

Hunting for Bargain Bottom Paints

Testers find some affordable antifouling paints that remain effective for at least 12 months.

Practical Sailor spends a lot of time studying bottom paint for good reason. Bottom paint prices continue to rise, pushing the \$300-per-gallon mark, and the expenses associated with bottom fouling can quickly eat into a maintenance budget.

Another key reason to pay attention is that the technology—as well as the market—is rapidly changing. The formulas of several familiar antifouling paints were adjusted in recent years, and we expect more modifications as manufacturers grapple with the rising cost of raw materials and increased pressure from regulatory agencies to minimize the environmental impact of the paints. The formula changes seem most prevalent in the low-budget paints, as manufacturers try to meet a price point and still deliver a product

that boaters can rely on.

While a drop in demand tied to the global recession might prompt special offers this spring, the only long-term price breaks we're likely to see are through reformulated or new blends that try to make more effective use of less biocide. In recent years, we've seen very good results in paints with relatively low percentages of copper, the most expensive raw material.

PAINT TYPES

This article focuses on the results of paint panels that were submerged in June 2008. (See "How We Tested," below.) The results are indicated in two tables (see pages 8 and 9), which are split between hard and ablative paints. The

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Paint test panels were pulled and rated in June. The above panels were immersed in a marina in Stamford, Conn.

HOW WE TESTED

The Fine Art of Judging Antifouling Paint Performance

Our bottom paint findings are based on the analysis of antifouling-coated fiberglass panels that have been immersed in salt water and removed once every six months for a checkup. The article above focuses on panels that have been immersed since June of 2008. The results are tabulated on pages 8 and 9. For a closer look at the two-year results on separate sets of panels, see page 10.

Each test involves duplicate fiberglass panel sets: One set is suspended in a canal in Key Largo, Fla.; its twin is immersed in a marina in Stamford, Conn. Following the manufacturers' instructions for preparation and number of coats (usually two coats), testers apply eight to 12 samples per 6-foot-by-2-foot-long panel. Column entries in the tables reflect performance in each locale.

Prior to rating, testers rinse the panels with a bucket of saltwater. Paints are rated Excellent (no growth), Good (light growth), Fair (moderate to heavy soft growth), and Poor (hard growth). The Good and Fair ratings are judged relative to results within each panel set, so a paint that scored Fair at the one-year mark might bump up to Good at the two-year review

as the relative performance of other paints slips. Any paint that rates Fair or better has done its job, in our opinion.

A Recommended paint is one that performed best overall or rated best among its specialized peers (best aluminum-safe paint, best water-based paint, best racing paint, etc.). The Budget Buy paints represent the least expensive among Recommended paints. Prices are based on an average of advertised prices. They do not include shipping. Because these are hazardous materials, you can save some by buying from a local distributor.

If you're a Northeast boater who hauls out and repaints every year, the one-year results are a good guide. Stick to the cheaper Recommended paints that match your requirements, otherwise, you'll be paying for protection you don't need. If you want to haul and relaunch without painting, or you want two years or more of continuous protection, the two-year results are a better guide.

Keep in mind that our test is subject to a number of variables and we recommend supplementing our data with local knowledge from other independent sources.

