

Phase Out of Copper Bottom Paint - A bill passed by the Washington state legislature in 2012 initiated the phase-out of copper bottom paint on all recreational boats less than 65-feet in length. The legislation, calls for a gradual elimination of the paint's application by 2020.

The first step in the law calls for a study to be performed in 2017 examining the effectiveness of non-copper bottom paint to ensure enough alternatives to copper paint are available in the market. In 2018, no new recreational boats up to 65-feet in length may be sold in Washington state with copper paint applied. In 2020, no copper paint will be available at point-of-sale for recreational boats up to 65-feet in length, and copper paint may not be applied to recreational boats up to 65-feet in length.

Copper-based paints have long been effective in preventing marine growth on the bottom of vessels. But the metal can have a detrimental effect on salmon in the region, even at small doses. Washington boatyards have been dealing with ever increasing copper regulations since 1992 when the first boatyard permit was issued.

The bill was a proactive measure by the Northwest Marine Trade Association (NMTA), whose members include boatyards, marinas, boat and accessory dealers, manufacturers, and more, to address growing pressure on its member boatyards by local environmental groups. In 2009, five boatyards received intent-to-sue letters from one group, alleging each boatyard was in violation of the federal Clean Water Act. Each boatyard settled with the group, costing the yards more than a combined \$77,000 in legal fees. Following the settlements, NMTA began taking steps to help its members reduce the level of copper and other water-borne pollutants flowing from their properties.

NMTA President George Harris said it was important to pass this bill and to limit the phase-out to boats under 65' for several reasons.

"The boatyard permit issued by the state's Department of Ecology applies to yards who work on boats 65-feet and smaller," said Harris. "Eliminating the pollution at the source, through this copper phase-out, was the best path to protecting boatyards, and boating in the region. Additionally, Washington state is a world leader in yacht building, with brands such as Westport, Delta, and Christensen headquartered here," said Harris, "We know the majority of those yachts are shipped all over the world. If the copper phase-out extended to boats larger than 65-feet, it would put our yacht manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage."

E-Paint, Sea Hawk Paint, Pettit Paints and Interlux all offer copper free alternatives. If you are preparing to re-paint the bottom of your boat, you may want to research these environmentally friendlier alternatives and determine with your boatyard vendor which alternative will work best on your boat. The Clean Boating Foundation has been tracking non-copper bottom paint performance and wants to have before and after pictures and boat owner's stories about their experience with various copper free bottom paints. You can visit their website www.cleanboatingfoundation.org to view stories and see results.