

'We Want It All, and We Want It Now'

The Holy Grail for marine antifouling paint makers is a pesticide- and biocide-free, non-toxic, low volatility bottom paint that keeps every hull its applied to slick-clean for years. Unfortunately, no one has conjured up this witches' brew as yet, and according to our past test results, this panacea of bottom paints is well off into the future. But they try—oh, do they try.

The reason paint makers seek such a revolution in bottom paint is certainly not from inherent altruism. Two things are pushing makers to find a formula that work. One is an increasingly regulated marketplace and the other, as always, is money.

The money and time spent getting paints with copper, tin, or anti-slime agents like Irgarol or Zinc-based compounds past the EPA is becoming increasingly expensive and time-consuming. According to Epaint President Alex Walsh, taking a single new paint through the EPA hoops could cost as much as a half-million dollars and take as long as seven years. Walsh also told us that any paint said to be "anti-fouling" must go through the EPA process.

Some have sidestepped the EPA approval process by not calling their paints "anti-fouling." But even this can be a costly process. Just ask Brad Lienhart from Microphase Coatings. Microphase nearly went bust when their PhaseCoat UFR failed miserably in the field—and in our testing—after working well under laboratory conditions. "This product did not perform well in the real world dynamic environment. In a short period of time (two to three months), it won't self clean and boat owners were real unhappy," Lienhart explained.

PhaseCoat has been pulled from the market, and the company has incurred the expense of removing it from a number of boats. They are not giving up though, as the company continues development of another non-fouling



PS's past tests have found that eco-friendly paints wax and wane in effectiveness, just as most copper-based paints do. One 'green' paint, Microphase PhaseCoat UFR (above left panel), failed during our tests and has been pulled off the market.

paint to be marketed to sailboat owners as Bare Bottom. This product is a one-part epoxy modified polysiloxane designed to be slick enough to keep marine growth from adhering to the boat bottom. Bare Bottom will have an MSRP of \$299 per gallon. Ouch—we'll hold our applause until we see how well it works.

Bringing any new bottom paint to market is a costly proposition. And—as evidenced by the price of the Bare Bottom—being an eco-friendly consumer doesn't come cheap. Copper-free paints can cost more than \$150 a gallon. Epaint's ZO rings in at \$212 per gallon.

We just hope to someday see a cost-effective, eco-friendly paint that actually controls both hard and soft marine growth well. After six months, the best eco-friendly paints were Flexdel Aquagard Alumi-Koat and Sea Hawk's Mission Bay CSF. After 18 months, the copper-free paints lagged well behind the others.

Some newbies on the market are Pettit's recently launched copper-free Vivid Free (a rebranded Alumacoat SR) and Interlux's Pacifica, a copper-free ablatives. According to Interlux's Jim Seidel, there are better antifouling products around, but the Pacifica serves a select market, aluminum boat owners, those boaters who sail areas where cuprous oxide is banned, or those who prefer a copper-free paint for the sake of the waters they sail in.