

Human Waste Disposal

It is illegal to discharge human waste into U.S. waters, and digging “catholes” can damage shallow, fragile island soils, so what do you do when nature calls? This section lists options and products for carrying waste off islands and back to the mainland. (See also the Leave No Trace section in Part I.)

- Most cruisers can rely on their porta-potty or boat holding tank. Maine has a growing number of pump out stations (listed in the sidebars of Part II): please take advantage of them.
- Boaters with ample storage space can use a bucket with a tight-fitting lid. Place seawater and porta-potty deodorizer (available at any marine supply store) in the bucket to minimize odors. Once ashore, the contents of the bucket should be dumped in a flush toilet or outhouse.
- Biodegradable bag with kitty litter, sand or leaves. With the air forced out, seal the bag and place in a closed container. Dispose of the contents in a toilet on the mainland, discard the bag, and wash out the container for reuse.
- “Tupperware Party” (personal size). Tupperware container with a water-tight lid, quarter-filled with seawater or other inert material.
- A container can be constructed from PVC pipe purchased from a home supply store. The pipe with a threaded lid seals one end and serves as the tank. Use a small trowel to move waste from the ground to the tank, then add something to minimize odor (seawater, etc.) and seal the threaded lid. Back at home, empty the contents into a toilet and disinfect the container for future use. On longer trips, keep the lid cracked to avoid build-up of gases inside the tank.
- A compact, washable, reusable toilet system called the Boombox has been designed to fit into the limited storage spaces of small boats (including kayaks). It includes a 2.3-gallon tank, a self-storing seat, and a wash-out kit for flushing at dumping stations; it is rated for 20 uses per trip. (See page 320 for purchasing information.)
- Waterproof ammo canister with a garbage bag liner.
- A Ziploc bag, when inverted, can be used to snatch up solid waste found or deposited on the ground.
- MITA member Jim Shaffer suggests a simple solution he calls “Crap Wrap” that starts each session with clean materials and allows for compact storage. To use this approach, you’ll need full-page sheets of newsprint or newspaper for each session, freezer-grade Ziploc sandwich bags (one per session), and two freezer-grade gallon-size Ziploc bags (one for a week’s worth of solid waste and one for clean newsprint and toilet paper).

Shaffer recommends the following procedure:

- Poop on the lower third of the newsprint sheet and add toilet paper. (Try to direct pee elsewhere.) Holding the newsprint at the sides, fold up the bottom a few turns, fold in the outside edges, and complete folding it toward the top. Fit this package into the Ziploc sandwich bag, squeezing out as much air as possible before sealing. Accumulate the sealed sandwich bags in the gallon bag.
- When back ashore, empty the sandwich bag contents into the toilet one at a time. Use a garden trowel or coat hanger to break the contents into two or more pieces to prevent clogging.
- The Ziploc bags can be rinsed with bleach solution and reused.
- The best newspapers for this purpose are water-based as oil-based inks can leave a ring in the toilet bowl. Rub your thumb over the newsprint: if your thumb stays clean, so will the toilet bowl. Paper towels and grocery bag paper do not work as well (and can be harder to break down in the toilet).

Thanks to Jim Shaffer for providing detailed guidance on this method.

Below are products and the approximate costs for various alternatives:

Tupperware: Suitable for kayaks, motor, and sailboats, for trips of varying length depending on container size. Add porta-potty deodorizer to absorb odors. Dispose of contents in your home toilet (avoid flushing clay kitty litter).

Approximate cost: \$5, available at grocery and home goods stores. Approximate cost of deodorizer: \$7; available at marine supply store.

PVC Pipe: Suitable for kayaks, motor, and sailboats, for 10 user days. Appropriate disposal in your home toilet. Approximate cost: \$18 - 10" PVC piping, cap for one end (seal with cement solvent), cap for the other end (removable, with plug)

Scat Packer: Portable toilet-style device suitable for motor and sailboats, up to 40 user days. Appropriate disposal at a marine pump out or RV dump station. Approximate cost: \$104.

503-848-6025 www.scatpacker.com

Boombbox: Small, portable toilet-style device suitable for kayaks, motor, and sailboats, up to 20 user days. Appropriate disposal at a marine pump out or RV dump station, or a home toilet after short trips. Approximate cost: \$60.

316-682-4037 www.eco-safe.net

Restop: Single-use toilet bags suitable for kayaks, motor, and sailboats, for day or overnight use. Appropriate disposal in mainland trash (enzyme formula breaks down waste).

Approximate cost: \$8 for a pack of four.

888-924-6665/760-741-6622 (fax) www.whennaturecalls.com

Wag Bag: Bag and chemical system suitable for kayaks, motor, and sailboats; 2-3 uses per bag. Appropriate disposal in mainland trash (chemicals break down waste).

Approximate cost: \$3.50 per bag.

877-520-0999/406-522-0987 (fax) www.thepett.com