Photo by Doug Logan

AS VALUE GUIDE ABLATIVE PAINTS at 12 MONTHS

NAME	MAKER	COST/ GALLON**	SPECIAL USES, COMMENTS	ANTI-SLIME AGENT	COPPER *** (by weight)	12-MONTH RATINGS	
						FL	CT
Awlstar	Awlgrip	\$81/qt.	Multi-season high copper		40%	Fair	Fair
Copper Pro SCX 67 Ablative ✓✓	Blue Water	\$185	High fouling areas	Irgarol	67%	Good	Fair
Copper Shield 45 Ablative \$	Blue Water	\$90	Good value		45%	Good	Fair
Copper Shield 45 Uno \$	Blue Water	\$90	Single season, economy paint		45%	Good	Fair
Copper Shield SCX 45 Ablative ✓✓	Blue Water	\$170	Biocide boosted high copper	Irgarol	45%	Fair	Good
Kolor ✓	Blue Water	\$170	Aluminum safe, bright colors		45%	Good	Fair
MarPro Aluma Pro	Blue Water	\$170	Boatyard blend of Kolor		45%	Poor	Fair
MarPro Super-B Ablative ★	Blue Water	\$115	Boatyard blend of Copper Shield 45		45%	Good	Good
MarPro Super-B Gold ✓	Blue Water	\$170	Boatyard blend of Copper Pro SCX 67	Irgarol	67%	Fair	Good
Ecominder	Epaint	\$184	Water-based	Zinc Pyrithione	None	Fair	Fair
EP-21 \$	Epaint	\$100	Freshwater, aluminum safe		None	Good	Fair
ZO ✓✓	Epaint	\$212	Aluminum safe	Zinc pyrithione	None	Fair	Good
Aquagard II Alumi-Koat	Flexdel	\$149	Water-based, aluminum safe	Zinc-based	3%	Fair	Poor
Aquagard Bottom Paint ✓	Flexdel	\$99	Water-based, dual biocide	Zinc-based	26%	Fair	Fair
Fiberglass Bottomkote ACT	Interlux	\$140	Ablative slime fighter	Irgarol	30%	Fair	Fair
Micron 66 ✓✓	Interlux	\$275	Potent dual biocide ablative, not for freshwater	Zinc pyrithione	40%	Good	Fair
Micron CSC	Interlux	\$200	High-strength ablative		37%	Fair	Fair
Micron Extra	Interlux	\$240	High-strength, dual biocide, ablative	Irgarol	39%	Fair	Fair
Pacifica	Interlux	\$170	No copper, bright colors, aluminum safe	Zinc Omadine	None	Fair	Fair
Tarr & Wonson Copper Paint	Interlux	\$100	Soft workboat paint		25%	Fair	Fair
Trilux 33 ✓	Interlux	\$250	Aluminum safe, bright colors	Zinc Pyrithione	17%	Fair	Poor
Tri-Lux II	Interlux	\$260	Aluminum safe		22%	Good	Fair
Alumacoat SR	Pettit	\$175	Aluminum safe	Zinc Omadine	None	Fair	Poor
Horizons ✓	Pettit	\$160	Ablative multi-season		48%	Fair	Good
Hydrocoat ★	Pettit	\$120	Water-based, trailerable		40%	Good	Good
Hydrocoat ECO	Pettit	\$199	Water-based, aluminum-safe, no copper	Zinc Pyrithione	None	Fair	Fair
Ultima SR 60 ★	Pettit	\$240	Biocide boosted multi-season ablative	Irgarol	60%	Good	Good
Ultima SR 40 (WM PCA Gold*) ✓	Pettit	\$190	Multi-season ablative	Irgarol	40%	Good	Fair
Ultima SSA (WM CPP Plus)	Pettit	\$120	Single-season ablative		36%	Fair	Fair
Ultima SSA CCT	Pettit	NA	Experimental for 2011		24%	Fair	Fair
Vivid Free	Pettit	\$200	Aluminum-safe ablative	Zinc Omadine	None	Fair	Poor
AF-33 \$	Sea Hawk	\$89	Harder ablative, economical, trailerable		34%	Fair	Fair
Biocop TF ✓	Sea Hawk	\$215	Dual biocide	Zinc Omadine	38%	Fair	Fair
Cukote ✓✓	Sea Hawk	\$162	High copper		48%	Fair	Good
Cukote Biocide Plus ✓	Sea Hawk	\$194	High copper and biocide	Irgarol	48%	Fair	Fair
Islands 77	Sea Hawk	\$240	Caribbean only, high copper, 24-month paint	Zinc Pyrithione	42%	Fair	Fair
Mission Bay	Sea Hawk	\$175	No copper, aluminum-safe	Zinc Omadine	None	Poor	Poor
Mission Bay CSF	Sea Hawk	\$180	No copper, water-based, aluminum-safe	Zinc Omadine	None	Poor	Fair
Monterey ✓	Sea Hawk	\$149	Water-based, high copper		55%	Fair	Fair

✓ Recommended ★ Best Choice \$ Budget Buy ✓ 24-month Finalist * Pettit paints rebranded for West Marine.
 ** Prices based on online search. Shipping excluded. *** Cuprous-oxide; cuprous thiocyanate in aluminum-safe paints.

