

# Send in the marinas

Key stewards in Michigan's boating community are leading the charge to protect the quality of Michigan's waterways. BY JEFF SPENCER



**B**oating is one of Michigan's most popular pastimes. The state has 1 million registered boats — more than any other state — and 750 marinas.

But this popularity also has a downside. Each year, hazardous substances are inadvertently released into Michigan's land, water and air as a result of common boating practices.

The Michigan Clean Marina Program is an industry-led partnership between the Michigan Boating Industries Association, Michigan Sea Grant College Program, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The program supports management of profitable businesses, while protecting and enhancing the quality

of Michigan's waterways. The strength of the program lies in its ability to integrate economic success with natural resource protection.

"It has been my concern that some of our citizens may think that those who use our waters for recreation, specifically power boating, are not concerned about our environment. Nothing is farther from the truth," stated Van Snider, president of the Michigan Boating Industries Association.

"The Michigan Clean Marina program not only encourages environmental best-management practices, it also shows that those of us who make our living in the recreational boating industry are proactive in protecting our environment, and the boating public wants to ensure they are boating in a water environment they can enjoy.

"Without a quality boating experience, we won't be in business."

The Clean Marina program was developed to protect water resources and wildlife habitat by promoting environmentally sound marina operations and boating practices. It is a voluntary stewardship program open to all public and private marinas within the state.

"I can personally testify that this program has helped us become a stronger, more informed marina," said Ward Walstrom Jr., CEO and vice president of sales for Walstrom Marine,

## Partners In Great Progress

Designated Michigan Clean Marinas

**Bay Harbor**  
Bay Harbor Co.

**Charlevoix**  
Irish Boat Shop

**Hammond Bay**  
Hammond Bay State Harbor

**Harbor Springs**  
Harbor Springs Municipal Marina  
Irish Boat Shop  
Walstrom Marine

**Harrison Township**  
Belle Maer Harbor  
MacRay Harbor

**Holland**  
Yacht Basin Marina

**Lexington**  
Lexington State Dock

**Macatawa**  
Eldean Shipyard

**Mackinac Island**  
Mackinac Island State Harbor

**Port Austin**  
Port Austin State Dock

**Presque Isle**  
Presque Isle State Harbor

**Petoskey**  
Petoskey City Marina



which services boaters from three marinas in Harbor Springs and Cheboygan.

"As we now look around our facility, we are proud of what we see, and as a member of the Michigan Clean Marina Program, we will continue to help protect our clean water and our environment."

As pledging participants in the program, marinas do their part by reducing and eliminating releases and discharges of harmful pollutants, sediments, nutrients, general refuse and anything else that can damage aquatic environments.

In order to receive official designation as a Clean Marina, participants are required to complete a 10-step process, which starts by attending a workshop where participating marina operators have an opportunity to learn about proper management practices and environmental stewardship. These one-day workshops include presentations, a guidebook and tip sheets.

Following attendance at a workshop, the marina operators return to their facilities, complete self-evaluation checklists for their property, and when appropriate, request a site visit and eventual designation.

Observed changes in operations by participating marinas include increased presence of spill kits at the fueling dock; recycling programs; greater communication between marinas and boaters regarding environmental issues; and increased aware-

ness of potential environmental concerns on the Great Lakes and inland waterways.

"Participating in and being certified a Michigan Clean Marina has been a very positive experience for Eldean Shipyard," said Wade Eldean of the Macatawa-based marina. "It's great to be able to tell our friends, customers and community that our business has environmentally friendly operations and that we are actively working to preserve the future of our waters."

Benefits of becoming a designated Clean Marina include preventing pollution and improving water quality in the Great Lakes; protecting fish and wildlife habitat, including gaining education regarding the introduction and spread of non-native aquatic invasive species; enhancing public image by promoting environmentally sound practices; and saving money by adopting cost-effective, best-management practices.

"I believe our customers have come to expect the level of stewardship that comes with being a Michigan Clean Marina," said Jack Hodge, vice-president and general manager of Irish Boat Shop in Charlevoix.

"They understand that their enjoyment of the water is in direct proportion to the quality of that water." ≈

*Jeff Spencer is a project manager with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.*