

Focus on antifouling boat paint



WHY IT MATTERS

Copper-based antifouling paints are a significant source of copper pollution in Washington's marinas and these paints were due to be phased out by 2020. If copper paint is banned, however, boaters will look to products that use a range of alternative biocides as the active ingredient. Some of these biocides could cause more environmental damage than copper, threatening water quality and damaging Washington's environment.

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Special accommodations

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Proposed Legislation

Will delay the existing ban on copper-based antifouling boat paints intended for recreational vessels and direct the Department of Ecology to conduct additional research on the full range of antifouling paints and biocides.

The problem

Antifouling bottom paints for boats are essential to prevent marine organisms from growing on hulls, reducing vessel performance and potentially damaging the hull. Most current bottom paints use copper-based biocides, and these paints are a significant source of copper pollution in Washington marinas. A 2011 law required these paints to be phased out by 2020 for recreational boats. However, an Ecology review found that available alternatives to copper paints could actually do more harm to the environment.

The solution

Delaying the implementation date for the copper-based antifouling paint ban until 2021 will give Ecology time to fully review the safety of all antifouling paints and develop a proposal that will improve water quality in Washington's marinas, protect our environment, and allow boat owners access to effective antifouling treatments.

Ecology's proposal

Under the proposal, Ecology will conduct modeling to determine how antifouling paints affect the environment specific to Washington's water conditions and marina designs. Ecology will also examine alternative methods of regulating antifouling paints, such as establishing a leach rate for copper or other biocides used in the paints.

How it will work

- A ban on copper-based antifouling paints scheduled to begin in 2018 (for new boats) and in 2020 (for all recreational sale and use), will be delayed until 2021.
- Ecology will conduct a study on antifouling paints and report to the Legislature.
- Ecology will study alternative methods of improving marina water quality, such as developing a leach rate standard for antifouling paints, and report to the Legislature on its findings by September 30, 2019.

How it will benefit Washington

The ban on copper-based antifouling paint enacted in the 2011 law will drive boat owners to switch to antifouling paints that use alternative biocides. Ecology has identified new research indicating that many of these biocides have the potential to cause greater harm to the environment than copper-based biocides and may actually reduce water quality in Washington marinas.

By giving Ecology more time to study alternative biocides and develop alternative strategies to preserve water quality in our state's marinas, we will ensure we are fulfilling our mission to protect Washington's environment.