

EBA Position Statement Marine Litter

Executive Summary

Marine litter is a recognised and increasing problem for the marine environment. Marine litter is not only ugly – it can harm ocean ecosystems, wildlife, and humans. Recreational boating² is not a significant contributor of marine litter, a high percentage of which comes from land based sources. However, the economic impact of marine litter is thought to be significant and it is a problem that needs to be addressed by all of society and recreational boaters represented by the European Boating Association³ (EBA) is acknowledge that they have a role to play.

The EBA recognises that the recreational boating community by its nature has a strong affinity with the marine environment and reducing the impact of its activities to an absolute minimum is a high priority. The EBA has participated in working groups to set standards for yacht harbours that include requirements for waste handling and collection facilities for all forms of waste that is generated by recreational boats.

The majority of recreational boats only make trips of limited duration and the need to throw any type of waste or litter overboard no longer exists. If facilities are available in recreational boat harbours (i.e. yacht harbours and marinas) they should suffice to collect this waste to allow proper disposal. Furthermore, the provision of such facilities should be obligatory.

At the same time it is acknowledged that public education is an ongoing concern and the EBA will use its resources to promote awareness of the protective measures required to obtain a Good Ecological Potential (GEP) for the marine environment within the recreational boating community.

Background

The EBA notes that “Environmental Conventions” (BARCELONA-, BERN- , HELCOM-, OSPAR) have action plans in place to conquer and prevent marine litter. The common objective is:

“to substantially reduce marine litter in the marine environment to levels where properties and quantities do not cause harm to the marine environment”.

This objective is also in line with the definition of Descriptor 10 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, where Good Environmental Status can be seen to be achieved, when:

“Properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment.”

The EBA acknowledges that a key principle guiding action to address marine litter is the precautionary principle in order to prevent and eliminate pollution. When adopting this principle the EBA's position is that:

- The quality of recreational boating activities is greatly enhanced when they take place in a healthy, clean and sustainable environment;
- Recreational boaters have a special affinity with the marine environment and by nature the vast majority will avoid pollution and littering;
- Education programmes and environmental awareness initiatives promote sustainable boating and help recreational boaters to understand how to choose sustainable products to safeguard the environment for the future;
- Boating organisations, marinas, maintenance facilities and recreational boat owners over recent years have invested in good waste, bilge water and chemical collection points in yacht harbours that will allow for separating general waste, paper, plastics, glass, bilge water, oil and chemicals for proper disposal.

Recreational boating is not the primary contributor of marine litter. Nevertheless, the problems caused by marine litter require continuous effort to ensure that recreational boaters act responsibly towards the marine environment. The EBA will participate in campaigns to enhance public knowledge about the effects of human activities on the marine eco system.

Regulations for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships are contained in Annex V of MARPOL. MARPOL Annex V seeks to eliminate and reduce the amount of garbage being discharged into the sea from ships. Unless expressly provided otherwise, Annex V applies to all ships, which means *all ships of any type whatsoever operating in the marine environment, from merchant ships to fixed or floating platforms to non-commercial ships like pleasure craft and yachts*. Although the Annex is optional, it entered into force on 31 December 1988. Today, more than 150 Countries have signed up to MARPOL Annex V.

Within the EU, Directive 2000/59/EC is aimed at reducing pollution produced by ships and ensures the availability of port reception facilities adequate to meet the needs of the ships normally using the port are provided. Similarly, recreational boats require easy access to adequate waste reception facilities.

The EBA has made a significant contribution to drafting of ISO 13687 which sets out minimum requirements which are suitable for all recreational craft harbours and marinas. ISO 13687 contain paragraphs on:

- Waste control (*There shall be an organized waste collection system in place including collection, storage and disposal and in accordance with local requirements.*)
- Oil and fuel spill (*The yacht harbour shall have means to contain the spread of oil or fuel spills on land or water.*)

- Environmental code of conduct (*The harbour shall have an environmental code of conduct addressed to the user(s). It shall be posted on the information point*). The code should cover the following issues:
 - a. Use of yacht harbour collection systems for waste;
 - b. Respect for nature and in particular sensitive protected natural areas;
 - c. Use of the boat-repair and washing areas, if any;
 - d. Banning the emptying litterbins, toilet tank waste, etc. in coastal waters;
 - e. Avoiding emptying litterbins, toilet tank waste, etc. when at sea.

The EBA Position on Marine Litter

Recreational boating is not a significant contributor of marine litter. Nevertheless, recreational boaters have a vested interest in protecting the environment where they spend their leisure time and a role to play in helping to reduce the incidence of marine litter. The EBA considers that the availability of efficient waste collecting facilities is a prerequisite to the avoidance of marine litter.

The EBA strongly urges all national maritime administrations to encourage the acceptance of ISO 13687 minimum standard for all recreational boat harbours and marinas as a pre-requisite for safeguarding marine waters and habitats.

The EBA will use its resources to promote general knowledge about the protective measures required to obtain a Good Ecological Potential (GEP) for the marine environment.

Notes

¹ Marine Litter

The following definition is a summary from an OSPAR work document:

Marine litter: Marine litter originates from different sea- and land-based sources. Marine litter covers any solid material which has been deliberately discarded, or unintentionally lost on beaches and on shores or at sea, including materials transported into marine environment from land by rivers or winds.

Marine litter consists of a wide range of materials, including plastic, metal, wood, rubber, glass and paper. Although the relative proportions of these materials vary regionally, there is clear evidence that plastic litter is by far the most abundant type. In some locations plastics make up 90 % of marine litter of shorelines. A similar predominance of plastics is reported from sampling at the sea surface and on the seabed.

Most plastics are extremely durable materials and persist in the marine environment for a considerable period, possibly as much as hundreds of years. However, plastics also deteriorate and fragment in the environment as a consequence of exposure to sunlight (photo-degradation) in

addition to physical and chemical deterioration. This breakdown of larger items results in numerous tiny plastic fragments, which, when smaller than 5mm are called secondary micro plastics. Other micro plastics that can be found in the marine environment are categorised as primary micro plastics due to the fact that they are produced either for direct use, such as for industrial abrasives or cosmetics or for indirect use, such as pre-production pellets or nurdles.

Marine litter is not only an aesthetic problem but incurs socioeconomic costs, threatens human health and safety and impacts on marine organisms. It is broadly documented that entanglement in, or ingestion of, marine litter can have negative consequences on the physical condition of marine animals and even lead to death. Ingestion of micro plastics is also of concern as it may provide a pathway for transport of harmful chemicals into the food web. Additionally, marine litter is known to damage and degrade habitats (e.g. in terms of smothering) and to be a possible vector for the transfer of alien species.

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 **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.