

# SAIL AMERICA NEWS

Monthly News for  
Sail America Members



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## SAIL AMERICA NEWS July 2014

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A former sports writer, Matt Gruhn is president of the [Marine Retailers Association of the Americas](#) (MRAA). [Click for more.](#)

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### **SEND US YOUR COMPANY NEWS!**

*Sail America News* is interested in your firm's news, events, activities and job postings. Send press releases or inquiries for consideration to Katelyn McSherry: [kmcsherry@sailamerica.com](mailto:kmcsherry@sailamerica.com)

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## **MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATION MANAGER**



Recently Sail America began our 2014/2015 membership renewal drive. On behalf of Sail America, I want to thank you for your continued membership in your trade association. As you know Sail America's strength is dependent on the sustained membership of companies like yours and we appreciate your commitment to us.

Did you know that 24 years ago the growth of Sail America was based on word of mouth referrals? The 1990 Annapolis Sailboat Show Special Edition of the Sailing Scene states "the goal is for every ASAP (now Sail America) member to get three new members...by the Miami International Boat Show in February. Interim President Olaf Harken reminded the attendees that everyone involved with the industry is

encouraged to join ASAP."

Recently we mailed each of you letting you know that we are offering the Member Referral Program that was created last year. As a valued member of Sail America, you can play an active role in helping your industry trade association grow its membership by referring other companies in your network who would benefit from Sail America membership. By referring new member companies, marine reps, sailing schools, riggers, and manufacturers you're contributing to the vitality of the industry, and the continued success of Sail America. With every new member we become a stronger representative for the industry and our collective voices get louder!

While summer has arrived we are turning our thoughts toward fall and the start of the boat show season and creating connectivity between sailors and our member businesses. We have already begun to work and plan with the Newport International Boat Show, the United States Sailboat Show, and the St. Petersburg Power and Sailboat Show teams to ensure a strong presence for Sail America, Discover Sailing, and our seminar series.

It is hard to believe that summer is half over according to many school calendars. I hope that you each have the opportunity to get out and enjoy the water—and don't forget to take the opportunity to introduce someone to sailing this summer.

It is through your dedication to the sailing industry and profession that our organization flourishes. Your membership means a good deal to us and we look forward to continuing to work together.

Good Sailing!

Peter Durant

## WAYPOINTS COVER STORY



A former sports writer, Matt Gruhn is president of the [Marine Retailers Association of the Americas](#) (MRAA). Prior to joining MRAA, Gruhn worked on the staff that launched Ehlert's *Powersports Business* in 1998, and began working on *Boating Industry* magazine when Ehlert/Affinity acquired it in 2002. Named editor of *Boating Industry* in 2003, associate publisher in 2009, and publisher and editorial director overseeing Affinity's trade group in 2010, Gruhn helped to launch *Boating Industry's* Top 100 Dealers Program.

While with *Boating Industry*, Gruhn led the team that produced the MRAA's annual convention, the [Marine Dealer Conference & Expo](#). He was integral to rebranding the MDCE and the event saw significant growth. Over the course of three years and during The

Great Recession, MDCE attendance doubled from 2007 to 2008 and more than doubled again from 2008 to 2009. From 2009 to 2010, the conference grew by another 30-plus percent. Today, the MDCE attracts more than 1,100 industry members, more than 600 of which are dealers.

Sail America chatted with Matt Gruhn about the state of the industry, how dealers and manufacturers communicate, and what the industry might expect moving into the future.

**Sail America:** How did you get involved in the marine industry?

**Matt Gruhn:** Well, I've been a boater my entire life, growing up doing a lot of boating and fishing. I worked for a marine distributor, Lorenz & Jones, for a couple years while in high school. And then I came back to the industry for good in 1997 when I started in the editorial ranks of a trio of boating magazines.

**SA:** MRAA has seen substantial growth in the past few years, including a 200% growth in membership since February 2012. Can you comment on that?

**MG:** When I came aboard at MRAA, there were only two people—me and one other person. Since early 2013, we've grown to a staff of nine people. What's been invigorating about our transformation is that our staff has a lot of next-generation thinking to it. There are a lot of young people on our staff. It wasn't intentional to hire young people, but, except for a few of us, our employees are all basically 20-somethings. They're full of new ideas and lots of energy and are fully capable of executing our mission to create and provide tools and resource for our members. It's been a lot of fun to see the passion and initiative they bring to the association.

