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### **Grant program targets phasing out of copper boat paint in marinas**

Orange County Coastkeeper announces a three-year campaign to encourage boat owners to switch to nontoxic alternatives.

*COSTA MESA, Calif.* – For decades, boat owners have used copper paint to protect their vessels from damage caused by barnacles and algae. The paint keeps a boat bottom clean, but it leaches copper into the bay, potentially poisoning some of the bottom-dwelling marine life that lives there.

Orange County Coastkeeper, Trace Marine and the city of Newport Beach are teaming up on a three-year public campaign to encourage boat owners to switch to environmentally friendly alternatives. Paid for through a \$260,400 grant funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency along with \$86,800 in matching funds, the campaign will focus on:

- A boater education program
- A financial incentive program
- City policy changes
- A water-monitoring program

“This is a positive step toward encouraging change in our marinas,” said Garry Brown, Executive Director of Orange County Coastkeeper. “There’s been a lot of debate over the impacts of copper-based paint on marine life. This project will encourage boat owners to consider alternatives through education, not regulation.”

Brown said Coastkeeper’s goal is to have 50 to 80 percent of the boaters in Balboa Yacht Basin Marina switch to non-toxic bottom paint.

According to the U.S. EPA, more than 50,000 pounds of copper leaches from bottom paint in Newport Bay each year.

Orange County Coastkeeper last year conducted a series of water and sediment tests in the Newport Bay marinas that showed concentrations of copper exceeding state sediment guidelines. Lab tests exposing bottom-dwelling organisms to sediment samples resulted in high mortality rates. Coastkeeper’s study indicated that much of the copper from bottom paints settles into the sediment, rather washing out of the bay with the tide: <http://www.coastkeeper.org/coastkeeper/work/projects/copper-paint-study.asp>

Ray Hiemstra, project manager for the copper study, said high levels of metals in the sediment at the bay could pose problems to organisms living there, as well as to the animals that eat them.

“It’s as simple as following the food chain,” Hiemstra said. “The mussels and clams living in the sediment are eaten by fish, which in turn are eaten by people fishing in the bay.”

The grant is funded by the U.S. EPA and administered by the State Water Board through the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

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Orange County Coastkeeper was founded in 1999 to identify pollution issues affecting water quality in local rivers, bays and coastal regions and to remedy them through education, advocacy, restoration and enforcement. For more information on the organization, visit [www.coastkeeper.org](http://www.coastkeeper.org)

Trace Marine is a company committed to the efficient execution of clean water programs and environmental solutions that reduce contaminants in area recreational waterways. Visit [www.tracemarine.com](http://www.tracemarine.com)

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