

Preparing your Boat for the Season

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If you are like me, you are planning the items you need to accomplish on the boat before the next boating season. Here are some things I have on my to do list.

Anchors and Rode

I hope to Anchor more this coming year than I have in the past. I need to clean, inspect and organize the anchors, chains and locker. Pay attention to wear and the connections between components. Soak anchor rode's in fabric softener and water overnight and rinse with fresh water, do not use bleach. Rinse all your lines, too. If you have chain, is there any corrosion and if so should it be replaced. Now is the time. Don't forget to check your 2nd anchor and rode as well.

Check for Corrosion

Electrical connections, metal-to-metal fasteners and non-stainless steel parts all need attention to help ensure you have a trouble free season. Spray fasteners with a corrosion inhibitor, and replace damaged units. Focus on areas where there is high moisture like Bilges. Don't neglect stainless steel components such as rails and instrument casings.

Electronics

Hopefully you have removed electronics and stored them in a dry, climate-controlled environment to prevent condensation and insect invasion. It's time to get them organized and installed again. Coat electrical connections with Corrosion Block, and spray metal screws with a burst of WD40.

Lights

Check your lights interior and exterior. Especially navigation lights as they are required. If your boat has a bicolor light that combines sidelights, make sure the colors don't leak to the wrong side, red and green have a purpose and you don't want confusion. Sidelights must be visible for one nautical mile, and all-around lights should be visible for two. If not, replace the bulbs with brighter, higher wattage ones or switch to the appropriate LED bulb. Check light socket for corrosion that could interfere with the electric signal, clean and or replace as needed.

Bottom Paint/Props/Zincs

Is it time for you to have the bottom painted with anti-fouling paint? I plan to redo the bottom paint for every 3 years depending on how it looks.

Inspect your propeller for any damage. You can check for bent prop blades by placing a ruler against the hull so that it touches one blade's tip. Slowly turn the propeller while firmly holding the ruler in place. If the blades intersect the plane of the ruler during this rotation, they are bent. They should be straightened or replaced by a dealer.

For maximum performance, inspect the leading edges of prop blades for gouges, nicks, rough spots and cracks. Smooth minor nicks and gouges with a machinist's general-purpose file. Use fine sandpaper to carefully complete the blending and smooth the surface. File and sand parallel with the blade, not perpendicular to it. Serious cracks and damage should only be repaired by an authorized dealer.

Zinc anodes prevent or reduce galvanic corrosion, the deterioration that occurs to dissimilar metals in an electrolytic solution (water). Replace zinc anodes at least once a year. They are fairly inexpensive and help protect very expensive parts.

Required service

Some operations can only be performed by a qualified service shop, especially on fuel-injected engines. Schedule annually required service soon, as opposed to the busy spring. Oil and filter changes should be done as well. If you have heat exchangers, you should check them for corrosion and buildup. I take mine to a radiator shop to clean and do pressure tests every time I have the bottom painted or if I see I am running hotter than normal.

Inspect and replace fuel filters there may be more than one, hoses, clamps, connectors, belts.

Strainers

Periodically check raw-water strainers in a boat's engine, generator, refrigerator, freezer and air conditioners for damage. If the component has any cracks or damage, replace it. Rinse the strainer and rub it clean. Check the strainer's stainless steel mesh ends. If they are compressed, replace the strainer. Inspect and replace or grease all seals.

Last, but not least

Are life jackets clean and usable? Do they have whistles? Check ancillary systems such as fresh water, bilge, circuit breakers, and fuses. Update your maintenance log and jot down your decommissioning procedures so you know where to begin in the spring so you don't forget anything.

This article is given courtesy of your local America's Boating Club of the Pamlico. This is a great time of the year to consider a general boating course. The America's Boating Course, which meets the requirement for NC State Boat Operator Certificate, is being given 2/24 and 3/2. To register or learn more information contact Kelly at 551-427-0585 or email papsed@gmail.com. We also invite you to visit our website to learn about more boating safety and education at <https://pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org>