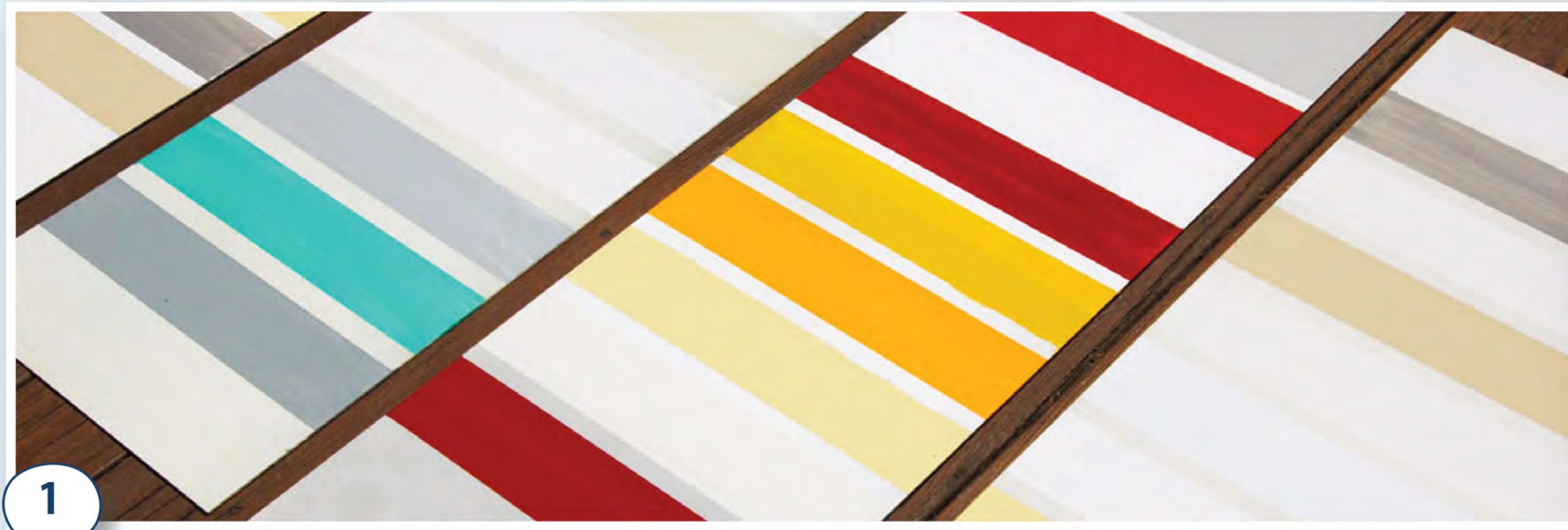


HOW WE TESTED



To rate the overall appearance of a paint panel after a year, testers evaluated the coating's color evenness, gloss, and surface texture.

Paint Panel Performance Tests

For 12 months, our test panels have been exposed to the elements 24/7, facing all four seasons of a Mid-Atlantic climate cycle. Treating the surface like any hull in a boatyard, we washed the panels with boat soap and a soft sponge. No abrasive cleaner, scrub brushing, or strong solvent entered the equation, but we did use a mild, non-abrasive mold cleaner on half of the surface. With each test-paint stripe coded for blind evaluation, testers conducted a series of bench tests after a year. All were scored on a scale of 1 (low) to five (high).

1 APPEARANCE

Appearance scores included three variables and their combined effect. Color evenness is fairly self explanatory; higher marks were gained by products that showed no sign of streaking or variation in tone or hue. Gloss after one year was another rating. (Here, the two-part paints dominated.) Lastly, we rated the texture of the surface; products with smooth, even finishes ranked higher than those with more uneven surfaces.

2 HARDNESS

To determine the relative hardness of each coating, testers employed Gradco's pencil hardness test method. The process involves a roller device that holds a pencil at a given angle as it is pushed across the surface of the coating sample. By using pencil leads of varying hardness, the coating was finally scratched, and testers recorded the lead hardness at which the coating allowed a scratch. We found that all paint samples fell within the following pencil hardness

range: HB (softest), F, H1, H2 (hardest). For ease of reporting we shifted to a points scale (1-5, with 5 being the best).

Tests were repeated five times. A jeweler's loupe and magnifying glass allowed testers to scrutinize the results at 4-10 power magnification.

3 ABRASION RESISTANCE

Testers used Scotchbrite scuff pads to evaluate the coatings' abrasion resistance. They applied a consistent 3 pounds of pressure to each pad and moved it five times over a 3-inch span. The amount of residue left on the pad indicated how abrasion prone the coating was. Not surprisingly, there was a fairly consistent correlation between hardness and abrasion resistance.

