

SAIL AMERICA NEWS

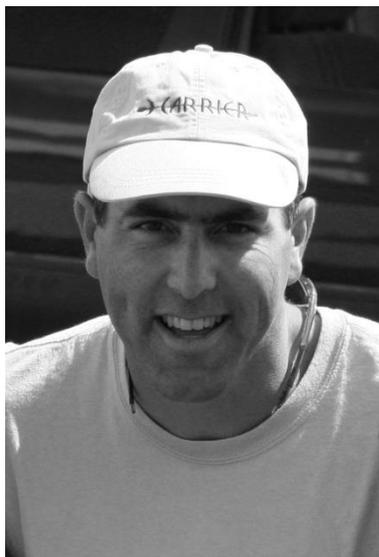
Monthly News for
Sail America Members



www.sailamerica.com



MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATION MANAGER



I have attended a number of industry events in the past several months—from boat shows to standards and training roundtables—and often my conversations lead to my outlook on the sailing industry. Since Sail America is the voice of the US sailing industry, with a mission to grow the sailing market, it's obvious I have thoughts on the outlook for 2014.

I have met a lot of people this past year and have been fortunate to talk a lot about sailing. I am amazed how many people have been touched by the sailing bug, no matter the point in their life.

Sailing enjoyed a tremendous boost from the America's Cup in 2013. People sat at the edges of their chairs watching the greatest comeback in sports history unfold on their TVs, computers, or smart devices. We watched as amazing video and graphics showed us the playing field, and advances in technology detailed tide, current, and wind changes challenging the contenders. Perhaps the greatest value the Cup brought to our industry was the fantastic commentary that made it easy for the non-sailor to understand what was happening.

And, the enthusiasm has carried over into consumer confidence. I am encouraged by the increased numbers of people attending boat shows and, specifically, our Discover Sailing Pavilions at the Newport and St Petersburg boat shows. In 2012, we introduced more than 1,000 new individuals to sailing through Discover Sailing and I expect this number to grow in the coming year.

I'm also encouraged by anecdotes from our manufacturing members on the number of individuals buying boats during the shows. I anticipate that new models and fresh product offerings will lead to another year of increased production and sales.

Growth will continue to be unevenly distributed across the country, as manufacturers continue to rebuild their depleted dealer networks and find reasonable financing options.

Sailors are hands-on purchasers and want to see a boat before they buy; this might help explain the increase we have observed in show attendance.

Millennials are being offered more solutions to remain in sailing. Charter companies and sailing schools should expect continue growth in 2014. And online “peer-to-peer” rentals will prompt new growth as these companies look to increase boat use by pairing boat owners with potential rentals.

The sailing gear and equipment market will continue to experience good growth as consumers continue to seek out new technology and product innovation. The aging of the fleet buoyed with consumer confidence will drive the OEMs and aftermarket sales.

And, finally, publishers will be fueled by the growth and evolution of the industry as they continue to engage new audiences and readers through coverage of industry news, insightful editorial, and captivating photography and video. In addition, media companies provide education and tutorials to support new sailors entering our industry.

With increasing consumer confidence and enthusiasm I am cautiously optimistic that the sailing will continue to grow in 2014. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the coming year. Feel free to email me, or drop me a line.

Good Sailing!

Peter Durant

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WAYPOINTS COVER STORY



Randy Draftz, owner of Charleston Yachting and event director for the Sperry Top-Sider Charleston Race Week (April 10–13, 2014), has been involved with the sailing industry his entire life. Established in 1995 by the Charleston Ocean Racing Association (CORA), Charleston Race Week, open to 20' to 80' monohulls, is the largest keelboat regatta in the US and after nearly two decades remains arguably the fastest growing regatta as well, attracting such sponsors as Torqeedo and Quantum Sails, Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina, Vineyard Vines, Gosling Rum, and its title sponsor

Sperry Top-Sider. Sail America caught up with Randy to chat about the meteoric rise of Charleston Race Week and to get his thoughts on business, racing, and sailing.

Sail America: How did you get involved with Charleston Race Week?

Randy Draftz: I was the Rear Commodore of the Charleston Ocean Racing Association (CORA). The Rear Commodore is responsible for running all the CORA races for the season (except race week). I thought I should at least help out so I worked on one of the signal boats as a starter. The following year I ran the scoring for race week. Then I missed a very important meeting and became race director.