But, it's also been a little humbling for me, as well. When I came in after Phil Keeter, I was the young guy, and literally overnight, I went from being the young guy to the old guy. I'm still trying to determine how I feel about that.

**SA:** The MDCE also saw amazing growth at a time when most people and companies were scaling back. To what do you attribute the success of MDCE from 2007 until now?

**MG:** There are two things really. First, the growth really came during the recession, which surprised us. But it also made sense because the fact of the matter is the event is all geared toward providing dealers with solutions for challenges and ideas for growth. During that time, dealers needed real-world answers like no other time before it. And we have been very successful in building an educational line-up, every single year that appeals to their needs. And that's the second thing: the delivery of timely strategies, ideas, best practices, and expert advice on real-world issues has continued to drive growth for this event. What we find is that a lot of dealers think this is the same as the old program that MRAA used to offer; but the truth is when we revamped the program, we completely reinvented it and have put all of our focus on delivering educational opportunities that truly help them grow. Now, many dealers come to the event every year and are bringing more and more of their staff members.

**SA:** What are some effective ways manufacturers are communicating with dealers and vice versa? What do dealers like to see from manufacturers, in terms of design, products, items that sell? What are some trends you're seeing?

**MG:** I believe that the key point here is that while the recession was tough on everyone, those companies that made it through have come to understand the value of relationship. Dealers and manufacturers, in my opinion, have stronger relationships, in general, than at any time in our industry's past. They collaborated to get through the tough times and they have learned better ways for strengthening their businesses as we begin to return to growth.

**SA:** What kind of ratio do you see between new boat sales and used boat sales?

**MG:** About two-thirds of all boats sold and registered in a given year are used boats. Used boats are really the new entry-level boat. What that means for us as an industry is that we need to gain more control over the pre-owned product that is being sold so that we can contribute proactively to a positive boating experience for first-time boaters. Those people who buy a boat from someone's driveway are at high risk of a bad boating experience. There could be problems with the boat before they buy it; they don't have quick access to quality service; and the quality of their boating experience is left to fate. If our dealers can capture more of that business, they can help control the quality of that experience for new boaters and we can keep those people in boating for the long term.

**SA:** What kinds of trends are you seeing at boat shows in terms of interest, sales, demographics?

**MG:** Dealer reports from boat shows have been positive this year. In fact, most early selling season reports, aside from the upper Midwest where there was some flooding, have been positive. Show reports suggest that while attendance may not be as strong as it has been in the past, buyers are turning out and are making purchases.

**SA:** What are some ways dealers are attracting buyers? Are they targeting a specific demographic? What are some ways a manufacturer can appeal to a buying demographic based on what dealers might be seeing?

**MG:** I think what's attracting buyers right now is quite simply, boating. There is a good deal of pent-up demand from the prolonged downturn and people are eager to get back on the water. With the new products and innovations that our industry has seen over the last few years, buyers understand that they can experience new things on the water and are investing their money and family time in boating. That's a refreshing trend. Simultaneously, dealers are connecting with buyers through all the new methods, whether that's social media, online video, digital marketing, as well as the standard means of hosting open houses, boat shows, and general advertising. Boat sales are up more than 10% over last year, year-to-date, so the formula is working.

**SA:** What are some ways you see the industry moving forward to address an aging buying demographic and/or compete with other sports that may pull some of that recreational spending away from the boating world?

**MG:** There's no denying that the majority of our boat sales over the years have been made to the Baby Boomers. And as the Boomers move into retirement, we need to identify ways to attract younger audiences into boating. There has been a lot of discussion about this over the last few years, and there are a series of initiatives underway that are addressing this. The most prominent of these was borne of the [Growth Summit](#), which offered a revitalized focus on addressing the challenges our industry faces. One of those, of course, was a lack of young people coming into boating, and the data is clear that people who boat as a child are far more likely to buy a boat as an adult. As a starting point, the Recreational Boating Leadership Council, a Growth Summit oversight committee, has addressed this challenge by creating a [Youth Boating Program](#) database, which can be found on [DiscoverBoating.com](#). A lot of work went into cataloging this information, so we're very proud of it, and what's more is that the web page allows people who offer other youth programs to add there's to the database at the click of a button. It's a great starting point for addressing this challenge.

