



EBA Position Statement Hull Fouling

Executive Summary

Hull fouling is a significant contributor to the spread of invasive non-native species (INNS). It also increases fuel consumption and hence greenhouse gas emissions. The EBA is concerned that many of the antifouling products permitted within national regulations resulting from the EU Biocide Directive are ineffective at preventing hull fouling. The EBA welcomes the potential to move away from biocidal solutions to more technical coatings and urges regulators to support rapid development and implementation of these technologies while ensuring that new coatings do not introduce new pollution problems.

Background

The European Boating Association¹ (EBA) recognises that the environmental impact of invasive non-native species (INNS) is of great concern for all kinds of water bodies around the globe. INNS may cause reductions in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, with resultant effects on communities' livelihoods and well-being. The risks associated with INNS will also be increased by the changing climate, as species move and are able to colonize new environments.

The EBA, being aware that the hull fouling issue is equally applicable to Recreational Boating, is concerned that many currently available antifouling products that are permitted within the national regulations resulting from the EU Biocide Directive are ineffective to prevent hull fouling and introduce a higher risk of spreading INNS.

Within the European Union the Biocide Directive stipulates strict limitations for the use of biocide components that may be used in a wide range of products; among them anti fouling applications. The EBA is aware that new technologies for managing hull fouling are now on the market, and that more are being developed, and welcomes the potential to move away from biocidal solutions to more technical coatings. However, the EBA also notes the potential for other pollutants, such as PFAS, to be introduced in such coatings.

Since the first Sustainable Ocean Summit in 2010, the WOC has worked to focus attention on action to address biofouling, including its potential to serve as a vector for the introduction of invasive species and the significant threat to ocean biodiversity that this can pose. The main

purpose is to identify what actions can be taken to manage biofouling and mitigate the threat of invasive species.

A major international initiative to address biofouling - the GloFouling Project – was launched in 2019 with WOC as the lead implementer for engaging ocean industry action with and through key organizations. The GloFouling Project is a partnership of the Global Environmental Facility, United Nations Development Program, IMO, and UNESCO Intergovernmental Ocean Commission. The EBA is a strategic member of the GloFouling Partnership and is listed on their website at <https://www.glofouling.imo.org/strategic-partners>.

The GloFouling Project will develop and put in place strategies to ameliorate biofouling, particularly in partner countries around the globe, relying largely on the development of public-private partnerships.

The development of innovative coatings that control biofouling on ships, offshore structures, and other key infrastructure involves not only technical research hurdles, but producers also face a host of regulatory challenges in bringing these products to market. Coatings researchers must balance the requirement for products that not only control biofouling effectively, but which do so in a way that is cognisant of the need to minimize ancillary environmental damage, including harm to other species that are not implicated in fouling. In this way, coatings scientists must balance the need for effective treatments while avoiding harm to the marine environment.

At the OSPAR – Environmental Impact of Human Activities conference in April 2018 hull fouling was addressed as a potential threat and a consultant contracted by the Netherlands Government presented a paper on hull fouling found on pleasure craft and its relation with alien species found both on these boats and the pleasure craft harbours on the coast of the Netherlands.

The EBA and its members have long been engaged in action to increase public awareness about the risk of unintentional spread of INNS by having maritime growth attached to parts of recreational boats when these are being transported or sailed from one area to another. This has resulted in a publication; “the European Code of Conduct on Recreational Boating and Invasive Alien Species” by the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) in November 2016.

The European Commission has also provided strict regulations on production and application of antifouling.

The EU biocides directive sets the upper limits on levels of regulated substances, and each EU Member State makes its own national regulations within these set limits.

The EBA Position on Hull Fouling

The EBA recognises that the environmental impact of invasive non-native species (INNS) is of great concern for all kinds of water bodies around the globe.

The EBA further recognises that hull fouling is a significant contributor to the spread of INNS and the issue is being addressed on a global scale by international organisations like the World Ocean

Council (WOC) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The proposed actions focus on shipping and the marine industry, where improvements are being sought in biofouling management.

The EBA, being aware that the hull fouling issue is equally applicable to Recreational Boating², is concerned that many currently available antifouling products that are permitted within the national regulations resulting from the EU Biocide Directive are ineffective to prevent hull fouling and introduce a higher risk of spreading INNS.

The EBA is also aware that new technologies for managing hull fouling are now on the market, and that more are being developed, and welcomes the potential to move away from biocidal solutions to more technical coatings. However, the EBA also notes the potential for other pollutants, such as PFAS³, to be introduced in such coatings. The EBA urges regulators to ensure that new coatings do not inadvertently introduce new pollution problems.

As hull fouling also reduces a boat's performance, ineffective antifouling will also increase the need for in-water cleaning. Reduced hull performance, if the boat is under power, also increases fuel consumption and / or reduces range. Effective antifouling is therefore critical to plans to decarbonise as well as to the reduction in the spread of INNS.

The EBA urges regulators to take steps to mitigate the contradiction that is created between the Biocide Directive and the Global initiative to reduce the risk of introducing alien aquatic species by hull fouling by supporting the rapid development and implementation of new antifouling technologies. This may require financial support as many new approaches have high up-front costs, though with similar lifetime costs.

The EBA notes the moves within the IMO and the Regional Seas Conventions to more tightly regulate the management of antifouling on larger vessels. The EBA is opposed to automatic extension of such regulations to recreational vessels under 24m length due to the significant administrative burden that they may introduce and the lack of a realistic enforcement regime.

Notes

¹ **European Boating Association**

The European Boating Association, Europäischer Sportschiffahrtsverband, Association Européenne de Navigation de Plaisance, is a civil, not for profit association of recreational boat users' organisations, founded in 1982, and established as an Unincorporated Association whose members agree to be governed by its constitution. The EBA member organisations (see <http://www.eba.eu.com/participantorgs>) collectively represent in excess of 1.5 million recreational boaters and an estimated 20 million active participants.

The purpose of the EBA is to represent the mutually agreed common interests of national recreational boat users' organisations in Europe, and in particular to:

- Coordinate and develop recreational boating activities in Europe by exchange of information, and action on matters of mutually agreed common interest.
- Promote the practice of all activities on the water, promoting and exchanging knowledge and experience between recreational boat users' organisations in Europe.
- Represent EBA members in environmental, regulatory and technical matters affecting their safe enjoyment of recreational boating activities on the water.
- Encourage the safe, unhampered and environmentally sustainable use of recreational boats on all European waters.
- Provide the link between the European institutions and EBA Members for consultation and information on proposed EU directives and regulations.
- Provide the link between other relevant global and regional organisations and EBA Members.

² Recreational Boating

The EBA is the European representative organisation for recreational boating.

There is no general consensus as to the terminology used to describe the types of boat used for "recreational boating", with expressions such as "recreational craft" or "private pleasure craft" being used to describe only subsets of such types of boat for the purposes of specific pieces of EU legislation. "Recreational boating" also includes the use of beach- or slipway-launched water toys such as wind surfers, sailing dinghies, inflatable boats and personal watercraft.

Boats used for "recreational boating" may be small or large, propelled by sail and/or power and used on inland waters and/or at sea. "Recreational boating" at sea can range from close-to-shore to trans-oceanic.

"Recreational boating" also includes the use of such boats privately owned and operated by the owner, hired (on bareboat or skippered charter) or used to provide a service (such as training or race participation).

In the context of this document, therefore, the EBA considers "recreational boating" to mean using boats that are designed or adapted for sport or leisure, whether propelled by sail and/or power, for the purposes for which they are designed or adapted.

³ Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, often referred to as "forever chemicals"