SA: How would you characterize this regatta?

RD: It's a fun family event and yet it is very competitive. The boats range from big grand prix entries to 20 foot one designs. We are adding multihulls for the first time this year, so the event has something to offer everyone.

SA: Who competes in the regatta?

RD: It's the novice to past Olympic medalists and America's Cup. It's one of the great things about our sport; we can sail against the best our sport has to offer if we choose.

SA: According to the race's website, Charleston Race Week saw a dramatic shift in 2005 after CORA struck a deal with the South Carolina Maritime Foundation to focus on establishing the Race Week as a premier event. Can you comment on this and to what do you attribute Charleston Race Week's popularity and its fast growth

RD: The event was growing and was headed to the next level. The game changer was moving the venue to a resort that had a marina and a beach. Having the harbor for smaller keelboats and the ocean for larger is also somewhat unique. Our weather in April is just starting to get warm and our sea breeze is becoming reliable, so it's also a great time of year to be in Charleston. We have worked hard to develop the quality of our race management and that has also allowed us to expand our six courses.

SA: Last year, the Melges 24 National Championship took place during Charleston Race Week. Did that help bolster attendance and/or recognition?

RD: It was great to host their National Championships. Sperry Top-Sider Charleston Race Week had already become one of the more popular M24 regattas. It's a great testament to the capabilities and caliber of our race committee.

SA: What changes have you seen in the near decade you've been director of the Race Week?

RD: I have watched it grow in popularity and competitiveness. It is great to see all the talent the event is now drawing. Last year it seemed like the best sailors were either at the AC World Series or at Sperry Top-Sider Charleston Race Week. We have gone from three courses to six to accommodate the growth. That's 160 race committee on the water! Forty marks and anchor rodes etc. It's just fantastic the support this event garners.

SA: What kinds of increases are you seeing in entries for 2014?

RD: We might see a slight increase, maybe 10%. It doesn't sound like much but that's 30 more boats. Right now we are way up, mostly due to the relatively new J70 class. We had to cap the inshore classes to 60 boats. Currently we are reorganizing the in-shore classes to allow us to lift the cap for the J70s where we currently have a waiting list.

SA: Where is the farthest-reaching competitor coming from?

RD: We usually will have some Europeans attending and I think we have a boat from China registered. Our state tourism board loves the event due to the fact that 85% of our attendees are from outside South Carolina.

SA: Let's talk about the online business you've owned for the past nine years, Charleston Yachting, a rigging and specialty marine store with products ranging from cordage and clothing to sails and inflatable boats. Did you launch the store?

RD: Yes I started the store originally online. I have been in the marine retail business for a long time. A few years in the sail making business then into the retail/distribution/manufacturing with a company called Chicago Yachting and Navigation. You had to be diverse to be in the marine industry in Chicago. Now the online business has evolved into more of a traditional chandlery these days.

SA: You've been professionally involved with the boating industry since the late '70/early '80s, correct? How does your personal sailing experience direct you in business, from a nuts-and-bolts R&D perspective and from an ideological perspective?

RD: My personal sailing experience has given me great exposure to all types of boats and their issues. Then there are the owners. They are successful and smart and I try to treat them as I would want to be treated and hopefully keep them coming back. Sailing is a great sport so we work hard on making sure our customers get to enjoy it as much as we do.

SA: Other than Charleston Race Week, are you involved with the local sailing community and in what way?

RD: Race Week is a big part of my life these days. It's also about what race week can do to help grow the sport and the community. I am still trying to learn the "no" word but it's not working as well as it should. I will run several races a year for CORA and help out at several of the local yacht club race committees. I did some work with US Sailing this past fall. If it helps grow or improve the sport I am still there.

SA: Are you involved in any outreach programs to youths or to involve people who are new to sailing?

RD: We started to create an organization to coordinate all the sailing initiatives in Charleston called [Sail Charleston](#). It's more of an informational website today but still an ongoing concern. Last year at race week we used Sail Charleston to invite people to an intro to sailing program where we had sailing schools, charter groups, and yacht clubs there for people to investigate. We then took them out on a chartered boat to view some of the racing with Greg Fisher commentating. It was a great start and got a lot of people exposed to the sport. This year we are partnering with [US Sailing's REACH program](#), which is a [STEM](#) program for middle school teachers and children. Hopefully we can introduce the sport and educate as well.