Tables above and on page 9 track antifouling performance over 12 months. Checks indicate Recommended paints in one or more of five key categories—overall, aluminum-safe, water based, eco-friendly, and racing. Budget Buy paints offer good value. Best Choice paints did best in both locations. Paints that did well in the 24-month test (see page 10) have blue checks.

AS VALUE GUIDE HARD PAINTS at 12 MONTHS

NAME	MAKER	COST/ GALLON**	SPECIAL USES, COMMENTS	ANTI-SLIME AGENT	COPPER*** (by weight)	12-MONTH RATINGS	
						FL	CT
Copper Pro SCX 67 Hard ✓	Blue Water	\$170	High copper, dual biocide	Irgarol	67%	Good	Fair
Copper Shield 45 Hard \$	Blue Water	\$90	Economy hard paint		45%	Good	Good
MarPro Superkote Gold ✓	Blue Water	\$170	Boatyard version of SCX 67	Irgarol	67%	Good	Excellent
MarPro SuperKote Hard \$	Blue Water	\$90	Boatyard version of Copper Shield 45 Hard		45%	Good	Good
EP 2000 ✓	Epaint	\$249	Water-based, race paint, aluminum-safe, photoactive	Zinc Pyrithione	None	Fair	Good
Sunwave	Epaint	\$125		None	Fair	Fair	
ZO-HP	Epaint	\$200	Dual biocide, racing, aluminum-safe	Zinc Omadine	None	Fair	Fair
California Bottomkote	Interlux	\$150	Low VOC, California only		35%	Fair	Fair
Epoxyco \$	Interlux	\$120	Budget hard paint		41%	Fair	Fair
Fiberglass Bottomkote ✓	Interlux	\$150	Dual biocide, fast dry, racing	Irgarol	43%	Good	Fair
Bottomkote Aqua	Interlux	\$150	Water-based		47%	Fair	Fair
Regatta Baltoplate ✓	Interlux	\$235	High copper race paint		45%	Fair	Fair
Ultra ✓	Interlux	\$215	High copper hard paint	Irgarol	67%	Good	Fair
Ultra-Kote	Interlux	\$190	High copper hard paint		67%	Fair	Fair
VC 17m	Interlux	\$50/qt.	Fresh water, racing, with Teflon		20%	Poor	Fair-
VC 17m Extra	Interlux	\$58/qt.	Fresh water, racing, with Teflon, dual biocide	Irgarol	20%	Poor	Fair
VC Offshore ✓ ✓	Interlux	\$270	Race paint		41%	Good	Fair
Copper-Guard	Pettit	\$90	Economy hard paint		46%	Poor	Fair
Super Premium ✓	Pettit	\$187	Hard, quick drying		66%	Fair	Fair
Trinidad	Pettit	\$180	High copper hard paint		76%	Fair	Fair
Trinidad 75	Pettit	\$204	Boatyard version of Trinidad SR		76%	Fair	Fair
Trinidad Pro ✓	Pettit	\$274	Boatyard version of Trinidad	Irgarol	70%	Good	Fair
Trinidad SR ✓	Pettit	\$225	High copper, dual biocide	Irgarol	70%	Fair	Fair
Unepoxy	Pettit	\$85	Standard hard single season		41%	Poor	Poor
Unepoxy LD (WM Bottomshield*)	Pettit	\$100	Standard hard single season		29%	Fair	Fair
Unepoxy Plus \$	Pettit	\$125	High copper modified epoxy		56%	Fair	Fair
Vivid ✓	Pettit	\$175	Bright colors, white	Zinc Omadine	25%	Good	Fair
Vivid Caribe ✓	Pettit	\$180	Caribbean version of Vivid	Zinc Omadine	22%	Good	Fair
Sharkskin \$	Sea Hawk	\$110	Budget-priced hard paint		45%	Fair	Fair
Tropikote	Sea Hawk	\$170	Multi-season, high copper		76%	Fair	Fair
Tropikote Biocide Plus	Sea Hawk	\$190	High copper, dual biocide, multi-season	Irgarol	74%	Fair	Fair

