

The Green Waterfront (abstract)

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A Call for Marina Muscle

By Dale Gilbert – December 16, 2007

Improvement of our waterfronts will require new products and concentrated efforts by industry professionals. The economic and environmental benefits are too closely allied to ignore. Florida's marine industry represents a total economic output of over \$18.4 billion, greater than the citrus and cruise ship industries combined. It may require formulating a total community, holistic approach to waterway access and clean marinas.

The changing dynamics of committees, regulations and funding agendas make no guarantees but *clean water solutions need action, with or without regulation; and with or without government funding.*

From a collection of articles by a non-profit team of waterfront professionals promoting sustainable building practices and clean marina programs. www.marinaREF.org Other related articles:

ISO 14001 – Waterfront Applications, by Jim Grant

Water Neutral, How Blue is Your Marina? by Mike Calinski

Green Purchasing Programs for Marinas, by Keith Boulais

Can Going Green Mean Waterfront Funding? by Jan McAdams

The Green Marine Contractor, by Steven Webster

Notes on LEED Drystack, by Dale Gilbert

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Franco Bianchi, CEO of Haworth, Inc., designer of work spaces was recently quoted – “We wanted customers to say, Aha! Not only are the products functional and easy to work with, they are sustainable and I can afford them.”

You may ask – What does furniture and office design have to do with marinas?

The day of paying a premium price for quality is soon becoming old and tried. The new paradigm is for the “better” product to be an “all better” product – higher quality, less environmental impact *and less expensive* (or at the very least, attached to a proven return on investment and long term efficiency). When considered in the context of marinas, clean water, and total economic impact, all this becomes a very high priority.

As all waterfront professionals know, the health of boating and waterfront industries have a significant impact on local economies (Example: Marine Industries Association of Florida – Florida's marine industry represents a total economic output of over \$18.4 billion, greater than the citrus and cruise ship industries combined)

Unfortunately, the better parts of our industry message will usually “fly under the radar” of mass media. Articles on boating access or waterfront development, typically, reflect negative opinions about the environmental impact of marinas. Reports are filled with mis-information that catch the attention of elected officials. It is time, and it is imperative, that all our industry components flex their environmental marina muscles, and shine a positive light on the facts.

Waterfront environmental problems are not solved solely by federal or state regulations; nor, may we say, are they solved solely by federal and state funding. They are solved by early involvement of serious, dedicated teams of community leaders striving to improve the local waterway.

Integrating all the local concerns is always a balancing act – but, if the team is faced with a barrage of negative input and alliances whose mission is to eliminate using the waterway at all, it is usually time to rethink the project approach and find more positive resources. Here's a brief list from current references to start:

- The marriage between Clean Water and Clean Marinas is a natural fit, and an indisputable, positive sign of a proactive industry (with over 25 years of clean water program experience). If your state doesn't have a program, you can't go wrong using another state's manual as a model for your business.
- Develop a living marina laboratory as a cooperative with local museums, aquariums and community education efforts. Consider adding environmental product demonstrations as part of fire and water safety programs at marina sites. They serve as introductory programs for community involvement.

- Consider a development focus which is ‘water neutral’. Current buzz words circle around the meaning and methods of being carbon neutral. Marinas can hold the unique position of leading water neutral efforts. There are a number of emerging technologies to help with this approach.
- U.S. Green Building Council has tens of thousands of members in the pursuit of making buildings green. The USGBC provides certifications for green buildings (LEED, Leadership in Environmental Leadership and Design). There are a few LEED marinas. There are no LEED drystacks, as yet.
- The International Standards Organization (ISO) is a non-governmental agency based in Geneva. Let regulators know you are considering an environmental management system (EMS), even if it’s only as an internal guide, and see if you don’t get more cooperation with your master plans. ISO 14001 designations have been awarded to over a dozen marinas in the U.S., and at least one marina product manufacturer is about to receive certification.
- Talk to permit agencies first – a must. Designate a point person as an environmental coordinator or facilitator.
- Boat shows, Marina Day and fishing tournaments offer excellent display times for the “Learning Laboratory”. They present an easy calendar of events to showcase community awareness and the best of the marina.

The bad news is, nothing is simple and there are obviously no guaranteed methods. The changing dynamics of committees, regulations and funding agendas make no project the same as another. ***One message from the industry, however, should be clear --- ‘We are here to help implement clean water solutions, with or without regulation; and with or without government funding.’***

Back to furniture design, product innovation and the good news:

- More and more manufacturers are developing products to assist in a holistic stewardship approach to marinas. The green and sustainable message is part of every company’s practice (or should be); and product innovation is in full swing.
- There are truly products for marina development which test better, pose less environmental impact and cost less (or should be).
- It is a guarantee, that lessons from these efforts will help enlist more marina muscle.