SA: Do you own a sailboat? Do you compete? What kinds of races get your attention?

RD: I used to have a small one design that I got involved in when I moved to Charleston. Maybe I have gotten lazy but the last few years I have been content to race with customers. I will always travel back up to Chicago for the Mac Race and I do a number of the local CORA races. I really need to get back involved in my own boat at some point. Not easy when you are in the business though.

SA: Are you native to Charleston? Did you grow up sailing? On what kind of boat?

RD: No, I grew up in Michigan. My family had boats that we would sail and race. I then moved to Chicago and spent 19 years working and sailboat racing. I arrived in Charleston in 1999. It wasn't exactly planned; I was keen on working with a dot.com startup called SailNet. I wasn't even that familiar with Charleston—it was all about the job. I created the online store and was their Director of E Commerce before I started Charleston Yachting. Now I have been here over 13 years and have watched our son grow up here. What a wonderful place. Time flies when you are having fun.

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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 devlin.sarah@me.com.

NMMA Urges Industry to Take Action to Reduce Ethanol Requirement

Over the past few months our industry has made tremendous progress in preventing the widespread implementation of high ethanol blends. In November, NMMA achieved a major victory when the EPA announced its proposal to modify the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) and to reduce the amount of ethanol required to be blended into the nation's fuel supply. As required by law, the EPA is now soliciting public comments on its proposal before rendering a final decision. Last month, NMMA testified before the EPA explaining the unintended dangers of the RFS and its impact on the marine industry. NMMA will also be submitting written comments this month. But your voice, your opinions and your comments are critical to our overall success. If you want the EPA to reduce the ethanol mandate, to modify the RFS and protect marine engines, [then you must speak up!](#) You can quickly and effectively voice your comments [HERE](#).

Comments are due by **Tuesday, January 28**. It's up to the boating community to show how this flawed policy is having devastating consequences on our industry.

It's simple. It's direct. And it makes a difference. We already know that the ethanol and corn lobbies are submitting thousands of comments. We can't sit on the sidelines. It's time to take action and let the EPA know that you want lower ethanol mandates in 2014. They want to hear from you—don't wait until it's too late!

[Visit This Link to Submit Your Comments](#)

For more information or assistance, please contact Michael Lewan at MLewan@nmma.org.

Sail America Member BoatUS Foundation Offers Low-Cost Life Jackets to Camps, Schools, Nonprofits

Non-profit summer camps, schools, or local nonprofit organizations providing on-the-water programs for kids have a strong need for safety, and having right-sized life jackets for kids is key. Now, the BoatUS Foundation's Kids Afloat Program is offering kid/teen-sized, vest-style life jackets for just \$5 each. However, supplies are limited and groups need to apply online at www.BoatUS.org/Kids-Afloat by February 28th, 2014. The Foundation will then choose those applications that best match program guidelines and post them to the Foundation's website and Facebook page for public voting in the spring. Those with the most votes will have the opportunity to purchase the deeply discounted life jackets.

The life jackets are Type-II and Type-III vests—the most comfortable non-inflating type available today that normally retail for about \$30 each. Applicants are allowed to request up to a total of 50 life jackets in infant, child, youth, and teen sizes.

[Stephen Colbert Joins National Sailing Hall of Fame Honorary Advisory Board](#)



Stephen Colbert, the political satirist, writer, comedian, actor, and host of the television show [The Colbert Report](#), has joined the NSHOF Honorary Advisory Board. He joins other distinguished members, including its Chair, actor and sailor Morgan Freeman, who filled the post left vacant by the late Walter Cronkite in 2009.

"I'm honored to be named to the Honorary Advisory Board," said Colbert. "I will do my best to not capsize the National Sailing Hall of Fame. Hard Alee!"

Stephen Colbert grew up on Charleston Harbor, right across from the Carolina Yacht Club, a NSHOF Founding Member Club. [According to a 2011 article in Sailing World](#), Colbert recalled, "The regattas were right outside my window. I wasn't allowed to go sailing because I don't have an eardrum in one ear and I couldn't get water in my ear. It just drove me crazy."

