

ShopTalk

Q&A with Peter Schrappen

As vice president of the Northwest Marine Trade Association, Peter Schrappen teamed up with other key members to help form the Clean Boating Foundation in Washington State. The Foundation serves to encourage boaters and boatyards to go above and beyond their legal requirements to select the most eco-friendly practices and products when spending time on the water.

In addition, Schrappen serves as the NMTA's director of government affairs, giving him a firm platform for advocating to protect the local marine ecology.

WHAT CAN BOATERS DO TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

I think the great thing about boaters is that they tend to be at least closeted environmentalists, meaning that they already have an appreciation of the outdoors and a desire to preserve that natural beauty. The other great quality they possess is a mindfulness when it comes to purchasing decisions. Very few boaters just go out and buy a boat. Trawler guys tend to do their homework and make an informed, deliberate decision when choosing a boat. I'd encourage boaters to use that same level of critical thinking when it comes to the products they purchase. If boaters put more consideration into "green" products such as paint, anodes, and detergents, and their impact on water quality, they can go a long way towards protecting the environment.

WHAT CAN BOATERS DO ABOUT WATER QUALITY?

The most important products tend to be those that spend the most time submerged in water. There are a few products out there that the Clean Boating Foundation has embraced, in particular, encouraging people to move away from using traditional zincs to combat corrosion. Sacrificial anodes are essential to protecting your cruiser and we highly recommend swapping your zincs for aluminum anodes.

All types of sacrificial anodes are made from alloys; zincs tend to contain cadmium, a known hazard to marine life, whereas aluminum alloys do not. The reason boaters

have been so slow to adopt aluminum is that it took the U.S. Navy—and the anode industry as a whole—time to perfect the alloy to make aluminum anodes truly effective. Those days are long gone, and modern aluminum anodes are more effective, weigh less, and are compatible in both salt and brackish water.

Washington is also the first state in the nation to have a law on the books to phase out the use of copper bottom-paint. Copper is great at killing life that wants to grow on the bottom of boats. Unfortunately, when your copper bottom paint flakes off, it is also great at harming sealife, like young salmon. Companies like Pettit are now offering water-based paints that are just as growth resistant yet pose less of a risk when it falls into the water.

As with all things, it all starts with boat owners, and we are encouraging boaters to ask their boatyards to carry more eco-friendly products, like non-copper paints, to help drive the industry towards being environmentally conscious.

WHAT'S THE LATEST WITH ETHANOL?

For boaters, the big problem with ethanol is how poorly it pairs with marine engines.

Studies conducted by the NMMA have shown that ethanol overall has a lower energy content than gasoline, meaning that about one-third more ethanol is required to travel the same distance as on gasoline. This means boaters must consume more fuel than ever before.

Furthermore, ethanol also has a tendency to attract water, especially salt water, into gasoline. The presence of water causes the ethanol to "sink" out of the fuel, a process called phase separation, forming two separate solutions in your tank. An engine won't run on the ethanol solution and it is corrosive to many components in marine engines.

Fortunately, this issue has become the *cause célèbre* for the NMMA and BoatUS (as well as many other boating groups and associations). As this article goes to print, the U.S. Senate is taking up a comprehensive energy bill, and they will have the opportunity to reject the Renewable Fuel Standard, which is the driving force behind the increase of ethanol blends. If you are a boater, be sure to contact your local senator to voice your concerns.

ARE THERE OTHER ECO-THREATS WORTH NOTING?

Yes, the spread of invasive species has become a huge ecological concern. Invasive species attach themselves to submerged areas and are easily transferred from one body of water to another if not scraped from the hulls and running gear of boats. Places like the Great Lakes, Lake Mead, and Lake Havasu, to name a few, are hurting due to critters like the Zebra and Quagga mussels. While the water in these affected areas looks great because it's so crystal clear, it is only because these mussels have filtered (read: killed off) all the life upon which the food web depends.

Unfortunately, once invasive species are introduced, it is too late.

We recommend maintaining a strong boating hygiene program that keeps you aware of the type of aquatic hitchhikers you might unwittingly be transporting. It's pretty simple: Clean, drain and dry your boat. ■