**SA:** How is MRAA involved in the Grow Boating Initiative? And how can others in the industry get involved?

**MG:** The Grow Boating Initiative is an industry effort to do exactly that—grow participation in boating. MRAA has been an equal partner in Grow Boating since the launch of the program. Discover Boating is the consumer-facing side of the program, and you've likely seen some of the program's [Stories of Discovery](#) this year. These are features on real people who have discovered boating and made it a focal point of

their lives. If you have not seen them, I highly encourage you to check them out. Here's the best part: Historically, people have come to know the Discover Boating campaign as solely an advertising campaign. But, today, this program is chock-full of resources that our dealers and manufacturers can use to encourage people to experience more through boating. These Stories of Discovery videos are a great example. They can be imbedded onto your website and can help you promote boating to your customers. In fact, just visit [GrowBoating.org](http://GrowBoating.org) and click on the Tools You Can Use link at the top of the page to find promotional materials, web content, logos, and more. They are all free for our industry members to use.

**SA:** Can you talk about methods or techniques dealers are using to engage their customers, keep their customers coming back, or grow their customer bases? In what ways are dealers making sure the sale doesn't end when the check is written and keeping that customer engaged in the sport?

**MG:** Boating is a lifestyle choice, and as such, our dealers need to create opportunities for their customers to enjoy that lifestyle. They need to give the reasons to participate in the lifestyle and offer them new experiences within it. A dealer once told me that they have determined that a boater really needs just five times on their boat each year to be able to justify ownership. His mission was to ensure that he offered enough events for all of his customers to get on the water five or more times. If we approach our business like that and we foster boating experiences for our customers, I believe the rewards will be very high. Boating is a social lifestyle. We need to create social experiences through the connection we have with other boaters and increase the enjoyment our customers get out of their boats.

**SA:** You're a boater yourself, yes?

**MG:** Yes, I am a boater, and while I do spend a good deal of time in a powerboat, surfing or just cruising, most of my time on the water is spent fishing. I enjoy a 4 a.m. wake-up call, being on the water before sunrise, and being off the water before the craziness of midday gets into full swing. Ideally, there'd be some fish on the line in the midst of all of that. I started boating as a child, and I'd have to say that my favorite memories are now all about watching my kids enjoy being on the water.

*[Marine Dealer Conference & Expo](#) is scheduled for November 16–19, 2014, in Orlando, Florida.*

## **MEMBER NEWS**

We want to hear from you! Send us your press releases and we'll share them with Sail America's membership. It's a quick and easy way to reach out to others within the sailing industry. Send press releases and your company news to [kmcsherry@sailamerica.com](mailto:kmcsherry@sailamerica.com)

### **[Summit Set to Wake up the Sailing Industry](#)**

The 13<sup>th</sup> International Sailing Summit (ISS) is taking place on November at METS in Amsterdam. This summit is predicted to prove revolutionary for the industry by

demonstrating that to succeed in a global market, companies must diversify and innovate. British Sailing, the group organizing the event, has named this year's theme as "Waking up the sailing industry—how sailing needs to modernize, diversify and develop to attract and retain participants."

This worldwide forum, bringing together the best in the industry, aims to drive change and promote sailing on a global scale. ISS will be broken into three sessions: Diversification, Participation, and Innovation. Each will address a need for modernization. Each year, ISS has proven itself a prominent event for the sailing industry and is the key driver in facilitating the exchange of thought leadership to both supply and demand sectors of the sailing market place.

More Information: [britishsailing.org](http://britishsailing.org)

### **[Torqeedo Helps Successful Solar-Powered Canoe Trip](#)**

After a long 1,100 mile journey that started in 2012, the CalypSol crew reached its final destination of Baton Rouge, LA. With help from Sail America member, Torqeedo, CalypSol successfully became the first solar-powered canoe voyage down the Mississippi. A Torqeedo Travel 503 electric outboard helped power the crew's long-distance expedition. Torqeedo's president stated that they were proud to be a supporter of the great voyage and the compatibility of their green vessel and Torqeedo's green motors showcased the endurance of the travelers as well as Torqeedo's outboard.

More Information: [tradeonlytoday.com](http://tradeonlytoday.com)

### **[Future Bright Again for Women's Match Racing](#)**

The U.S. Women's Match Racing Championship took place on July 11-13, 2014, at Oakcliff Sailing Center with eight teams of North America's best female match racers. Team Epic Racing, skippered by Stephanie Roble, took first but the fifty women who sailed this event scored an even greater victory. They showed that women's match racing has made an enormous comeback in the United States. The U.S. once dominated in women's match racing but unfortunately declined throughout the years. After this race, there is evidence that the U.S. can do it again. This race was close and competitive across the board, which is a testament to the talent growing at home.

