



Potential Models for a Program to Recognize Environmentally Responsible Marinas in Northwest Mexico

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Potential Models for a Program to Recognized Environmentally-Responsible Marinas in Northwest Mexico

There are over a dozen programs in North America and Europe to certify environmentally-responsible boating facilities. Any one of these programs could be adapted to fit the needs of Mexico's marina community. The three models that seem most appropriate, however, are Europe's **Blue Flag Campaign**, Ontario's **Clean Marine Eco-rated Marinas**, and the **Maryland Clean Marina Initiative** from the United States. Each program is summarized below.

Blue Flag Campaign



Summary

The Blue Flag is an exclusive eco-label awarded to more than 2,800 beaches and marinas in 23 countries across Europe and South Africa in 2002. The Blue Flag Campaign began in 1987 and is run by the independent non-profit organization Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The Blue Flag is a symbol of high environmental standards as well as good sanitary and safety facilities at beaches and marinas. The Blue Flag Campaign includes environmental education and information for the public, decision makers and tourism operators.

Award Criteria

To qualify for the Blue Flag award, marinas must meet criteria relating to:

- environmental education and information,
- environmental management,
- safety and services, and
- water quality.

Some criteria are imperative whereas others are guidelines. All imperative requirements have to be fulfilled along with a defined number of guideline criteria. For example, one imperative criterion is that hazardous wastes—such as solvents and waste oil—must be collected in segregated containers, handled by a licensed contractor, and disposed of at a licensed facility for hazardous waste. A guideline criterion is that toilet pumping facilities are present in the marina. The complete award criteria for marinas can be found at www.blueflag.org/CriteriaMarinas.asp.

All Blue Flags are awarded for one season at a time. If some of the imperative criteria are not fulfilled during the season or the conditions change, the Blue Flag will be withdrawn.

Establishment of the Blue Flag Campaign in a New Country

In order for a new country to establish a Blue Flag Campaign, a suitable organization must be identified to carry out the task as national Blue Flag operator. The organization must be a non-profit, non-governmental, independent organization and it must have environmental education and protection as important objectives. It is an obvious advantage if the organization has a history of environmental work related to local authorities and also experiences with national initiatives. If there is no suitable organization, a new national organization can be founded.

Once such an organization is found or founded, it must become a member of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The organization must be in accordance with the statutes of FEE, be able to raise the necessary funds to pay the subscription fee, be able to run the Blue Flag Campaign and, lastly, be ready and willing to participate in other FEE activities as well. The FEE General Assembly approves applications for membership and puts a great deal of emphasis on whether the organization generally shares the objectives of FEE.

In order to implement the Blue Flag Campaign, the FEE member organization must go through the following four steps in the implementation process:

1. Organize a Blue Flag workshop/meeting,
2. Establish a Blue Flag national committee,
3. Carry out the Blue Flag feasibility phase (production of national and local feasibility report), and
4. Run the Blue Flag pilot phase (testing compliance at pilot sites, filling in the gaps).

Furthermore, the national organization and committee work in cooperation with FEE to decide on regional Blue Flag criteria. The regional criteria must have the same high level of quality as in Europe but must be adapted to the environmental conditions in the region.

Highlights

- By joining this established, international program, Mexico could immediately build upon existing Blue Flag recognition and credibility.
- As part of the implementation process, the award criteria would be tailored to the environmental conditions in the region.

Source: www.blueflag.org.



Clean Marine Eco-rated Marinas

Summary

“Eco-rated Marinas” are marinas in Ontario, Canada that have adopted Environmental Best Practices as a policy and way of doing business. Using a Clean Marine Manual developed in 1997, participating marinas are guided through environmentally responsible practices in all marine operations. The manual was produced through the cooperation of the Ontario Marine Operators Association (OMOA), Environment Canada, and Ontario Ministry of Environment. Eco Ratings are achieved in an audit covering more than 200 environmental practices. This audit is completed by Terra Choice Environmental Services licensed by Environment Canada. Results are then converted to a rating system with a low of one and a high of five green anchors.

