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Being an Environmentally Kind Boater

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Florida is well known for its sun, beaches, and amusement parks, but boating and recreational fishing are other popular past times for both residents and visitors. According to the Marine Industries Association of Florida, boating is estimated to be a \$14 billion industry. This figure includes boaters, marinas, and boatyards. However, boating contributes to the pressure put on our aquatic resources. Spilled fuel, exhaust fumes, trash, boat sewage, cleaning products, and grey water can degrade surface waters.

In order to help reduce water pollution, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Division of Law Enforcement formed the Clean Boating Partnership (CBP). Through partnering with other state agencies and representatives of privately owned, municipal, and city owned marinas throughout the state, programs have been developed that target recreational boaters, marinas, and boatyards

One program is the Clean Boating Program, which was developed to educate recreational boaters about environmentally friendly boating habits. The "Clean Boating Habits" booklet provides boaters with facts, goals, and actions about environmentally friendly alternatives on managing situations such as hurricane preparation, boat cleaning, and fueling. Information is also given on handling waste and grey water and preventing the spread of exotic species. To become part of this program and receive this valuable booklet, boaters are asked to first take the "Clean Boater Pledge" where boaters promise to set an example by preventing water pollution, recycling, preventing the spread of exotics, and encouraging other boaters to follow these practices. Participants also receive other stuff like a program decal and incentive items.

Another way for boaters to keep Florida's waters clean is to use a "Clean Marina." Marinas that choose to take part in the program must first complete a Clean Marina Action Plan, which is a self-assessment of a marina's operations. After completion, owners set a deadline to correct any areas that do not meet the program's criteria. Once all corrections have been made and verified by members of the CBP and District DEP, the marina receives the Clean Marina designation. Marinas are given a plaque and flag to show off their commitment to prevent pollution. To aid owners in attaining the status, program criteria known as Marina Environmental Measures have been put into place to guide marina owners. Annual assessments are done to ensure that program criteria and practices are still being followed by designated marinas. By using Clean Marinas, boaters are sending a message that protecting the waterways is important.

A similar program to Clean Marina is Clean Boatyard, which targets facilities that repair, refinish, and clean boats. This program also encourages the adoption of environmentally friendly practices that are greater than minimum regulatory requirements through assessment and incorporation of corrective measures according to program criteria.

These programs are a great way to learn how to protect our resources while enjoying some time out on the water. So, apply some “prier pressure” and encourage fellow boaters, marinas, and boatyards to take part. For more information, contact your local extension office or visit <http://www.floridacleanboatingpartnership.com>.