

Title:

N-75: Promote/offer free pump out stations to better water quality and allow boats a better option than dumping waste offshore.

Background:

- This recommended management action relates to Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties, i.e. those of the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) region.
- The primary target is coastal estuaries, but because boaters may dump their holding tanks anywhere, the positive effects could be widespread.
- This recommended management action is being put forth to improve water quality over the reefs and in the estuaries due to the degradation of coastal waters directly related to boats dumping their holding tanks into surface waters, as opposed to having them pumped out.

Objective:

- The intended outcome of this action is to improve water quality, reduce sewage in surface waters and, as a result, have potentially fewer coliform-related health warnings.
- The improved water quality will bring more tourism and improve the economy along with residents' quality of life.

Intended Benefits and/or Potential Adverse Effects:

- Some potential benefits of implementation of this recommended management action are: (1) boaters are more likely to use free pump-out services as opposed to paying to have their tanks pumped out, usage will increase if boaters can easily access information on locations of free pump-out services, (2) improved water quality because the tanks are not being dumped into the waterways, and (3) improved water quality will bring more tourism and benefit the economy along with residents' quality of life.
- Potential negative environmental impacts could result from spillages associated with the pump-out vessel itself. It should be noted, however, that Martin County has had no such issues since initiating this service in 2000.
- The potential negative social/economic impacts of this action include: existing, for-profit companies that provide waste pump-out services may oppose this initiative as it could negatively affect their revenue. This problem could be mitigated by the development of a database listing all pump-out services on a county-by-county basis, which would provide for-profit pump-out service providers with free publicity.
- The duration of the benefits of this recommended management action are long term. As opportunities for free pump-out become more well-known, the program would hopefully become increasingly popular and well-utilized.
- Some possible issues that may arise with implementation of this recommended management action include: (1) funding, as the costs would need to be covered by grants or other sources, (2) potential opposition from existing for-profit businesses that offer similar services, (3) increased enforcement if you want to make sure that boats are being pumped out, and (4) maps showing locations of pump-out services may need to be updated frequently (suggestion would be to develop and post the locations electronically).
- If this recommended management action were not implemented coastal waters will continue to degrade as a result of boaters who choose to illegally dump their waste rather than having it pumped out.

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Agencies/ Organizations:

- The lead agencies for implementation of this recommended management action would be county governments, which would be the most likely entities to implement this action. Funding for Martin County's program comes from Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Clean Vessel Act grant program. Promotion could be by SEFCRI via a mobile phone app.
- Other potential agencies or organizations who could be involved include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and county health departments.
- The key stakeholders for this recommended management action would be boaters, the fishing and diving industries and marinas.
- There are no conflicts with current laws and, unless there is a mandate for boaters to use pump-outs stations, no new regulation would need to be considered.

Permitting/ Enforcement Requirements of MA:

- There are no permitting requirements for this recommended management action.
- A means of measuring the success of this recommended management action includes tallying the number of boats pumping out and the volume of sewage pumped out.

Cost:

- The estimated direct cost of implementing this recommended management action includes an upfront cost of \$200,000 - \$300,000, depending on the size of the pump-out vessel and its capacity i.e. number of boats serviced. The annual cost to Martin County is approximately \$80,000 for vessel operation and staff. Costs would increase due to the need for a larger vessel and the larger number of boats in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties. The counties could approve this recommended management action as part of their annual budget.
- Potential funding could be acquired through the FDEP's Clean Vessel Act grant program.

Time Frame & Extent:

- The anticipated timeframe for implementation of this recommended management action is 0 - 2 years.

Miscellaneous Info:

- This recommended management action is linked to N-97 and with land-based sources of pollution in general, especially septic tank/sewage issues.
- An uncertainty associated with this recommended management action is determining whether free pump-out services will translate into increased voluntary compliance.
- Supporting and relevant data includes the free pump-out services currently being provided in Monroe and Martin counties. Use of the service is highly regarded by boaters and prevents thousands of gallons of sewage from being discharged into coastal waters each year.
- Currently, Martin County offers free pump-out services to any boat within the county boundary.

Goals/ Objectives to be achieved:

Refer to the [SEFCRI Coral Reef Management Goals and Objectives Reference Guide](#)

- FL Priorities Goal A1 / FL Priorities Goal C1, Obj. 4.
- SEFCRI LAS FDOU Issue 3 Goal Obj. 3.

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