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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Dec. 14, 2016



Under the comprehensive Monroe County pump out program that began in 2013, Pumpout USA's Capt. David Pascale (L) and Capt. David "Doc" Zeh removed the millionth gallon of sewage Dec. 8 from the S/V Bliss that is anchored in Key West Harbor.

PUMPOUT USA COLLECTS MILLIONTH GALLON OF SEWAGE FROM BOATS REGISTERED IN COUNTY'S FREE PROGRAM

KEY LARGO, FL – The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners recognized Pumpout USA for an environmental milestone. This month the mobile vessel pump out service collected its one millionth gallon of sewage under the County's free pump out program for boats anchored in Florida Keys waters.

It would take a pool 267 feet long (nearly the length of a football field), 50 feet wide and 10 feet deep to hold 1 million gallons, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The milestone occurred on Dec. 8, when Pumpout USA removed the human waste from a 49-foot schooner named S/V Bliss that is owned by local captain Rhon Opiela and anchored off Fleming Key in Key West Harbor.

The program, funded by the state and County, has been free to boaters from Key Largo to Key West since its inception in January 2013. Pumpout USA properly disposes of the sewage at marina facilities throughout the County.

“The milestone of 1,000,000 gallons of sewage properly disposed of is a testament to the County’s commitment to protecting the Keys fragile marine environment, and we are very happy to see the boaters on board with the program,” said Rich Jones, senior administrator of Monroe County’s Marine Resources Office.

At the Dec. 14 BOCC meeting in Key Largo, Jones presented Pumpout USA president Donnie Brown with a “golden toilet” paper weight that reads: “No. 1 in the business of No. 2.” Jones also presented him with a plaque.

Monroe County Mayor George Neugent said the program has been a big success and told Brown to keep up the good work of keeping the sewage out of the Keys waters.

Pumpout USA has been with the program since it began. Over the past four years, the company has developed its service and steadily increased its registered customer base to 2,182. Pumpout USA now has seven boats that operate throughout the island chain. Six can hold 350 gallons of sewage and a smaller one launched from boat ramps holds 200 gallons, said John Andzelik, supervising captain of Pumpout USA.

Before the contracted service began in 2013, the County operated one pump out vessel in Key Largo, and the lower Keys had only a couple of privately operated sewage pump out boats that operated sporadically and in limited locations, charging up to \$25 per pump out.

The County set a goal to provide pump out access to all local and transient boaters throughout the 120-mile island chain. This would help prevent illegal discharge of sewage that creates a health hazard and harms the environment and water quality, both to the nearshore waters and out to the coral reef.

In 2013, the County partnered with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to start the Keys-wide pump out program. The County provided start-up funds of \$98,000 for the first quarter of the service. The DEP provided funding through its Clean Vessel Act Program. In September 2014, the BOCC approved an extension of the program through 2016.

In July, with the state providing \$500,000 to operate the program for one more year, the BOCC again approved an extension of the program and approved keeping it free to boaters. Pump outs now run about 1,600 to 2,000 per month in the program.

The state’s contribution pays for 92 percent of the program for a one-year period that began July 1, 2016 and will run through June 30, 2017. The other funding for the pump out service, which costs \$729,800 for the year, comes from a CVA grant of \$172,350 and the County’s match of that grant of \$57,000, which comes from boater improvement funds generated from boat registration fees.

Boaters can call 305-900-0263 to schedule a pump-out or they can register online for routine pump-pout service at www.po-keys.com.