Clean Boater Tip Sheet

Vessel Cleaning

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 paint chips may then be consumed by mussels, worms, and other bottom-dwelling creatures and passed up the food chain to fish, birds, and humans.

Clean Carefully

- Wash frequently with a sponge or nonabrasive pad and plain water. 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 non toxic 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 to damage seam compounds.
- Avoid detergents that contain ammonia, sodium hypochlorite (bleach), chlorinated solvents, petroleum distillates, and lye.
- Try some of the alternative cleaning products listed in the table below.
- Collect all paint chips, dust, and residue. Dispose in regular trash at home or in designated receptacles at your marina.

Recycle Regularly

- Bring used solvents and waste gasoline to local hazardous waste collection days.
- Become knowledgeable about disposal procedures for waste and hazardous materials at your marina.
- For additional information, contact Ohio EPA, Office of Pollution Prevention at (614) 644-3469 or Division of Hazardous Waste Management at (614) 644-2917, or visit the Ohio EPA web site at www.epa.state.oh.us/opp/wastex.html.

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 which merely CAUTION consumers.
- Be wary of unqualified general claims of environmental benefit, e.g., "ozone friendly." A better, more meaningful label would read, "This product is 95 percent less damaging to the ozone layer than past formulations that contained chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)."

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.

Products	Alternative
Bleach	Borax
Detergent & Soap	Elbow grease
Scouring Powders	Baking soda. Or rub area with one-half lemon dipped in borax, then rinse
General Cleaner	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 qt. warm water. Rinse and squeegee
Aluminum Cleaner	2 Tbsp. cream of tartar + 1 qt. 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, and 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 with equal amounts of lemon juice and salt, or white vinegar and salt
Drain Opener	Dissemble or use plumber's snake. Or flush with boiling water + one-quarter cup baking soda + one-quarter 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

Adapted from Buller, Pat. 1995. Clean Marina+Clean Boating+Clean Water Partnership. Seattle, WA: Puget Soundkeeper Alliance.