



Putting Your Boat into Winter Hibernation



Photo source: BoatUS Foundation

All good things must eventually come to an end. At the end of each New Hampshire summer there will come a time for those of us who boat to conclude their boating season. For many, then comes the inevitable ritual of closing up camp and putting the boat into hibernation.

By implementing the lake-friendly boat cleaning and engine winterization suggestions below, you can help ensure a healthy environment while putting your boat to sleep until next year's boating season.

Lake-Friendly Boat Cleaning

Despite New Hampshire's lakes being some of the cleanest in the nation, the hull of your boat has likely accumulated a layer of slime on it. Did you know that whether you or your marina washes the boat, it is illegal to discharge boat wash water directly into surface waters or ground water (unless your marina has a groundwater discharge permit)?

If you clean your boat yourself, here's how you can protect the environment:

- Remove the boat from the water, even if you are only cleaning the deck areas.
- Use homemade natural spray wash that does not require a water rinse. You can make a phosphate and toxic-free wash by mixing water with baking soda, borax, or lemon or lime juice.
- Remove the spray wash with a sponge or mop. Squeeze the polluted waste water from the sponge or mop into a bucket and then dump the bucket into your household wastewater treatment system—remember, do not dump the water directly into the lake or onto the ground!

Environmentally-Friendly Engine Winterization

Did you know that antifreeze usually does not need to be left in your boat engine during the winter? As long as all of the water is drained out of the engine, there is very little chance that it will crack when exposed to freezing temperatures.

According to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the preferred method for engine winterization is as follows:

1. Flush the engine with antifreeze. If you have to remove the antifreeze by using the bilge, you will need to clean the bilge afterwards using a bilge sock—you can purchase one at your local marina or online.
2. Let the engine drain and capture the antifreeze for re-use next year.

If your local marina winterizes your boat, ask that they follow the method described above.

Cleaning your boat and wintering the engine are simple things that can be done at home in an inexpensive and environmentally-responsible way. Now, let's hope that next summer will bring many more days of sunny, rain-free boating!

NH LAKES is the only statewide, member-supported nonprofit organization working to keep New Hampshire's lakes clean and healthy, now and in the future. The organization works with partners, promotes clean water policies and responsible use, and inspires the public to care for our lakes. For more lake-friendly tips, visit www.nhlakes.org, email info@nhlakes.org, or call 603.226.0299.

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