He did a little sailing on and off until 2005, when a friend invited him to crew in the Charleston to Bermuda race aboard a 45-foot cat ketch. "I just loved it," he said.

The National Sailing Hall of Fame is a nonprofit educational facility dedicated to

preserving America's sailing legacy and engaging sailing's next generation by sharing the benefits, excitement, and beauty of sailing, preserving its history, and showcasing sailing's impact on American culture.

NSHOF honors those who have made outstanding contributions to American sailing, teaches math and science through sailing to students, encourages sailing development, and works to provide inspiration and a landmark for sailing enthusiasts.

Sail America Members Working Together: Beneteau Chooses DTX Anchor

Sail America member Lewmar has been chosen as supplier to one of the highlights of Boot Düsseldorf (Jan. 18–26, 2014). Sail America member Beneteau's new flybridge motorboat flagship MC5 will feature one of Lewmar's new DTX anchors at its international debut at Boot Düsseldorf. A major sea-change in their motorboat styling, this boat demanded an anchor to suit. The reliable holding performance and excellent aesthetics make the DTX anchor range the perfect choice to adorn this stunning boat.

Sail America Member Sailing Breezes Reports: Women Fastest Growing Outdoor Recreation Group

Source [*Sailing Breezes*](#):

A [recent survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) revealed that women are now the fastest growing outdoor recreation group. They now make up 27 percent of anglers.

The ongoing popularity of the international [Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program](#), known as BOW, may be partly behind this trend. Started in 1991, the program emerged as the brainchild of a conference held at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point to identify barriers to the outdoors for women. The conference determined that limited access to outdoor education strongly hindered women from taking on activities like hunting or fishing, said BOW international director Peggy Farrell.

To read the article, please visit:

http://www.sailingbreezes.com/Sailing_Breezes_Current/Articles/jan14/women-fastest-growing-outdoor-recreation-group.html

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 new 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.

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS—THE LATEST UPDATES

The following information is paraphrased from the NMMA Economic Overview, formerly Boating News Net, a monthly economic report produced by NMMA featuring industry and general economic indicators that impact your business. To read NMMA's Economic Overview or to receive it yourself, [please subscribe](#).

Third quarter GDP growth rose from 2.8% to 3.6%, primarily reflecting a greater pickup in inventory investment and a downward revision to imports. Offsetting these gains were slowdowns in consumer spending on housing, utilities, and health care. For 2014, economists with the National Association for Business Economics (NABE) expect the GDP to expand by 2.8%, an upward revision from previous forecasts.

Consumer confidence fell again this past November to 70.4 as both the Present Situation Index and Expectations Index turned down slightly to mixed reports.

The unemployment rate fell to a five-year low at 7% in November with another 203,000 primarily private-sector jobs added to payrolls. YTD, 2.1 million jobs have been added to payrolls, averaging 189,000 jobs monthly.

Traditional powerboat wholesale shipments rose for the third consecutive month in September year over year (YOY) for NMMA's control group of manufacturers and were up 3.8% YTD. Ski boats, aluminum outboards boats, and fiberglass outboard boats remain bright spots (up 12.8%, 7.3%, and 6.7% YTD YOY respectively), representing the bulk of the market and offsetting slowdowns in all other boat segments.

[Read NMMA's Economic Overview in its entirety.](#) For more information, please visit NMMA.org.

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BOAT SHOW UPDATES

St. Petersburg Power and Sailboat Show

According to an article in *Soundings Trade Only*, though turnout was down about 6%, the number of new and used boats at the St. Petersburg Power and Sailboat Show was up 3% this past December 5–8. The nearly 300 exhibitors saw a steady crowd of buyers and according to Efrem “Skip” Zimbalist of AIM, *STO*’s owner (and Sail America *Waypoints* subject in May 2013), the sales climate is improving with the pace picking up in eastern Florida and within the small boat market. For more about the St. Petersburg Power and Sailboat Show, please see the article in [Soundings Trade Only](#) or visit [Show Management](#).

Strictly Sail Pacific Boat Show

April 10–13, 2014, in Oakland, California

Now in its 19th year, the West Coast’s largest original all-sail boat show will sail into Jack London Square with all that is hot in the world of sailing. Whether you are a newbie or a seasoned sailor, this four-day sailing spectacular is the place to immerse yourself in the world of sailing, check out new sailboats, talk to experts, participate in hands-on seminars, get on the water and have fun.

