



## Selecting green products for your marina

*Pictured here is the floating structure that received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) designation for Forever Resorts.*

BY DALE GILBERT

**A**s energy saving products and sustainable terms become mainstream, it seems everyone wants to promote their 'green' advantage. Waterfront businesses, such as marinas, boatyards, and service centers, are no exception.

It has become commonplace for suppliers and manufacturers to market their products by touting how green they are or how good they are for the environment. The only problem here is that waterfront businesses don't know if these descriptions are true. Moreover, how do marinas and other businesses perform accurate, apples-to-apples comparisons of green and other products? How good is the "green" warranty? Can the marina justify a cost difference?

### Difficult to answer

Some of these questions can be answered by regulations, such as with the amounts of recycled or recyclable content in products. Testing and technical analysis can answer other questions. In general, however, technologies move too fast, and regulation moves too slow, resulting in a process where many decisions about a "green" product are left

with a thin layer of support.

In today's marketplace where marinas are adding a "green" factor to their purchasing decisions, it is not uncommon for them to reach a level of frustration caused by changing product criteria. At one end of this discussion is 'green-washing,' that is marketing efforts that intentionally mislead or misrepresent product performance. At the other end is a call for the certification of products as "green" under national standards.

Michelle Moore, vice president of policy and public affairs at the U.S. Green Building Council, suggested that marinas seek out third party or industry labels in which an independent entity verifies greenness or that an item meets standards set by an industry consortium.

In trying to determine if its products are "green," marinas will get data from product testing comparisons, Internet searches, and digitized spreadsheets. Many times complete due diligence results in too much data for a timely review and forces the marina to make a simpler choice based solely on price.

### An orderly process

Marinas and boatyards looking to properly institute green and sustainable practices will find real value in the

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work of others in the field. Marinas that follow green practices and purchase green products can provide their waterfront properties with significant short- and long-term cost benefits. Green purchasing programs can result in maintenance cost savings of between 30 and 80 percent. Additional savings are common for environmental improvements to the property.

Here are some examples of marinas that have used environmental planning to jump start operational improvement and a list of the benefits they have achieved.

**Sun Harbor Marina** in San Diego, Calif., is the first LEED designated marina in the United States. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It is a certification process developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and applied to buildings and businesses that are environmental leaders. *Marina Dock Age* profiled this marina and its environmental and green purchasing practices in the September/October 2006 issue. For more information on the marina, visit its Web site: [www.sun-harbor.com](http://www.sun-harbor.com).

**Port Covington Maritime Center** in Baltimore, Md., went beyond typical Clean Marina criteria during recent renovations. Its hands-on project management practices included energy and water saving techniques not previously considered in renovation projects of this sort. In addition, the owner of the boatyard business developed alliances with

the local university to track environmental progress. *Marina Dock Age* profiled the green technology used in this renovation project in its January/February 2008 issue. To find out more about the boatyard/service center, visit the Web site: [www.portcovington.com](http://www.portcovington.com).

**Forever Resorts** is a marina management company that oversees 14 marina properties in four different states implementing ISO 14001 management systems. These international environmental standards have been at Forever Resorts' properties since 2000. A Forever 'green' team has recently completed the first LEED floating dock structure. For more information, visit the Web site: [www.foreverearth.net](http://www.foreverearth.net).

**Fishermen's Village Yacht Basin**, in Punta Gorda, Fla., was named the 2008 "Marina of the Year" by *Marina Dock Age*. One of the reasons why it won this award was its outstanding environmen-

tal practices. The marina is an EPA Energy Star participant and has implemented a Clean Waterfront Renovation (five-year) Program. Visit the Web site: [www.fishville.com](http://www.fishville.com).

