

## ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

**Garbage, Garbage in the water is not only ugly**, but it can also create entanglement, ingestion, and aesthetic problems for animals and boaters. Plastics in particular last for decades in the environment.

In the Gulf of Mexico, birds have been seen feeding cigarette butts to their young. In Marina Del Rey, cool water intakes for inboard boats have sucked up plastic bags, causing engines to overheat. In the Great Lakes, old rope and monofilament fishing line have wrapped around propellers, causing other engine problems. The problem is everywhere, but we all have a role to play in cleaning up our local boating waters.

(This bird has its head stuck in a plastic six-pack container.)



## THE LAW

Under federal law, it is illegal to toss ANY garbage from a boat while you are anywhere in lakes, rivers, bays, sounds, and offshore in the ocean less than 3 miles. Yes, this means you can't throw a banana peel or your half-eaten sandwich overboard....

Violations may result in civil penalties up to \$25,000, a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to 5 years! (State anti-littering laws may also apply on your boating waters.) The further offshore you go in the ocean, the more things you can legally dispose of from your boat. But you must always keep plastic items onboard for later disposal ashore.

Remember that while on inland and coastal waters where most of us do our boating, no garbage should go overboard. The only exception to this rule is fish waste, which under federal law, you can still put back into the water.

Please note that this law only covers garbage, and does not cover sewage (black water) or sink or shower water (grey water). These will be discussed under the sewage section below.

## Garbage disposal regulations for U.S. waterways

<b>Lakes, Rivers, Bays, Sounds, and 0-3 miles from shore.</b>	<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP</b>	Plastic, rags, glass, food, metal, crockery, dunnage, lining & packaging, materials that float.
<b>3-12 Miles</b>	<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP</b>	Plastic, rags*, glass,* food*, metal*, crockery*, dunnage, lining & packaging, materials that float.
<b>12-25 Miles</b>	<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP</b>	Plastic, dunnage, lining & packing, materials that float.
<b>25 miles or more</b>	<b>ILLEGAL TO DUMP</b>	Plastic.
<b>Dunnage</b> -- This refers to packing materials normally associated with commercial shipping such as packing foam or pallets.		
<b>Plastics</b> --This includes such things as chip or garbage bags, plastic bottles, fishing line, and cigarette butts.		
* Unless ground smaller than one inch.		

**Specific Requirements:** There are additional requirements based on how long your boat is. If you have a boat 26' or longer, you must have a written garbage placard and an oil discharge placard "prominently posted" to remind you and your crew what can be thrown overboard and what can't. The placards must be permanently

attached, be made of durable material, and must be at least 4X9 inches in size. Great Lakes boaters must display a garbage placard specifically designed for the Great lakes. Shown below, these stickers are available from most boating supply stores.



If your boat is 40' or longer, you must also have a written waste management plan, stating how you deal with the collected waste onboard, who handles it, and where it is disposed. This can be as short as one paragraph. We recommend that you keep your plan in your onboard ships papers. Click here: [cleanwater@boat-us.com](mailto:cleanwater@boat-us.com) if you would like to receive some sample waste management plans.