The decision in 2011 to exclude women's match racing from the 2016 Olympics halted the momentum and left sailors wondering what the next step would be. That is where the Women's International Match Racing Series (WIM) came into play. This 5-event series features prize money and a chance for women to get back into the sport. Because talent and interest exists again, the U.S. has an opportunity to use the existing infrastructure to build a match racing powerhouse once again.

More Information: [sailingscuttlebutt.com](http://sailingscuttlebutt.com)

### **[BoatUS Signs Deal with Online Weather Forecasting Service](#)**

Sail America member BoatUS has partnered with BuoyWeather.com to offer its members access to accurate marine forecasts on the BoatUS website. With weather being the number one determining factor when planning a day on the water, this partnership gives members access to forecasts by logging on to individualized, “my.BoatUS.com” page. Members will be able to point to a spot on a map and get a real-time three-day weather forecast along with important information boaters will need to stay safe on the water. Users can set up a customizable “favorites” list where they can choose from wind, swell size, wave period, weather radar, current, sea-surface temperature, and anything they need to stay safe and have fun.

More Information: [tradeonlytoday.com](http://tradeonlytoday.com)

### **[Leukemia Cup Regatta Sails Past a Milestone](#)**

Sail America member The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has released great news regarding the Leukemia Cup Regatta. Since its first event in Birmingham, AL, in 1987, the Leukemia Cup Regatta has passed the \$50 million mark in support. The Leukemia Cup has grown throughout North America and Canada with more than 40 races and continues to grow with support.

More Information: [Research Success](#)

More Information: [Leukemia Cup](#)

### **[IBEX Unveils Seminar Lineup](#)**

Organizers of the International BoatBuilders’ Exhibition and Conference (IBEX) announce the educational lineup for this year’s event, to be held September 29–October 2, 2014, at the Tampa Convention Center in Florida. With over 525 exhibitors and an educational lineup, IBEX 2014 will be useful for everyone in the industry.

Seminar Topics:

- Installation and management of large battery banks
- A multihull designer’s lessons from the America’s Cup
- Tailoring wakes for recreational boats
- Fundamentals of fiberglass repair
- ABYC 2014 standards update
- The green wire: grounding, bonding, and handling the negative connection
- Introduction to design for 3D printing
- How boats are adapting to smartphones, tablets and the internet
- Infusing a carbon fiber multihull

More Information: [tradeonlytoday.com](http://tradeonlytoday.com)



### **[BoatUS President Adds Voice to NMMA Congressional Boating Caucus Briefing](#)**

National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) President Thom Dammrich, in cooperation with the US Congressional Boating Caucus co-chairs, gave a briefing on the State of the Recreational Boat Industry and Implications for the US Economy at the US Capitol's Longworth House Office Building. Joining Dammrich was Sail America member BoatUS President Margaret Podlich who provided a voice for the nation's recreational boaters and shared information on boater demographics and the need for boating-friendly legislation. Dammrich spoke about the need for a strong American boat manufacturing industry and how Capitol Hill directly affects the boating industry. BoatUS' Podlich spoke about the range of boating activities and participants, and the specific policy needs of these groups. Podlich mentions that to enable boating to continue to be a \$121 billion industry in the country, there needs to be a smart long-term sustainable policy on everything from ethanol to dredging.

More Information: [boatus.com](http://boatus.com)

### **[#GILLMOSTWANTED](#)**

In support of Aberdeen Asset Management Cowes Week, August 2-9, 2014,, Sail America member Gill announced a social media campaign and competition to coincide with the event. During the week, a man dressed in full Gill sailing gear, including a distinctive sailing hood that disguises his face, will be amongst the crew and spectators in and around the Yacht Haven. Anyone who spots the man, takes a selfie with him, and posts it to Instagram/Twitter using #GILLMOSTWANTED is entered to win the Ocean Racer jacket and trousers that he is wearing.

For more information visit Gill's [Twitter](#) page.

### **[USCG Empanelled Standards/Rubrics Experts Team Launches National Validation Survey](#)**

A team of experts in conjunction with U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) grant funding, seeks national content validation of SAIL boat operation standards/rubrics that will be freely available to the boating public. This is your opportunity to impact the development of free recreational paddling and rowing (canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboards, etc.) standards/rubrics that can be voluntarily used by educators when developing boating courses. You may participate by completing the on-line survey.

**WHAT:** The National On-Water Standards Team, funded by USCG grants, is seeking input from recreational sailboat educators across the nation on a set of rubrics used to describe sailing skills at the entry level. Following the survey, the rubrics will be updated to reflect input from sailors nationwide and eventually be validated and updated through a national field-testing program.