✓ Recommended ★ Best Choice \$ Budget Buy ✓ 24-month Finalist

*Rebranded for West Marine. **Prices based on online search. Shipping excluded. ***Cuprous oxide; copper-thiocyanate in aluminum-safe paints.

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two types of paints work differently, but for our purposes, the most important distinction is the maintenance regimen for each.

Long after they've lost their anti-fouling properties, hard paints leave behind binding resins and pigments. Once a few seasons of paint have built up, a vigorous sanding prep is required to keep the hull smooth and clean. Most

hard paints can be burnished smooth for racing, and resist scrubbing well. Because of their chemistry, many hard paints lose their potency when they are stored out of the water for long periods (maximum time varies greatly).

Ablative paints wear away through use, so you can recoat year after year without building up thick layers. Basic workboat ablatives slough away with water friction to expose more biocide. Other, advanced copolymer ablatives,

are chemically engineered to release biocides at a more controlled rate. Although some "hard" ablatives are suitable for trailering, ablatives generally won't tolerate a vigorous scrubbing as well as some hard paints.

Within these hard and ablatives categories are paints that cater to specific needs: Paints for aluminum hulls, paints for racing, water-based paints that are

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AS		VALUE GUIDE		ANTIFOULING PAINTS at 24 MONTHS					
BEST	TYPE	NAME	MFR.	PRICE/GALLON*	SPECIALTY/COMMENTS	COPPER % (by weight)	ANTI-SLIME AGENT	24-MONTH RATINGS	
								FL	CT
ABLATIVE/SOFT		Micron 66 ★	Interlux	\$275	Fast dry	40%	Zinc Pyrithione	Fair	Good
		Trilux 33 ✓	Interlux	\$250	Bright colors, aluminum	17%	Zinc Pyrithione	Fair	Fair
		Nautical Epoxycop Ablative \$	Interlux	\$110	Economy ablative	43%	No	Fair	Fair
		Biocop TF ✓	Sea Hawk	\$255	Dual biocide ablative	38%	Zinc Omadine	Fair	Good
		Cukote ✓	Sea Hawk	\$162	High copper ablative	48%	No	Fair	Good
		Cukote Biocide Plus ✓	Sea Hawk	\$194	Dual biocide, high copper	48%	Irgarol	Fair	Good
		Monterey ✓	Sea Hawk	\$149	Water based	55%	No	Fair	Fair
		Copper Pro SCX 67 ✓	Blue Water	\$185	Biocide boosted ablative	67%	Irgarol	Good	Fair
		Copper Shield SCX 45 ✓	Blue Water	\$170	Dual biocide, high copper	45%	Irgarol	Fair	Fair
		ZO ✓	Epaint	\$212	Aluminum	None	Zinc Pyrithione	Fair	Good
HARD		Horizons ✓	Pettit	\$160	High copper ablative	48%	No	Fair	Fair
		Fiberglass Bottomkote \$	Interlux	\$150	Dual biocide, fast dry, racing	43%	Irgarol	Fair	Fair
		Fiberglass Bottomkote Aqua ✓	Interlux	\$150	Water based, fast dry	46%	No	Fair	Fair
		VC Offshore ✓	Interlux	\$270	Racing	41%	No	Fair	Fair
		Trinidad SR ✓	Pettit	\$225	High copper, dual biocide	70%	Irgarol	Fair	Fair
		Unepoxy Plus ★	Pettit	\$125	Budget priced, high copper	56%	No	Good	Fair
		Vivid ✓	Pettit	\$175	Fast dry, bright colors	25%	Zinc Omadine	Good	Fair
	EP 2000	Epaint	\$249	No copper, hard racing finish	None	Zinc Pyrithione	Fair	Fair	

✓ Recommended ★ Best Choice \$ Budget Buy

* Prices based on online search. Shipping excluded.

