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EcoConsumer

## Staying green while at the beach

You don't need to leave your green values behind when you take to the beach or boat this summer in the Northwest.

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Special to The Seattle Times

When we're at the beach or on a boat during the short window of summer weather in the Puget Sound area, we don't need to leave our green values at home. So let's dive right in.

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**Q:** We'll start small. Boating or hitting the beach with friends calls for abundant cold beverages, so what's the greenest way to keep them ice-cold?

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**A:** Try to resist buying those cheap Styrofoam-type coolers that may not even make it through one summer. Put some thought into the type of cooler you need (roomy? light? wheeled?) for your various summer activities and make sure you get one that's well-made and durable.

Coolers are a prime seasonal example of our society's shift toward inexpensive, short-lived products that create waste and squander resources. Many of us remember our parents using the same cooler or ice chest every summer for 10 or 15 years, but that's almost unheard of today.

Extend your cooler's life by taking care of it. After each use, wash it with mild soap if needed, or rinse it, and leave it open until it dries. For tough stains, try a well-diluted bleach solution.

**Q:** What about the bigger green picture for summer activities on or near water?

**A:** Safety should always be your first priority, to prevent drownings, severe sunburn and other hazards. Once you have that handled, consider your environmental footprint.

Since even a quart of gasoline, diesel fuel or oil can pollute acres of water and shellfish beds, power boaters and jet skiers need to be especially careful. The Washington Department of Ecology offers green boating tips, from proper waste disposal to using less-toxic cleaning products, at [seati.ms/pHMULo](http://seati.ms/pHMULo).

**Q:** Isn't it a lot greener to be on the water without a gas or diesel engine?

**A:** Absolutely. For a power-boat experience minus the noise and fumes, you can rent a 10-person electric boat for a family outing on Lake Union from the Electric Boat Co. ([theelectricboatco.com](http://theelectricboatco.com)).

To add exercise to your green boating, consider kayaking, canoeing or the fast-growing sport of

stand-up paddle boarding. Rent those nonmotorized watercraft for the afternoon to try them out. Several dozen Western Washington rental locations can be easily found with an online search.

**Q:** Being on the water means we'll get lots of sun, we hope. What's the latest advice about safe, effective sunscreen?

**A:** Since sun can cause cancer and other skin damage, choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects from both UVA (ultraviolet A) rays and UVB (ultraviolet B) rays. Your sunscreen should also have an SPF (sun protection factor) rating of at least 15.

Beyond those basic recommendations, confusion reigns about the best types of sunscreen or the safest ingredients. In June, the Food and Drug Administration announced new regulations ([seati.ms/p8FaQG](http://seati.ms/p8FaQG)) on the claims of sunscreen manufacturers. Although these rules don't take effect until next year, they should provide some clarity for consumers.

The nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG), which conducts extensive research on sunscreens, supports even stricter European-style regulations that limit certain ingredients. EWG's 2011 report on sunscreens, including its rankings of specific products, is at [seati.ms/qhKIVp](http://seati.ms/qhKIVp).

Although anathema to most Seattle residents, the safest strategy may be to wear long-sleeve clothing and avoid direct sun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. When you do use sunscreen, apply it 30 minutes before you go out and reapply it every three hours.

**Q:** Lastly, what's the best way to stay hydrated when we're on the water and out in the sun?

**A:** When filling that cooler, include reusable bottles and plastic jugs full of ice water from the tap. Save money and reduce waste by making fruit drinks from powder mixes that you add to your water.

Once you're safe and green, your "only worry in the world" will be, in the words of a hit country song by the Zac Brown Band, "Is the tide gonna reach my chair?"

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