing maintenance procedures.
- Install fuel/air separators on inboard fuel tank air vents to help reduce the amount of fuel spilled into surface waters while fueling.

Operating Your Boat

Boat traffic and operation can significantly impact shallow water habitats. Boat wakes can erode shorelines and uproot submergent and emergent plants. This leads to reduced habitat for fish and wildlife and increases suspended sediment loads. Suspended sediment reduces the amount of sunlight penetrating the water column and shades out submerged plants that are important to fish for habitat and oxygen production.

- Keep your watercraft away from sensitive, shallow water habitat areas and established "no boating" zones.
- When in a "no wake" zone, operate your watercraft at the slowest possible speed (*idle speed or less per Indiana Code 14-15-3-17*) that allows you to maintain steering and make headway with minimal wake.
- Winch your watercraft onto boat trailers instead of power loading your boat onto the trailer. The strong current created by the boat's propeller causes severe erosion and washout at the end of the ramp.



When recycling used oil, be careful not to spill it on the ground. This used oil collection container has a secondary containment tray which helps to catch spills and prevent releases to the environment (Photo by Cathy Csatari, IDEM).

For More Information

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