Award Criteria

The award criteria are proprietary and, therefore, not available for review. According to OMOA, however, a facility that is in compliance with 50 percent of the applicable items on the award checklist is awarded a single green anchor. Each additional ten percent on the checklist is recognized with another anchor.

Highlights

- Environmental audits are conducted by an independent third party.
- Following an audit, a marina is given a report describing what can be done to increase the facility's score.
- The tiered rating system (one to five green anchors) allows facilities to be recognized for their initial efforts while working toward a higher goal, *i.e.*, additional green anchors. Also, allows boaters and other interested parties to distinguish between facilities that are making some effort to protect natural resources and those that have truly superior environmental practices.

For more information, visit www.omoa.com/clean_marine.asp or contact Bob Eaton, Ontario Marine Operators Association at 705-326-9359, robert.eaton@sympatico.ca or Kevin Gallagher, Terra Choice, 613-247-1900.

Source: www.omoa.com/clean_marine.asp and conversation with Bob Eaton, 4/30/03.



Maryland Clean Marina Initiative

Summary

The Maryland Clean Marina Initiative was developed in response to federal legislation requiring states to address nonpoint source pollution generated at marinas. Rather than developing additional regulations, the State created this voluntary program to certify and promote environmentally-responsible marinas. The Clean Marina Initiative was developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in cooperation with marina operators and government and environmental representatives. To help facilities achieve Clean Marina status, the program offers a range of technical assistance including templates for commonly needed plans, grant funding, informal site assessments, and educational materials to distribute to boaters.

Award Criteria

The steps to clean marina certification are as follows.

- Sign a **pledge** committing to protect Maryland's waterways from harmful chemicals, excess nutrients and debris. A press release is issued by DNR for each pledge received.
- Conduct a **self-assessment** using the Clean Marina Award Checklist. The checklist is keyed to the *Maryland Clean Marina Guidebook*, a comprehensive pollution prevention manual for marina operators. The checklist is divided into eight sections: vessel maintenance and repair, petroleum control, emergency planning, sewage handling, waste containment and disposal, marina management, stormwater management, and marina design and maintenance. Marinas must comply with all applicable legal requirements and achieve a minimum score for each section of the checklist.
- Marina operators are invited to call upon a **mentor** for assistance. Clean Marina staff and committee members, along with members of the Marine Trade Association of Maryland, are available to provide confidential advice.
- Once a marina operator feels that his or her facility meets the minimum award criteria, a **confirmation visit** is scheduled. During the visit, a member of the Clean Marina staff and the operator of a certified Clean Marina verify that the candidate marina meets the award criteria. If the marina does not meet the criteria, Clean Marina staff send a letter outlining what additional steps need to be taken. Alternatively, if the inspection team feels that the facility meets the award criteria the staff member sends an email to the full Clean Marina committee asking for their consent.
- A certified Clean Marina is **rewarded** with a 3'x5' flag bearing the Clean Marina logo, a smaller burgee, a certificate signed by the State governor and the secretary of DNR, promotion in Clean Marina exhibits and displays, and another press release.

- Certified Clean Marinas are responsible for **maintaining** the award standards. They affirm in writing annually that they continue to meet or exceed the Clean Marina criteria. At least every third year, a re-certification visit is scheduled.

Highlights

- The process of including industry representatives in program development and implementation has lead to greater acceptance of this government program than may have otherwise been anticipated. Also, industry involvement in establishing the award criteria insured that the standard is practical and appropriate for the mid-Atlantic region.
- Operators of certified Clean Marinas participate in confirmation visits of candidate marinas. This industry participation creates a collegial, rather than confrontational, atmosphere.
- The pledge phase provides an easy initial step for marina operators followed immediately by public recognition generated by the DNR-issued press release. This “early rewards” aspect of the program was designed to give marina operators positive reinforcement and, thus, encouragement to proceed to full certification.
- Free technical assistance is available to help marina operators both comply with their legal obligations and to meet the Clean Marina standards.

For more information, visit www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/cleanmarina or contact Donna Morrow at 410-260-8773 or dmorrow@dnr.state.md.us.