Antifouling Paints that Can Go the Distance

Two years is about the best you can expect from today's antifouling paints, although they can be coaxed into longer service with regular use and cleaning. Usually, paints that last this long are expensive blends—hard paints loaded with copper or advanced ablatives that extend the release of biocide.

The above table shows the best performing paints out of a field of 67 that went into testing in June 2007. Each paint has been rated a total of 16 times (eight in each location, Florida and Connecticut), and this is the last rating period for this set. To make the two-year list, a paint must have no Poor ratings, earn a total of at least three Good ratings, or be the best performing paint in its category (water based, aluminum friendly, etc.). Test and ratings procedures mirrored those used for our one-year paints. (See "How We Tested," page 7.)

Previous tests have shown both hard and ablative paints to be effective over a 24-month period. While you can extend the life of an ablative by adding coats (most makers say stop at four coats), exceeding the recommended coats of a hard paint is not cost effective. (For more on paint types, see page 7.)

ABLATIVE PAINTS

Among the top ablative paints, Blue Water's Copper Shield SCX 45 and Pettit Horizons both provided good performance at around the \$170 mark, but Interlux's Epoxycop Ablative (not to be confused with Epoxycop Hard) was by far the least expensive. This is a \$89 ablative is being dropped from Interlux's

product line so there might not be much left on store shelves come spring. Interlux recommends its Fiberglass Bottomkote ACT instead, but it didn't make our two-year cut.

Not surprisingly, high-priced ablatives dominated the field: Interlux's Micron 66 (not for fresh water), Blue Water's Copper Pro SCX 67 and three blends from Sea Hawk, Biocop TF, Cukote, Cukote Biocide Plus. Micron 66 started off the strongest, but all five paints were closely matched after 12 months. Two-thirds of the best ablative paints are so-called dual biocide paints.

In the aluminum-friendly category, Epaint's ZO and Interlux's Trilux 33 managed to stay barnacle free. For extended life, Epaint recommends the color white and routine (soft) cleaning.

HARD PAINTS

Four moderately-priced hard paints made the final cut, two from Interlux—Fiberglass Bottomkote and Fiberglass Bottomkote Aqua—and two from Pettit—Unepoxy Plus and Vivid. Of the four, Unepoxy Plus scored the highest marks during the course of the rating period.

Trinidad SR, a high copper paint boosted with the slime-fighter Irgarol, beat out all the other higher-priced hard paints, including regular Trinidad, which remained barnacle free at 24 months, but only mustered one Good during the rating period, so it didn't make this list. Vivid, VC Offshore, and EP 2000 (the only non-copper hard paint to survive) are our picks among paints marketed to racers.

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easy for the do-it-yourself to apply and reduce the amount of volatile organic compounds (VOC) released into the atmosphere, and eco-friendly paints with limited biocides. We've flagged the best of each of these subcategories with Recommended check marks in the tables.

Whatever type of paint you buy, check the application guidelines and be sure it is compatible with the paint you have on your boat. If in doubt about prep work, ask the new paint's manufacturer for guidance.

WHAT WE TESTED

The class of 2008-2009 attracted seven major paintmakers: Awlgrip, Blue Water, Epaint, Flexdel, Interlux, Pettit, and Sea Hawk. All have participated in previous tests, although this is the first one-year checkup for several paints that were introduced or reformulated in 2008. Most of the introduced paints were modified to better control the delivery of biocide, to reduce environmental impact, or to target a specific region or environment.

AWLGRIP

Awlgrip's Awlstar is an expensive paint with a good reputation, and any paint in this price range should hold off barnacles for at least 18 months at our test sites. So far, Awlstar has repelled barnacles in both locations, although it allowed some slime growth.

Bottom line: Awlstar's one-year results are good, but the true test will be the 18-month report.

