

Bottom Paint: The Big Picture and the Long Haul

Consistent with our past tests, self-polishing or ablative paints make up the majority of the market by about a 4-to-3 ratio. After 18 months, the field of top performing paints is almost evenly split between ablative/copolymers and hard antifoulants.

Irgarol remains the most common anti-slime agent used in conjunction with a copper-based paint by about a 4-to-1 margin over the more expensive, zinc-based chemicals. Results for these paints has been evenly mixed Fair and Good ratings. Three of the four copper-based paints using a zinc-based anti-slime agent have performed at a higher level with ratings averaging Good or better. Although one of these, Micron Optima, is no longer available, the other two are on our recommended list. Still, the majority of recommended paints contain no anti-slime agent at all.

Irgarol is used as a standalone antifoulant in a few freshwater paints, and in our testing, its performance has generally been poor. Zinc-based agents have produced somewhat better results as standalone antifoulants, though at a higher price.

Our last “top pick” paint from the 18-month panels was Interlux Micron Optima. This paint is no longer available, and so will not be given a recommendation. After 18 months underwater, two paints have emerged as winners on this set of panels: Blue Water Kolor and Interlux Micron 66.

After 18 months of testing, we were hard-pressed to find a wa-

SPECIALTY PAINTS BY TYPE AT 18 MONTHS	
WHITE/BRIGHT	BLUE WATER KOLOR
NO COPPER	EPAINT Z0 (rated fair in both locales)
RACING	INTERLUX VC OFFSHORE
WATER-BASED	INTERLUX FIBERGLASS BOTTOMKOTE AQUA, PETTIT HYDROCOAT, INTERLUX BOTTOMKOTE AQUA (all rated fair in both locales)

ter-based or aluminum-friendly paint that performed well. None protected as well as their more potent competitors: The best rated Fair, so you won't find them in the 18-month chart—only paints scoring Good or better make the long-term chart. See the table above to find out which of these paints did the best.

Our three worst paints after 18 months, with across-the-board Poor ratings, were Interlux VC-17m, Epaint EP-21, and Sea Hawk Mission Bay CSF. All of these paints are designed to have minimum impact to the environment and are meant to serve a niche market, for use either in freshwater areas or for those boatowners whose environmental conscience is stronger than their disdain for bottom scrubbing.