

Creating a green waterfront calls for

MARINA MUSCLE

BY DALE GILBERT

Francò Bianchi, chief executive officer of Haworth, Inc., the Holland, Mich.-based designer of work spaces, recently said "We want customers to say, 'Aha! Not only are the products functional and easy to work with, they are sustainable and I can afford them.'"

Many of you are probably asking, "What does furniture and office design have to do with marinas?" The answer is that it's a way of introducing a new mindset for the marina industry called "Think Green!"

CHANGING TIMES

The days of paying a premium price for a quality product have become old and tired. The new paradigm for business is that the "better" product should be a "better product" in nearly every aspect. It has to be of higher quality, environmentally-friendly, and less expensive (or at the very least, be 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 these factors become very high priorities.

As all waterfront professionals know, healthy boating and waterfront industries have a significant impact on local economies. One need only examine Southern Florida to see the reality of this statement. The Marine Industries Association of South Florida, Florida's premier marine industry association, reports that the state's marine industry, both directly and indirectly, represents a total annual economic output of more than \$18 billion, which is far greater than the combined economic impact of the citrus and cruise ship industries.

Unfortunately, the industry's message about its economic impact, environmental stewardship, and recreational benefits seems to be lost on most people, primarily because the mainstream media wants to portray the boating industry

solely as yachts and megayachts, which represent but a small fraction of the total boating industry.

A review of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio outlets reveals that most articles and reports on boating access or waterfront development typically reflect negative opinions about the environmental impact of marinas. These articles and reports are filled with information that catch the attention of community residents and elected officials, but are not true portrayals of marinas or boatyards.

AN ORGANIZED RESPONSE

So how does the marina industry combat these negative reports and get its positive message out to regulators and the community? There's no simple answer, but now is the time for all members of the marina industry to come together, join forces, and flex their cumulative marina muscles to shine a positive light on the marina industry



City Harbor Marina in Annapolis, Md., was the first marina to receive a Clean Marina designation from the first state in the nation to have a Clean Marina program (picture courtesy of marinas.com)

As much as the industry doesn't want to face the fact that state and federal funding alone cannot solve waterfront environmental problems, it must also realize that the early involvement of serious, dedicated teams of community leaders striving to improve the local waterway are needed to gain permits and move waterfront projects forward.

Integrating all the local concerns is always a balancing act, but the marina team usually faces a barrage of negative input, along with alliances whose mission is to stop marinas from using the waterway at all. Faced with this organized opposition, marinas usually respond that it's time to rethink the project approach and look for more positive resources.

Instead of turning tail in the face of this organized opposition, today's marina industry needs to fight in an organized, constructive fashion. Here are some examples of how this is currently being accomplished.

The marriage between Clean Water and Clean Marinas is a natural fit, and an indisputable, positive sign of a proactive industry. Although not every state has a Clean Marina program, these environmental programs are sure signs of what the marina industry's goals are both now and in the future. Marinas that don't have Clean Marina programs can't go wrong using another state's manual as a business model.

Marinas need to cooperate with local museums, aquariums, and community education efforts to develop living marina laboratories. Marinas should consider adding environmental product demonstrations as part of their fire and water safety programs at marina sites. They serve as introductory programs for community involvement.

Marinas should consider developing a "water neutral" focus. Current buzz words circle around the meaning and methods of being carbon neutral. Marinas can hold a unique position of leading water neutral efforts. There are a number of emerging technologies to help with this approach.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has tens of thousands of members who are pursuing efforts to make their buildings "green." The USGBC provides certifications for



Marina Day Kids is a community outreach event held at Harbourtowne Marina in Dania Beach, Fla.

green buildings. These are called LEED-certified buildings, that is, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. There are a few LEED-certified marinas. There are no LEED drystacks, as yet.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) is a non-governmental, standards-setting agency based in Geneva, Switzerland. It awards certification to manufacturing operations based on the following operating processes. ISO 14001 is an environmental certification and a dozen U.S. marinas have received this designation, and at least one marina product manufacturer is about to receive this certification. Marinas should inform regulators about their environmental management systems (EMS), even if it's only as an internal guide, and see if the marinas don't receive more cooperation with their master plans.

Marinas need to stay in constant contact with permitting agencies. This is a must because this is the first place marinas must visit when making changes, upgrades, renovations, and renewals at their marinas. Designate a point person as an environmental coordinator or facilitator.

Boat shows, National Marina Day, and fishing tournaments offer excellent opportunities for marinas to display the "Learning Laboratory." These events allow marinas to showcase community awareness and highlight the benefits marinas bring to the local communities.

Although there are no guaranteed

methods for gaining permits and winning community support for marinas, these are two issues that all marinas must put into their strategic business plans. The changing dynamics of committees, regulations, and funding agendas make each project different. However, there must be one message from the industry, "We are here to help implement clean water solutions, with or without regulation and with or without government funding."

If the marine and marina industries are to change their thinking to "Think Green," marinas then need to be aware that more and more manufacturers are developing products to assist in a holistic stewardship approach. The green and sustainable message is part of every company's practice (or should be) and product innovation is in full swing.

Make no mistake about it, the marina industry's "green efforts" are just beginning, but to be successful, all marinas need to get on the bandwagon. The lessons that marinas learn from these efforts will help enlist more marina muscle. ⚓

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