BLUE WATER

Blue Water has reformulated many of its paints for 2009, and we will get our first look at these as well as several new Blue Water paints in the spring. The amount of biocide in the paints we reported on here are the same as in the new paints. The company carries two paint lines, the Blue Water line, available through its website, some boatyards and chandleries, and the MarPro line, available through boatyards and distributor Donovan Marine.

With one exception, Blue Water's

paints scored very well in testing, repelling hard growth and keeping algae at bay. Performance is fairly reflected in the prices, with the more expensive copper-laden hard paints generally doing better. Like a few other zinc-based aluminum-safe paints, the MarPro Aluma Pro paint succumbed to barnacles at the 12-month mark.

Bottom line: Blue Water's top-of-the-line ablative paint, Copper Pro SCX 67 Ablative, boosted with the slime-fighting pesticide Irgarol, is a pricey, but consistent performer. Both its Copper Shield 45 ablative and Copper Shield 45 hard paints offer affordable one-year protection.

EPAIN

Epaint specializes in low-copper, eco-friendly paints that are also compatible with aluminum hulls, and its blends have done consistently well. In this race, the company has three hard paints that are copper free: ZO-HP, an abrasion-resistant paint introduced in 2007 that can be sanded to a very smooth finish for racing; Sunwave, a photo-active paint introduced in 2008; and EP 2000, a consistently good performer in the aluminum-friendly category. On the ablative side, Epaint ZO was among the cleanest of all the paints in Connecticut after one year. Epaints' new Ecominder and the budget-priced EP-21 are also keeping barnacles away.

Bottom line: For copper-free protection, Epaint's offerings rank high. Of the many aluminum-safe products, Epaint ZO has done better than most others in our testing, repelling barnacles for up to two years. Because Epaints are photoactive, they will ablate faster in warm, sunny waters, and at least one extra coat near the waterline is recommended.

FLEXDEL

Flexdel's aluminum-friendly Aquaguard has done well among its peers in past testing. In the wake of very good results in our 2008 review, Flexdel launched a new Alumi-Koat II. The new blend—like many aluminum-friendly paints—did not make it one year barnacle-free in Connecticut.

Bottom line: Flexdel's Aquaguard



Most of the one-year panels did a good job at repelling hard growth.

is easy to apply and competes closely with others in its category, although distribution is limited.

INTERLUX

Interlux, which also sells paints under the Nautical label, offers a paint for every pocketbook or need, but the range of choices can be confusing. For the baffled, Interlux's website offers a helpful selection tool. Interlux is rolling some of its Nautical paints into the Interlux line, so some of these paints may not be available by the end of next year, or they will have different names.

Interlux's Micron 66 has consistently ranked among the best long-term performers during the past few years. Like the other Micron series paints, it can be hauled and relaunched for a second season. Micron 66 is not recommended for freshwater, although Interlux is testing a freshwater version.

Among Interlux's low-cost hard paints, Fiberglass Bottomkote and water-based Bottomkote Aqua have consistently provided one-year protection. Its copper-laden Ultra has also shown longevity. Its thin-film VC-series Teflon paints do poorly in our long-term tests, but freshwater racers like the smooth finish.

Two new eco-paints show promise: Low VOC, low-copper California Bottomkote survived its first year intact;

the new copper-free Pacifica is also doing well. We have not yet tested Pacifica Plus, a no-copper paint using the new biocide Ecomea.

For offshore racers, VC Offshore has been a steady performer. Baltoplate does well combating hard growth, and has a slick finish that is favored by racers.

Bottom line: If you can stomach the price, Micron 66 is a good choice for long-term cruisers. Budget-minded sailors should hunt for Nautical Coatings Epoxycop Ablative blend. The paint, which is getting dropped from the Interlux lineup, was not in the 12-month test, but it did well in our two-year test. Fiberglass Bottomkote is a bargain hard paint.