**WHERE:** <https://www.research.net/s/sailrubrics>

**WHEN:** The survey will be conducted August 5 – September 4, 2014.

**WHO:** Recreational sail boating enthusiasts and especially those with experience in On-Water teaching or training are urged to participate in an on-line survey designed to collect feedback on the content of these voluntary entry-level, skill-based standards/rubrics for recreational sailing.

By completing this survey you will have a voice in the design of a national set of SAIL boating standards for sailors to be made freely available for voluntary application in beginner boating courses. This effort is part of the US Coast Guard's (USCG) vision of a National System of Standards for Recreational Boat Operation – that will organize both classroom and on-water standards within a comprehensive system of recreational boating education. The system will address standards for three domains of recreational boating: SAIL, POWER and HUMAN propulsion.

More Information: Contact K. Brian Dorval, On-Water Standards Facilitator at 716-994-2842 or [brian@thinkfirstserve.com](mailto:brian@thinkfirstserve.com)

### **Sail America Member Referral Plan**

As a valued member of Sail America, you can play an active role in helping your industry trade association grow its membership by referring other companies in your network who would benefit from Sail America membership. By referring new member companies, marine reps, sailing schools, riggers, and manufacturers, you're contributing to the vitality of the industry, and the continued success of Sail America. With every new member we become a stronger representation of the industry and our collective voices get louder.

If a new member joins Sail America because of your referral, we will offer you the following benefits to say thank you:

- 1) Acknowledgment at Strictly Sail Pacific, Oakland, CA, April 2014.
- 2) Four complimentary tickets to Strictly Sail Pacific in Oakland, CA, April 2014.
- 3) Recognition on Sail America's website.

Please contact Stephanie Grove, Sail America's Membership Coordinator, for more details. She can be reached directly at 401-289-2540 or [sgrove@sailamerica.com](mailto:sgrove@sailamerica.com).

### **BOAT SHOW UPDATE**

#### **[Strictly Sail Long Beach cancelled, Sail Fest moves to LA](#)**

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) announced that it is cancelling the Strictly Sail Long Beach show scheduled for October 23–26, 2014. The reason behind this is to focus on fewer shows in larger markets to better serve the boating industry, specifically to the West Coast. NMMA plans to concentrate its

efforts and resources on the Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco shows and expand these events to include a greater sailing presence.

More Information: [nmma.org](http://nmma.org)

### **Save the Dates**

#### **Newport International Boat Show**

September 11–14, 2014, Newport, Rhode Island

#### **United States Sailboat Show**

October 9–13, 2014, Annapolis, Maryland

#### **Strictly Sail Pacific**

April 9–12, 2015, Oakland, California

### **PROGRESSIONS AND JOB POSTINGS**

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#### **North Sails names Tim Healy President of North Sails One Design**

North Sails announced that World Champion sailor Tim Healy has been named President of North Sails One Design. Healy, who rejoined North Sails as One Design Coordinator in 2013, will succeed Vince Brun, who's 37

years of exceptional leadership established North Sails as the leader in one design sail making. While passing on the title of President to Healy, Brun will remain an active part of North Sails One Design, serving as a member of the newly formed One Design Management Team, which will focus on developing future strategies for the group.

In addition to Healy, North Sails One Design will be managed by an international team of industry experts who will be focusing on the ensuring the success in the merge of North's One Design divisions in Europe and North America.

More Information: [sailingscuttlebutt.com](http://sailingscuttlebutt.com)

### **[World Champion Geoff Becker Joins North Sails One Design](#)**

North Sails announced that Geoff Becker has joined the team to represent the North Sails One Design brand in the Chesapeake Bay area. Geoff is a World Champion sailor and respected coach who shares North Sail's passion for the sport. He will be working closely with clients to improve their results and maximize their sailing experience. Growing up on one design boats, Geoff is no stranger to this type which makes for a great track record and sailing accomplishments.



More Information: [sailingscuttlebutt.com](http://sailingscuttlebutt.com)

### **[Senior Account Manager at Raymarine](#)**

Sail America member, Raymarine, is looking for a Senior Account Manager out of their Nashua, NH and Orlando, FL locations. The Senior Account Manager's primary responsibilities include OEM account management, contract negotiations, staff management and business development. The Manager establishes and manages all aspects of OEM sales within the assigned client group including sales analysis, communications, presentation of sales/marketing information and growing OEM revenue.

More information: [raymarine.com](http://raymarine.com)