

New boat means less waste



Annapolis City Administrator Bob Agee, Annapolis Harbormaster Ric Dahlgren, Deputy Annapolis Harbormaster George Ward, West/Rhode Riverkeeper Bob Gallagher, and Watershed Services Official for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Kristin Flemming hand off the Annapolis Harbor pumpout boat to the West/Rhode Riverkeeper Tuesday at the Annapolis City Dock.

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Annapolis -

Less bacteria-laden human waste will be dumped into Anne Arundel County's rivers because the City of Annapolis has a new sewage pumping vessel.

The ship — also called a honeydipper — pulls up beside a boat and easily removes sewage from its holding tank.

Marinas also have their own pumping stations, but the vessel will be a convenient alternative for boaters who now illegally dump raw sewage into the water, said Scott Tinkler, general manager of Port Annapolis Marina, located in Back Creek.

Boaters can dump untreated waste simply by flipping a valve, said Donald O'Neill, federal clean vessel act coordinator for the department.

"Boaters have a choice whether to pollute or not. All we can do is help make that choice easier, by making pumpout stations more readily available," O'Neill said.

The West and Rhode Rivers inherited Annapolis' retired ship — the Gerald W — which pumped more than 300,000 gallons of sewage in its 11 years of use.

Both of the rivers have serious bacteria problems and are listed as impaired rivers by the Maryland Department of the Environment, said Bob Gallagher, the West and Rhode Riverkeeper.

"When bacteria spikes it's going to make people sick if they are swimming in the water. They can get serious gastro-intestinal problems," said Gallagher.

Marinas in the rivers pump sewage out of only 1,500 boats per year — half of the total number of boats that dock there, Gallagher said.

His group will operate the vessel in the rivers at no charge. Annapolis will continue to charge \$5 for the pumping service with its new boat, said Ric Dahlgren, city harbormaster.

Money for the new ship was provided by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, getting about 75 percent of the \$146,000 cost from the federal government, according to a press release.