2014 Strictly Sail Pacific Boat Show highlights include:

- Hundreds of sailboats, gear and accessories
 - 110 free seminars, hands-on workshops, and advanced workshops
 - Free sailboat rides for adults and children
 - Small Boat Zone—Chat with local sailors from class associations, active fleets, and yacht clubs
 - Author’s Corner—Check out the latest books from top sailing authors, purchase a signed book, and hear a tale or two about any number of sailing topics
 - Fun Zone—Fun activities and games for the young aspiring sailor
- For more information, visit [StrictlySailPacific.com](#).

Sail America’s Annual Member Meeting during Strictly Sail Pacific

Friday, April 11, 2014, 8:00 am –9:30 am, Scott’s Restaurant

Make plans to attend Sail America’s Annual Member meeting this April. The member meeting will include breakfast and is open to members and non-members.

At the meeting you'll hear an update on Sail America's accomplishments and future plans. You'll also have the opportunity to network with industry professionals.

American Boating Congress Returns to DC

May 5-7, 2014, in Washington DC

Recreational boating faces regulations and issues that impact all our businesses. Held annually, the American Boating Congress is a comprehensive legislative conference that brings together recreational boating industry leaders to formulate public policy and present a unified front on issues that impact marine businesses. Learn ways to grow your business in the current economy.

- Meet elected officials to discuss your policy concerns
- Speak directly with policymakers in your Congressional district
- Learn more about the Congressional process and how you can stay involved year round
- Hear from elected officials, policy makers, and distinguished speakers
- Join peers from all segments of the industry to help ensure a healthy future for recreational boating.

Elected officials listen when their constituents talk. Sail America's members are experts on recreational boating and can have a profound impact on the decisions made on Capitol Hill. You'll never have a better opportunity to personally influence legislation and protect your business interests.

You don't need to be expert in government affairs. The American Boating Congress staff provides opportunities and tools, arming you with the information you need to make your visit to Capitol Hill impactful! Interested? Learn more at www.nmma.org/abc

Sail America Industry Conference

June 9-11, 2014, Charleston, South Carolina

Schedule-at-a-Glance Available

The overall schedule-at-a-glance for Sail America's Industry Conference (SAIC) is now available. The SAIC will be held June 9-11, 2014 at the Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina in Charleston, SC.

The conference, sponsored by B&G, will feature more than fifteen educational seminars, a regatta, and an industry dinner. Networking events and a raffle will also be included.

Sail America's Industry Conference is *the* place for sailing industry professionals to learn about new topics and trends, receive updates, and networking with over 150 participants.

Monday, June 9

Afternoon	Regatta
7:00 pm–9:00 pm	Opening Reception

Tuesday, June 10

8:30 am–8:45 am	Welcome
8:45 am–9:45 am	Keynote
9:50 am–10:30 am	General Session
10:30 am–10:45 am	Break
10:45 am–11:45 am	General Session
11:45 am–12:30 pm	General Session
12:30 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm–2:30 pm	Concurrent Sessions
2:30 pm–2:45 pm	Break
2:45 pm–3:45 pm	Concurrent Sessions
3:45 pm–4:00 pm	Break
4:00 pm–4:45 pm	General Session
4:45 pm–5:00 pm	Closing Remarks/Wrap Up
6:00 pm–7:00 pm	Dinner Cocktail Hour
7:00 pm–9:00 pm	Dinner

Wednesday, June 11

8:30 am–9:15 am	Concurrent Sessions
9:30 am–10:45 am	Concurrent Sessions
11:00 am–12:00 pm	General Session
12:00 pm	Conference Concludes

SAIC Sponsorship Opportunities

Sail America has published a [Sponsorship Opportunities brochure](#) for its Industry Conference.

The brochure contains information on the conference, six sponsorship levels and benefits, and a sponsor contract. Download the brochure today to see how you can get involved, gain recognition for your company, and support Sail America.

Space is limited at each sponsorship level and the title sponsorship is already sold. [Sign up today](#) to ensure the sponsorship you want and to start receiving benefits.

To learn more about Sail America's Industry Conference, visit SailAmerica.com.



