

May 1, 2010

**Subject: Gulf Coast Oil Spill - What To Do About Your Bottom Paint**

The recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has raised concerns for the environment, tourism, the food supply, and the economy. It has also caused boaters in the gulf to worry about possible effects to their underwater coatings. While there are many variables to consider in addressing these questions, there are some basic points to consider before choosing a specific course of action.

If only the surface of the antifouling paint film has been affected by the oil spill, then pressure washing (2200 psi minimum), followed by wiping the surface with Pettit #120 thinner, and then sanding and repainting should be adequate.

Unfortunately, since many boats have had contact with the spill for periods of two weeks or more, the oil has more than likely penetrated through the antifouling paint already present on the hulls. In fact, it is probable that the fuel oil has reached the gelcoat and/or epoxy barrier coat level by this time. Although it may be possible to remove the oil from the surface of the paint films, it will not be readily removed from the sub-layers of antifouling paint existing on these boats. The residue of any oil that remains behind after power washing and solvent or detergent cleaning the surface, will eventually begin to exude from the porous paint films. This may ultimately create adhesion problems for subsequently applied antifoulants. These oil exudates would also be expected to inhibit the necessary leaching of cuprous oxide and/or co-biocides present in the antifouling paint, particularly from matrix type antifouling such as hard epoxies or vinyl paints.

The only way to ensure that the oil does not cause future adhesion or antifouling failures is to thoroughly remove it from the hulls of the vessels via complete stripping of the antifouling paint down to the gelcoat or to a sound, oil resistant, epoxy barrier coat layer. Once this stripping has been accomplished, the boat should be pressure washed, and solvent or detergent cleaned to remove all traces of the oil. The surface will then be ready to sand with 80 grit paper, and recoat with antifouling paint

**It may be possible to recondition only the affected area by removing the antifouling paint from the waterline down to approximately twelve inches below the waterline, or as far below the waterline as necessary to cover all areas affected by extended contact with the fuel oil. However, it is imperative to confirm that all affected areas are addressed. This waterline reconditioning scenario should be the case with most sailboats and larger powerboats moored in a marina. Smaller, lighter powerboats might show contamination of the entire underwater paint film and would therefore need to be completely stripped, cleaned, and sanded prior to any reapplication of antifouling paint.**

**Pettit Marine Paint, as well as boatyards, dealers, and OEMs, will be unable to honor any warranty for fouling problems due to oil contaminated surfaces or adhesion issues where paint was applied over an oil contaminated surface that was not properly remediated. For additional information or assistance in addressing coating issues that arise from contact with this spill, please call the Pettit Marine Paint Technical Assistance Hotline at 800-221-4466.**