

BOSWORTH Pumps AS FEATURED IN: **SEA KAYAKER**

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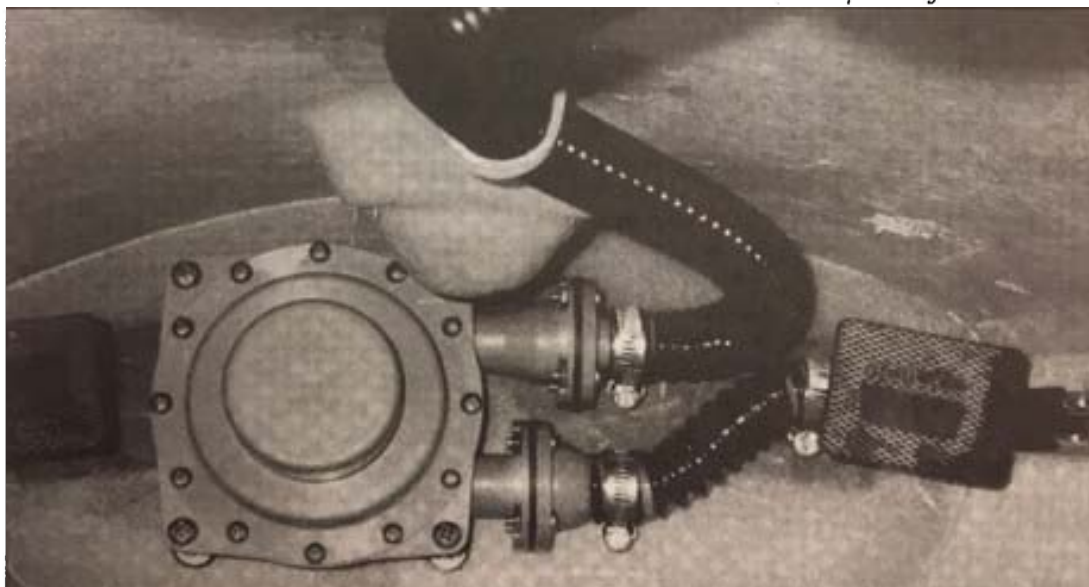


DO IT YOURSELF

FOOT-POWERED BILGE PUMP

Text and photos by Tom Finn

The bulkhead-mounted foot-operated bilge pump resolves both of the hand bilge pump's shortcomings: You can keep your spray skirt sealed and both hands on the paddle while pumping out your cockpit.



The finished pump installation.

Except for the PFD, a kayaker's most basic piece of safety equipment may be the hand-held, hand-operated bilge pump. The hand bilge pump serves its purpose in most situations: practicing rescues, pumping out seepage after practicing rolls or, more rarely, while rafted up with another kayaker during a real rescue. However, if you have to use it while paddling solo in rough weather, you will quickly become aware that it has two fairly serious shortcomings: You can't seal the spray skirt, and you can't keep both hands on the paddle while pumping.

If you go out paddling alone, which many kayakers do at least occasionally, you have an obligation, both to yourself and to any others who might come to your assistance if you get into trouble, to be as self-sufficient as possible. The bulkhead-mounted foot-operated bilge pump resolves both of the hand bilge pump's shortcomings: You can keep your spray skirt sealed and both hands on the paddle while pumping out your cockpit. With basic mechanical skills, a few simple hand tools and a few hours of your time, you can install a foot-operated bilge pump for around a hundred dollars.

There are two additional options when it

comes to hand bilge pumps, but in my opinion, both of these have drawbacks. For about the same cost as a foot pump, and probably with much less work, you can install a battery-powered electric bilge pump (see SK, Aug. '99). However, electric pumps require users to ensure that the batteries are charged before each trip and that the entire electrical system—pump, switch and batteries—is kept completely dry and free of corrosion. The second option is to install a hand-operated, through-deck pump. While this option lets you pump out your cockpit with your spray skirt in place, you can only keep one hand on your paddle while pumping.

Solid Footing

Foot-operated bilge pumps for kayaks are all bulkhead mounted. This location provides a rigid surface and, hopefully, situates the pump within comfortable reach of your feet while you are in your normal paddling position. Wooden or composite kayaks are usually well suited for mounting a foot pump as long as the bulkhead is rigid and firmly attached. In most instances, you can't install a foot pump on the bulkhead of a plastic kayak. Caulked-in foam or plastic bulkheads are not rigid or secure enough to support