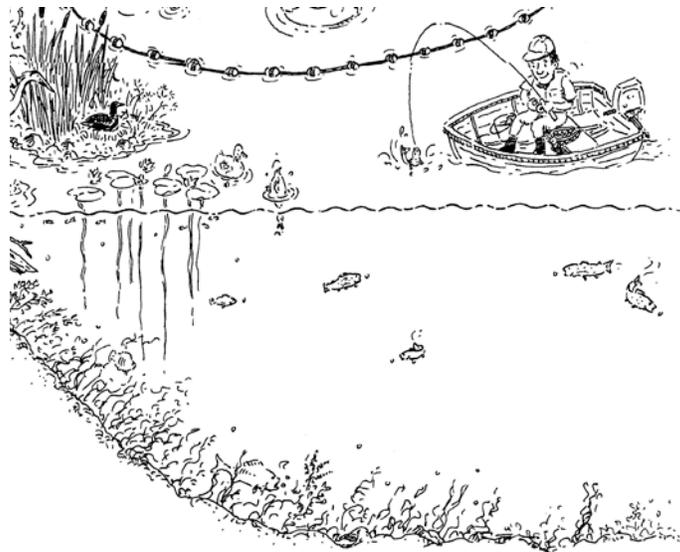


Fact sheet for washing boats and docks

When deciding how to clean your boat or dock it is important to be mindful of the impacts everyday cleaning agents can pose to water quality and aquatic life. Some cleaning products pose potential risks to human health and may be detrimental to the environment. Typical household soaps (dish, laundry, and multi- purpose) can increase nutrient pollution (ammonia and phosphorous) in lakes and streams, fostering algae blooms and oxygen depletion. Some cleaning agents can be toxic to aquatic organisms. We encourage selecting an effective biodegradable and phosphate-free cleaning agent with a neutral pH when cleaning your boat or dock.



Keeping phosphorus out of our lakes

Managing the accumulation of phosphorus in our lakes is extremely important for human health, aquatic life, and animal interaction. Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for vegetation growth; however, excess phosphorus input can lead to eutrophication which fosters excessive algal growth, and in some cases result in harmful algal blooms (HABs). Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can produce the perfect conditions for algae blooms, which in turn, increases turbidity and decreases dissolved oxygen levels as the algae decomposes. Decreased levels of oxygen can cause stress and ultimately kill aquatic life. Algae blooms can turn lakes into thick, smelly green soup that is undesirable for swimming and other recreational water activities. Too much algae clouds water and blocks sunlight from reaching aquatic plants. HABs can result in public health concerns for people and pets.

What products are safe to use on my boat or dock?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has created a webpage to help determine which products are better choices for the environment. They have developed the “Safer Choice Standard,” which evaluates and ranks every single ingredient in cleaning products in order to ensure they meet EPA criteria. For more information check out their website:

<https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products>

In general- avoid cleaning products containing the following:

- **Ammonia:** Toxic when inhaled, swallowed, or touched potentially deadly when mixed with other chemicals.
- **Antibacterials & Disinfectants:** These include a whole list of ingredients ranging from *Bleach* to *Triclosan*. Overuses of these types of products possibly contribute to antibiotic resistant bacteria.
- **Butyl Glycol, Ethylene Glycol, Monobutyl:** Very common in most general cleaners and is dangerous to the kidney, liver, and nervous system.
- **Chlorine Bleach:** Extremely strong, corrosive, and irritating to both the eyes and lungs.
- **Petroleum Solvents:** Commonly found in many cleaning products as *surfactants*. Other derivatives, such as, formaldehyde, can be found in a variety of common household cleaners.
- **Phosphates:** Harmful to aquatic life and are often found in detergents and dish soaps. (Removed in Washington State, 2010).
- **Phthalates:** Disruptive hormones which are comprised of complex synthetic fragrances. Look for options that say “*Phthalate Free*” or mention the use of essential oil for fragrance.

These brands provide biodegradable and phosphate-free cleaning products:

- Seventh Generation
- Meyer’s
- Planet
- J.R. Watkins
- Simple Green
- Biokleen

Other resources

[Hull Cleaning and Boat Washing](#) - Washington Dept. of Ecology

[Non-Toxic Cleaning Products](#) - Sailors of the Sea

[About EWG's Guide to Healthy Cleaning](#) - Environmental Working Group

[Safer Choices](#) - U.S. EPA

[Green Secrets for a Clean Boat](#) - American Sailing Association

[Legislative initiatives](#) - Washington State Lake Protection Association