

[The following testimony is a transcription of oral testimony recorded on November 13, 2017, at the webinar hearing for proposed Chapter 173-228 WAC – Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone. The testimony was transcribed by Dept. of Ecology staff. The original audio file of this testimony is part of the rule file (Administrative Order #17-02).]

Alyssa Barton, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance:

So, this is Alyssa Barton. I'm speaking today on behalf of Puget Soundkeeper Alliance. We have over 3,000 members, supporters, and volunteers throughout the Puget Sound watershed, and our mission is to protect and preserve the waters of Puget Sound.

We've been working on this issue for some time, and we are highly supportive of the No Discharge Zone.

I was personally shocked to find out that we were still using Puget Sound as a toilet. I didn't know that, that type of activity went on before I moved out here. But, we need a No Discharge Zone to protect public health, and our shellfish beds, and our other resources, and our water quality in this region.

Even partially treated sewage doesn't always kill all the bacteria that can make people sick. And, you know, we have protections in place to manage land-based sewage. We ought to take this step. It's much needed to manage sewage that's currently being discharged directly into the Sound.

This step was highlighted in the Puget Sound Partnership action agenda for shellfish protection, and it's definitely needed. We would point out that a lot of the boating community here, actually the majority of the boating community, over 97%, are already doing the right thing.

Of those 153,000 recreational boaters, most of them already have marine toilets and tanks onboard to store their blackwater. And of the 36,000 commercial vessels that operate in the Sound, about 34,000 already have tanks onboard, so this isn't going to be a huge heavy lift for them particularly because there's going to be a grace period that's quite generous. For commercial vessels to retrofit, they have five years. So, I think that's a great compromise.

I think this is really needed. And, I think there are enough pump stations, for the most part, throughout Puget Sound to have the capacity to handle the recreational and commercial vessel blackwater. I think we have more than 173 stationary pumpouts at the 102 locations that were mentioned in the slideshow. I know Puget Soundkeeper Alliance has published a guide with pumpout locations around the Sound. We've been doing that for 20 years, I think.

So, I guess, in short, we're highly supportive. The No Discharge Zone is definitely needed, and we can't wait to see it happen.

Thank you.