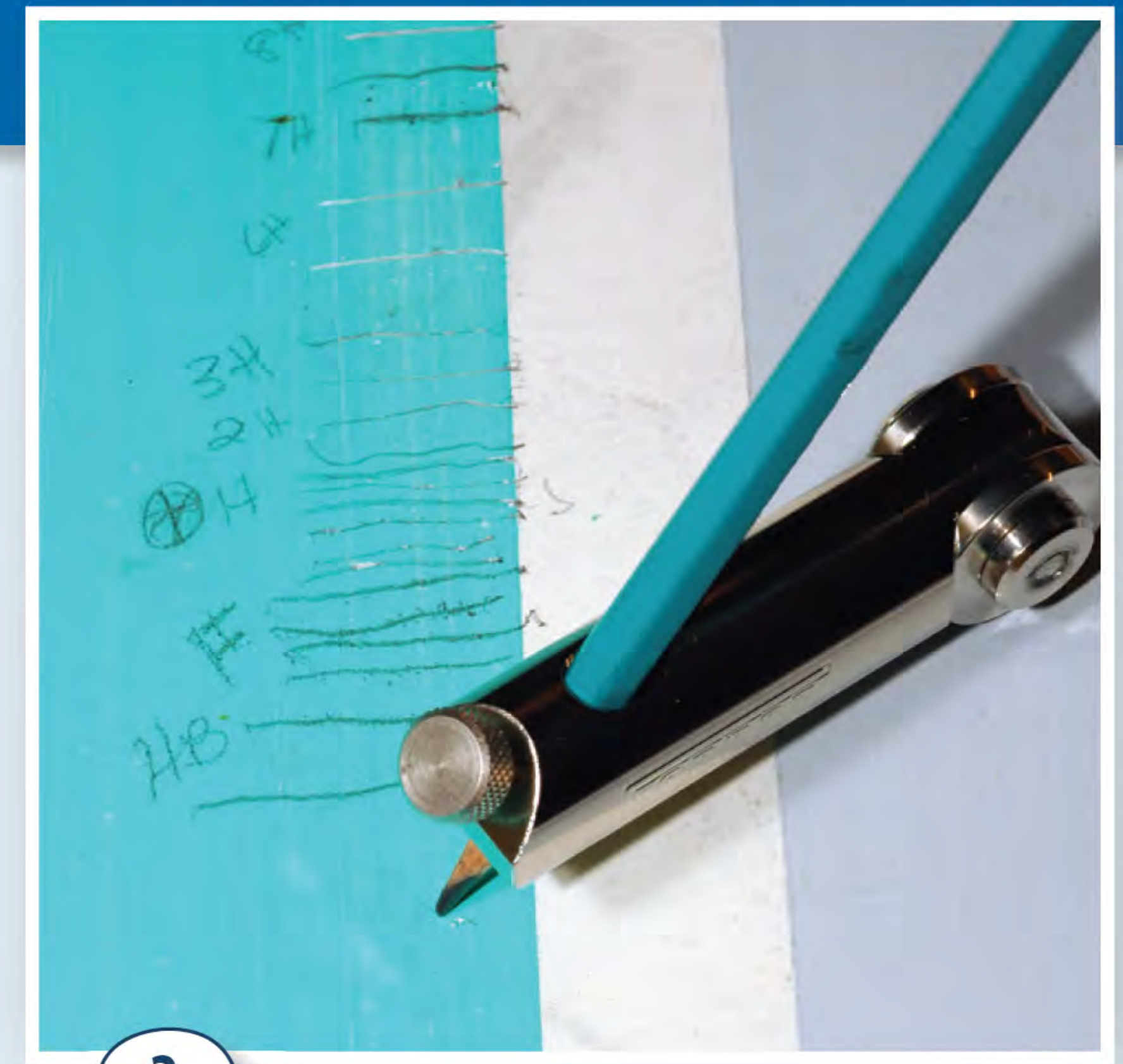
4 STAIN RESISTANCE

The most common hull stain is what many refer to as the ICW moustache or waterline stain. The culprit behind the Intracoastal Waterway staining is tannic acid. In the natural environment, it is linked to tree roots, leaves decaying in the water, and other botanical growth.

To mimic the effects of tannin-rich waters on a boat's topside paint, testers applied amounts of tea, which has tannin, to the paint panels. One drop of tea was left on panel for 30 minutes and a second for an hour and a half. A dampened sponge was used to wipe off the residue, and any sign of a ring or fuller stain was noted.

TOTAL SCORE (WHITES)

The white paints were evaluated on all four of the above performance characteristics, but only two (hardness and appear-



ance) were used to compare the colored paints. One of the reasons we stuck to white paints for the most in-depth part of the test was that warm and cool tone colors raise preference over hues that are aesthetically based and very subjective.

The total score listed in the table is the actual numerical final score the white coatings earned. (See Value Guide, page 16.)