PETTIT

A division of paintmaker Kop-Coat, Pettit has had good success with its Vivid line, a hard paint marketed heavily for its bright colors. The paint has consistently done well at the one-year mark, and has reached the 24-month mark in Florida. The Trinidad line, popular in sub-tropical and tropical waters, has a good reputation among South Florida yard owners. Pettit's budget-priced Unepoxy uncharacteristically sprouted barnacles at six months in our tests, but a new formula Unepoxy LD is doing much better. Ultima SR 60, an expensive paint with high copper content, is doing very well in both locations.

Pettit was among the first to launch a paint featuring the antifouling agent Ecomea. Hopes are running high for this biocide, but so far, the metal-free Hydrocoat Ecomea is doing no better than the much cheaper plain Hydrocoat in our test. Pettit's new Fusion ablative (not yet released) will be reported on in our spring update.

Bottom line: On the ablative side, Pettit's water-based Hydrocoat, Ultima Pro, Ultima SR 40 (West Marine PCA Gold), are winners, matching the best of their peers at the 12-month mark. If you want a hard paint, consider Vivid or Unepoxy Plus, a budget-priced paint with slime-fighting pesticides that shows endurance. If you want to stretch protection past 12 months, look at Trinidad SR.

SEA HAWK

Sea Hawk Paints has been fairly active in launching new eco-friendly blends. Past winners of PS tests include its low-VOC, water-based Monterey paint, which provided 18 months of barnacle-free protection for one of our Florida-based test boats. Sea Hawk's budget-priced Sharkskin makes it into the top of the ranks in the 12-month tables, while a few of the more expensive Sea Hawk blends stood out in the two-year comparison.

Bottom line: Loaded with copper, Sea Hawk's Cukote is a contender in the high-copper, expensive ablative category. AF-33 (ablative) and Sharkskin (hard) compete in the Budget Buy category.

WEST MARINE

West Marine offers three re-branded Pettit paints to serve the needs of most boaters. Its ablative paints, PCA Gold (Ultima SR 40), and West Marine CPP (Ultima SSA) are still in the race, with the more expensive PCA Gold garnering Good in Florida. The reformulated West Marine Bottomshield (Unepoxy LD) is faring much better than the older formula Unepoxy at 12 months.

Bottom line: Though not top performers, all three paints are keeping barnacles away. Keep an eye out for discounts and/or coupons on these paints as spring approaches.

CONCLUSION

A healthy field of paints from the Class of 2008 earned the Recommended or Budget Buy designations, but several cost more than \$200 per gallon, too much for just 12 months of protection

in our book. If you want 24-month protection, read page 10 before opening your wallet.

What we are looking for among these results are the best 12-month paints in each category at the best price. First, the abrasives: For basic protection, Blue Water Copper Shield 45 and Petit Horizons come in as favorites, both under \$120-per-gallon. If fouling isn't serious and you don't mind routine cleaning, Epaint's EP-21 looks promising. If it's a water-based paint you want, Pettit's Hydrocoat provided a year of good service in both locations.

We've yet to find a reliable inexpensive aluminum-safe paint. Epaint's ZO has good record, but it's pricey. For the budget-minded, Blue Water Kolor has the edge at 12 months, but it was riddled with barnacles at 24 months. Trilux 33, has done well in the past, as has Pettit's Alumacoat SR, though neither survived 12 months in Connecticut this time.

In the hard paint category, Blue Water Copper Shield 45 Hard, Interlux Epoxycop, Interlux Fiberglass Bottomkote, Pettit Unepoxy Plus, and Sea Hawk Sharkskin are all very close in terms of price versus performance. Pettit Vivid reigns in the bright color hard-paint category. The other highly-rated racing paints—Interlux's Offshore VC, Regatta Baltoplate, and Epaint's ZO-HP—carry higher price tags.

If you get more than 12 months of protection from any of these low- to mid-priced paints, you are doing well. Look for an update on these paints and the newly released paints in the March 2010 issue. ▲

CONTACTS

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800/258-5998,
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FLEXDEL CORP.
888/353-9335
www.aquagard-boatpaint.com

INTERLUX YACHT FINISHES
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www.yachtpaint.com

KOP-COAT (PETTIT)
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www.pettitpaint.com

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www.seahawkpaints.com

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