



LAUDERTRAC

WATERWAY QUALITY UPDATE

Tracking Progress on Fort Lauderdale Commission Priorities for 2021



August 2021

ELIMINATE MARINE POLLUTION

The City continues to improve its waterways by identifying root causes of poor waterway quality. One such cause is the illegal discharge of sewage from vessels. City staff has conducted a feasibility and cost effectiveness study to reduce or eliminate illegal discharges by increasing the availability of mobile pumpouts within the City. As a part of the study, staff researched other municipalities' sewage pumpout programs, assessed the cost benefits of a Public-Private Partnership (P3) with pumpout vessel vendors in Fort Lauderdale, and contacted the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) about state and federal grant programs. Below are the findings and some of the options that are under consideration for implementation in Fort Lauderdale.

Option 1: City-operated mobile vessel pumpout service

Martin County offers disposal services to boaters five days a week at no charge. Their program has two staff members and two boats and averages 21 pumpouts per day totaling 165,000 gallons of sewage discharge per year. The program is supplemented and supported by FDEP Clean Vessel Act (CVA) grants.

Under this model, the City could operate on-demand or by appointment for "come-to-you" citywide pumpout service. The goal would be to increase boaters' compliance by offering a convenient and cost-effective solution for proper sewage disposal and thereby improve waterway quality. The City may be eligible for a CVA grant to cover a portion of the vessel purchase price as well as some operational costs. However, the grant would restrict City service fees to a maximum \$5.00 per pumpout regardless of the volume collected. If the City does not receive grant funding, boaters could be charged at the current market rate that would be significantly higher.



Marine Boat Builders Co. 23' 460-gallon capacity pumpout vessel used in Charleston, South Carolina

Option 2: Vendor-operated pumpout service

Since 2009, most of the Florida Keys in Monroe County and the Dry Tortugas National Park are designated as "No Discharge Zones," as approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for having adequate pumpout facilities. Monroe County requires anchored vessels to have proof of compliance with a minimum of one pumpout per month. The County offers one free pumpout per week to visiting anchored vessels that are registered. Unregistered and non-anchored vessels are required to use fixed shore side pumpouts and maintain service receipts. The County funds the free service through the Monroe County Boating Improvement Program, CVA Grants, and State Legislative allocations to use a private contractor. Monroe County designates zones of service and provides a quota of the maximum number of pumpouts for each zone. The contractor provides service at a contracted and reduced rate to each zone depending on the day of the week. The contractor also offers a premium pickup service on non-scheduled days at a higher rate.



Marine Boat Builders Co. integral on board pumpout system

Should the Fort Lauderdale determine this model as most feasible and effective, the City would seek designation as a "No Discharge Zone" and could benefit from a more efficient program with no capital outlay, no City assets/staff or fixed annual cost required, and potentially receive outside funding support. It would decrease illegal sewage disposal and improve opportunities to monitor abandoned vessels, find dischargers with stronger enforcement, and provide opportunities to market the City's clean waterways.

In addition to the two options mentioned, the City is continuing to research additional options such as creating a P3 program or maintaining current operations. Learn more about the City of Fort Lauderdale's existing program at gyr.fortlauderdale.gov/greener-government/natural-resources-preservation/clean-water/protecting-our-waterways/pump-out-stations