

Clean Marinas, Healthy Coasts



With its beautiful beaches, temperate weather, and plentiful fishing opportunities, North Carolina is considered a boater's paradise. Approximately 370,000 boaters take advantage of the state's unique coastal resources each year for recreation, fishing, and touring. Although boats and associated industries, such as marinas and boatyards, can have an impact on coastal ecosystems, there are also opportunities for marina operators and boaters to become leaders in "clean boating" through the N.C. Clean Marina program. The N.C. Clean Marina initiative was the focus of a February 18th workshop hosted by the N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve's Coastal Training Program. The workshop was attended by 45 marina owners and operators, regulators from state environmental agencies, environmental non-profits, and marine industry vendors, who gathered to learn how to incorporate sound environmental and safety practices into marina operations.

The workshop began with an overview of the N.C. Clean Marina initiative by program manager Pat Durrett. The N.C. Clean Marina program was designed to satisfy the requirements of the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program, which is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to address nonpoint pollution associated with runoff, precipitation, and drainage. Marina operations can contribute to nonpoint source pollution when activities like fueling boats, powerwashing, and pumping-out waste produce runoff into adjacent waterways. Administered as a voluntary initiative by the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, the N.C. Clean Marina program works with marinas to address these potential issues and incorporate best management practices to protect the environment and promote safe operations. By implementing best practices related to recycling and labeling, handling of fuel, spill management, and hazardous waste disposal, marinas and boatyards are eligible to apply for certification as a N.C. Clean Marina. After completing an application and site visit from Ms. Durrett to ensure regulatory compliance and utilization of best management practices, marinas are officially certified, and receive benefits such as a flag, media exposure, links on the Division's website, and technical assistance from N.C. Clean Marina staff. Program participants also cited the marketing and insurance benefits associated with being a N.C. Clean Marina, as the designation attracts responsible boaters, demonstrates environmental stewardship, and reduces liability by improving worker safety and ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.

After the program introduction, experts from the N.C. Big Sweep and the International Marina Institute provided unique perspectives on recycling monofilament fishing line and career development for marina professionals. Then representatives from the N.C. Division of Water Resources and Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources spoke with participants about water quality and stormwater regulations that impact the marina industry. By complying with regulations and working with state agencies to address water quality concerns, adopting best practices associated with recycling monofilament line, and developing professional standards for marina management, marina operators can improve their public perception and protect the valuable coastal resources that are important to their continued business success. As participants agreed, clean marinas can contribute to a healthy coast, which is good for the environment and for business.

A second N.C. Clean Marina workshop is scheduled for March 5, 2014 in Wilmington. Registration for this free workshop closes February 26. Please visit www.nccoastaltraining.net to register.