

Green and Clean Marinas

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INTRO: This is Superior Science News. Today's program explores efforts to make marinas in Minnesota and Wisconsin more environmentally friendly.

Great Lakes states have been examining ways to minimize their impact on lake environments. Minnesota and Wisconsin are no exception. The two states are joining forces to develop successful clean or green marina programs to protect Lake Superior. Wisconsin Sea Grant Coastal Engineering Specialist Gene Clark says they started looking at the issue a few years ago.

"... Clean Marina Program in Wisconsin actually started several years ago. The Wisconsin Coastal Management Program started the initial work on the program, collected some of the best management practices that marinas would follow, developed a booklet called *Ship Shape* and then sent that out to many of our marinas within the state. That's as far as it went."

Clark says now they're looking at a certification program where they can talk to marinas and recommend practices they can implement to protect the lake.

"... Demonstrate the practices, show them where they can make modifications to their operations to do a better job with nonpoint source pollution abatement, and then go back afterward and walk through the marina with them and talk about how are things working and are there any other changes they can still make to make things better."

Minnesota Sea Grant Extension Educator Dale Bergeron says it just makes sense.

"Marinas are the primary access point for many, many boaters and fisherman. So, they're a great opportunity to not only make sure that boating is done in a responsible manner but also as a focal point for dispersing information."

Bergeron says marinas are eager to protect their greatest resource.

"Boaters want to be out in the wilderness or they want to be in pristine environments. So, they're going to seek out leaders in the industry that are preserving the resources that they'd like to use. I think most marina owners are really wanting to do a good job. The question is do they have the information that they need and do they have the incentives that will allow them to upgrade."

Clark says state clean marina programs will need to compile a workbook of best practices for marinas.

“... Practices such as how you fuel your boat, what you do with the waste products of the boat. It focused on marina practices such as stormwater runoff from their parking lots – practices such as where they maintain boats, where they paint boats, where they repair boats, and practices that try to keep pollutants out of the water.”

Both Clark and Bergeron emphasize the need for marina owners to be involved and at the core of the program’s design.

“Probably, the biggest, most important element of a successful green marina program is that it’s run by and developed by the users. Unless the program is seen as a resource, it won’t be fully optimized.”

Clark says they received a thirty-thousand-dollar grant from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program to help guide the state’s clean marina program.

“... Develop the workbook, develop the training modules and initiate the program and then hand that off to a newly developed committee called the Wisconsin Marinas Association, which will be the real lead agency implementing this program.”

Both states will be talking with marinas this summer. Bergeron says it’s important that marinas see the program as an opportunity.

“It would not in any way, shape, or form be an enforcement program or regulator’s program. So, it would be to provide a service to the marina operators. Secondly, we’d try to help clarify for them what the national and specific state laws were that might apply to them.”

Bergeron hopes these clean marina programs will be able to offer incentives to marinas, such as low-interest or no-interest loans. He hopes that will allow them to make changes to help protect the lake and possibly become a nationwide trend.

“So the idea is that not only can we develop a clean marina program for Minnesota and Wisconsin in a collaborative effort, but maybe we can start to create shared resources on a national level – create a database of best practices and a database of resources we can set examples of what state legislation can be implemented to support the development of cleaner marinas and the improvement of marinas that already exist.”

For Superior Science News, I’m Marie Zhuikov.

Outro: This has been a production of the Minnesota Sea Grant program at UMD and KUWS Radio.

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