



*Testers
rinse the
test panels
with seawater
before rating
the paints.*

18-MONTH REPORT

Hard Paints Top Long-term Ratings

The 18-month panels saw a greater percentage of hard paints going the distance. In our previous long-term test, the field had been evenly split. Hard paints are generally a good choice for year-round cruisers who plan to extend their protection with regular scrubbing. The downside is the layer-cake buildup that eventually will need stripping or sanding.

The table on the facing page features the best and worst paints at the 18-month mark. Almost all of best paints are over 40-percent copper. The only two that had less were Pettit Vivid (25 percent copper with a zinc-based anti-slime agent) and Epaint ZO (copper-free with a zinc-based biocide).

A few, such as Interlux Micron 66, Pettit Ultima SR, Pettit Trinidad SR, and Interlux VC Offshore made the two-year cut in the previous long-term test (October 2008), as did the Budget Buys. Both Interlux EpoxyCop, at \$97 per gallon, and Pettit Unepoxy Plus, at \$125, get Budget Buy honors this go-round.

As often happens in our long-term tests, no water-based paint made our 18-month list. (Only paints scoring Good or better make the long-term “Best” paints list.) The top-performers in other specialty categories were Epaint ZO for aluminum hulls and eco-friendly paint jobs, and VC Offshore for race-ready bottoms.

After 18 months, some paints degraded to the point where they garnered Poor ratings. The majority of these are single-season products, and can’t be expected to offer the long-term protection of multi-season paints. The two multi-seasons antifouling that made the Worst list, Pettit Alumacoat SR and Flexdel Alumi-Koat, are copper-free, aluminum safe paints—a category that historically hasn’t weathered the long haul as well as metal-based antifoulants. And since we test in salt water, we expected freshwater paints like Interlux’s VC-17m and VC-17m Extra, and Pettit SR-21 to allow hard growth. They should perform better in fresh water.