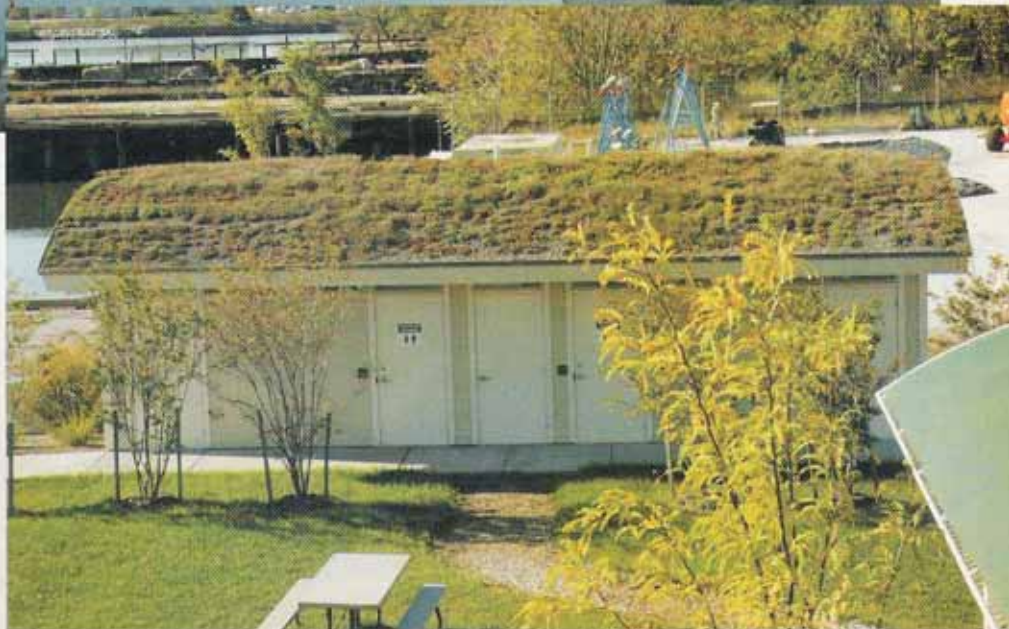
Each year, *Marina Dock Age* surveys Clean Marina programs to determine how they are performing and if more marinas are joining. Each state program (now more than 20 states) has published guidelines and printed workbooks for best management practices. The policies do not endorse specific products but are an excellent source for product comparison. Emphasis is placed on water quality, pollution, and waste management.

The Green Marine Summit is an annual forum sponsored by the Florida Marina Contractors Association and other interested industries. The conference focuses on marina construction and site planning techniques. For



Above: This is the marina location where Forever Resorts installed its LEED certified floating structure.

Right: Wherever practical, Port Covington has deployed grass greenbelts and "living roofs" to capture runoff and keep pollutants out of Chesapeake Bay.



more information, go to the Web site: [www.cleanwaterfront.net/summit](http://www.cleanwaterfront.net/summit).

The Association of Marina Industries and its International Marina Institute are continually upgrading their Certified Marina Manager program to include training for the selection of green products and equipment. To find specific green products, visit the Web site: [www.marinaassociation.org](http://www.marinaassociation.org).

### **Flexibility and adaptability**

Because so much of waterfront planning is site specific, the examples previously cited are not a signal to develop standards for regulation. On the contrary, green marina purchasing practices should remain flexible.

However, marinas, boatyards, and other businesses can draw some general conclusions from the purchasing programs used in these projects. Marinas should compile a list of the benefits gained from implementing sustainable procurement policies and use them as green "starter kits."

One of the first conclusions is that

sustainable purchasing programs require commitment. This means from the top down. History indicates that marinas will realize little value if policies are not practiced company-wide.

Second, the marina needs to identify, record, reference, and update quantifiable benchmarks for green products. Descriptions of 'energy saving' and 'conservation' products are meaningless without starting numbers.

A third conclusion is to get more staff people involved in the purchasing process. The inclusion of more people can allow marinas to:

- Review the methods and manufacturing practices of vendors and suppliers. Review the supply chain, delivery, and distribution efficiency. Review company history, warranty follow through, and quality control system.

- Review products by benchmarks, testing, industry standards, and certifications. Staff should examine technical references, such as material specification and data sheets from the American Society for Testing and Materials, along

with specification formats from the Construction Specification Institute.

- Manage applications so that the best green product doesn't become a pollutant or waste material because contractual and maintenance procedures are not consistent with environmental goals. Marinas should review installation techniques, product life cycles, and use patterns. Use Clean Marina and Clean Boatyard criteria.

Finally, marinas can help push the green agenda by measuring their results and adjusting goals to another level. As benchmarks and results are recorded, marinas should refocus efforts on new goals because designing, building, and operating green, sustainable, and Clean Marinas are an ongoing process. ⚓

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