Save the Dates

Strictly Sail Chicago

January 23-26, 2014, Chicago, Illinois

Strictly Sail Miami

February 13-17, 2014, Miami, Florida

South West International Boat Show

March 27-30, 2014, Texas

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PROGRESSIONS AND JOB POSTINGS

Sail America Member Edson International Welcomes Total Marine Supply

Edson International has appointed Tim Loftus of Total Marine Supply, LLC, as its factory representative in the Midwest and Great Lakes states. Will Keene, Edson's President and Co-owner, reports: "We are excited to have Tim join our team. He brings a wealth of knowledge to the job, along with his reputation for honesty and integrity, which makes this a good fit for Edson's customers in the Great Lakes region."

Tim Loftus has owned and operated Total Marine Supply for nine years, specializing in the sales of marine equipment to OEM boat builders and large marine distributors. Prior to that Tim managed distributor sales for Harken Yacht Equipment, following a long career in field sales for Motorola and Fairchild Semiconductor. Tim is a lifelong sailor and avid racer on Lake Michigan.

Rob Wilkinson to Lead ACE's General Insurance Business in Thailand

Sail America member ACE Group, one of the world's largest multi-line property and casualty insurers, appointed Rob Wilkinson as the new Country President to lead its general insurance operations in Thailand—ACE INA Overseas Insurance Company Limited. Wilkinson, whose appointment was effective on January 6 replaces incumbent, Glen Browne who has been appointed as the Regional Head for ACE's Accident & Health business in the Asia Pacific region.

Wilkinson has been with ACE for more than four years, most recently as the Country President of Korea, which is the region's second largest operation. Under his stewardship, he rapidly grew the Accident & Health business to the biggest international Accident & Health operation driven by product innovation and diversified distribution. Between 2009–2011, he was the Regional Head of Accident & Health for ACE in the Asia Pacific; a position that allowed Wilkinson to have first-hand experience in Southeast Asia and Thailand in particular. Prior to joining ACE, Wilkinson was with an international health insurer for 17 years. During this time, he was in a variety of roles with increasing responsibility, which included stints in Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and Taiwan, culminating with the role as the CEO Life/Accident & Health for Europe based in Spain. Over the course of his career, Wilkinson has developed specific expertise in growing very

large businesses. He has a broad range of management experience encompassing sales and marketing, operations, product development and channel management.

IMTRA Announces Restructured Management Team

As of January 1, former COO Eric Braitmayer has become President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Sail America member IMTRA, a leading manufacturer and importer of quality marine products. Braitmayer succeeded IMTRA's long-time President and CEO, Nat Bishop, who has retired.

In addition to Mr. Braitmayer's new role, former Commercial Sales Manager Alex Larsen has been promoted to Vice-President of Commercial Sales. Peter Kilgore retains his long-time role as president of IMTRA subsidiary Maximum Weather and succeeds Braitmayer as IMTRA's Vice-President of Marketing. Rounding out the management team is Vice-President of Sales Chip Farnham who will continue to manage customer relations and drive revenue generation, and Jeff Vancura who joined IMTRA in June 2013 as CFO.

Swiackey Retires, Tony Bon Appointed CEO, at Sail America Member Samson

Sail America member Samson, the worldwide leader in performance rope, announced that after more than 41 years, Steve Swiackey has retired as CEO at the end of 2013. Tony Bon, Samson's current president, has been named CEO.

Swiackey came to Samson in 1972 as Assistant Plant Manager of what was then Samson's largest manufacturing operation in Shirley, Massachusetts. He quickly rose to Plant Manager, then to Vice-President of Manufacturing, and in 1985 became President of the company. In 1988 Swiackey bought Samson, relocating the company's headquarters and its largest manufacturing operation to Ferndale, Washington. In 1993 he sold the business to the present owners, Wind River Holdings™; adding manufacturing facilities in Lafayette, Louisiana, and setting the stage for the strategy that would ultimately transform Samson into the world's leading high-performance synthetic rope company.

Swiackey will remain an asset to Samson by serving in a consultancy role to Wind River Holdings™.

Bon has been a valued member of the Samson team since 1974 when he began on the manufacturing floor in Samson's Massachusetts facility. He soon progressed to Production Superintendent and later transferred to the Ferndale facility in 1980 as Plant Manager. Since then, he has held positions as Materials Manager, Vice-President of Operations, Senior Vice-President, Chief Operating Officer, and President since 2007.