



# Anchored in Stewardship: Navigating Clean Marina Certification– Apr. 21, 2026

Eric Kretsch, AMI & Ken Brown, Safe Harbor Marinas



*Educating & Connecting  
Marina Professionals*



**SAFE HARBOR**  
MARINAS



# Agenda

- Introductions
- Why does Clean Marina certification matter today?
- Business and Environmental Benefits
- What is Clean Marina Certification?
- The Certification Process
- Case Study
- Maintaining your Certification

Thank you to

**Reid Middleton**



# Why does Clean Marina matter today?

- **Increasing regulatory pressure** – Expanding requirements, more frequent inspections, and enforcement
- **Rising customer expectations** – Consumers expect/prefer environmentally responsible operations
- **Operational and financial risk** – Non-compliance leads to increased costs
- **Focus on resilience and long-term viability**



# From a business perspective

- **A business advantage** – marina differentiation, supports marketing, branding, and can help retain customers.
- **A risk management tool** – Helps to improve your safety culture which can help to reduce spills, violations, and incidents, and improves preparedness and response.
- **Drives operational efficiency** – Standardization of operations across staff departments can reduce waste and improve resource management.
- **A Commitment of Stewardship** – Demonstrates responsibility with insurance companies and state and federal agencies and can build community trust.
- **Culture and reputation drive success** – employees want to be proud of where they work, boaters want to keep their boats at the best marina.



# Insurance and Risk Management

- **Stronger position with insurers** – demonstrates proactive risk management.
- **Reduced likelihood of incidents** – less spills, less injuries, less losses.
- **Lower liability exposure** – reductions in human error, trained staff response, and documentation.
- **Improved incident response** – plans and equipment are in place, staff knows their roles.
- **Better documentation and defensibility** – Critical for regulatory reviews, claims, and legal situations.

**Good environmental practices aren't just good for the water—they directly reduce risk, liability, and potential costs.**



# Our plotted course

1. What is the Clean Marina Certification?
2. How the certification process works.
3. Real-world lessons from the field.
4. How to get started.




# What is Clean Marina Certification?

- A voluntary program – you choose to participate, it's not a regulatory mandate
- Many of the programs are state-based, and a few are regional or nationally based.
- Programs share a national framework
- Rooted in Best Management Practices – Practical, proven actions that reduce environmental impact.
- “Clean Marina” is a nationally recognized standard.



# Core Focus Areas

- Stormwater management
- Fueling & petroleum control
- Sewage & wastewater handling
- Solid & hazardous waste management
- Aquatic invasive species prevention
- Boater education
- Resilience planning



**ASSOCIATION OF  
MARINA  
INDUSTRIES**  
*Educating & Connecting  
Marina Professionals*

### AMI Clean & Resilient Marina Best Management Practices Checklist

Design and Siting Considerations for New and Expanding Marinas	Status	Yes	No	N/A	Evidence
<p>Marina development and expansion projects along coastal or inland shorelines, including dredging, will require a joint permit from the <a href="#">U.S. Army Corps (USACE)</a> and a state natural resources or environmental management agency. These agencies have regulatory responsibilities to ensure compliance with federal and state laws.</p>					
1. Do you have the proper federal and state and/or local permits for all your current marina construction, erosion control, and dredging?	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide proof of recent permits.
2. Do you pledge to obtain those proper permits (federal, state, and local) for all your future marina construction, erosion control, and dredging?	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<p>States are typically trustees of the bottomlands and waters of the state and have perpetual duty to manage these resources for the benefit of its citizens. A permit is required from the State for altering the bottomlands, such as dredging, construction of a marina, or shore protection, and a bottomlands conveyance (lease, deed, or agreement) is required for certain occupations of a state's public trust bottomlands. The conveyance may require an annual fee to the agency and will contain conditions for the use and occupancy of the subject bottomlands. Consult your state Submerged Lands Program for additional information.</p>					
3. If required, do you have a valid bottomlands lease with your respective state? <small>If YES, please provide evidence when submitting this checklist. If NO, please explain why in the notes section below.</small>	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide bottomlands lease document.
4. Have you checked federal and state rules regarding wetlands and considered steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate their disturbance?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does your marina own undeveloped natural habitat areas? If the answer is NO, please proceed to question #6.	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5a. If you answered YES to #5, have you placed or explored the protection of this land in a conservation trust/lease?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Do you pledge to have new facilities be located on brownfields or previously disturbed sites?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<p>Chromated copper arsenate (CCA) – treated lumber or creosote-treated lumber or other petroleum-based substances and asphalt should not be used in structures in aquatic resources. Alternative asphalt coatings do not contain coal tars, which leach harmful volatile organic compound chemicals into water runoff.</p>					
7. Do you pledge to use environmentally neutral materials and avoid using exotic timbers or wood treated with CCA or creosote?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<p><b>Design &amp; Siting BMP Comments and Notes:</b></p>					



# The Key Concept: Continuous Improvement

- Not a one-time certification
- Regular review of practices
- Consistent re-evaluation and adaptation to operational and environmental changes
- Building a culture of responsibility from staff to leadership.



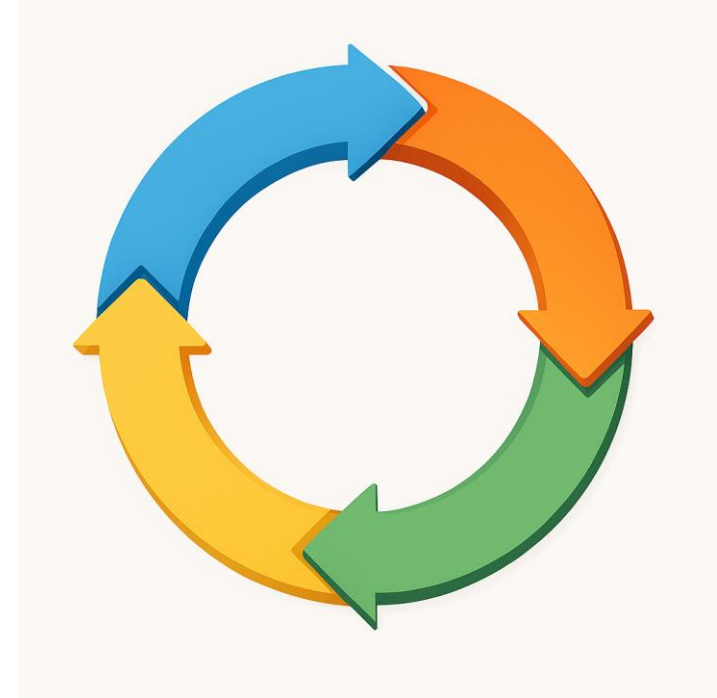
# AMI's Clean Marina Program

- National (International) Education and Training Program.
- Focus on education – not just compliance, not just certification.
- Provide Professional Certification (CRMP).
- Covers both environmental and resilience topics.
- Supports long-term success.



# The Certification Process

- Self-assessment
- Planning
- Training
  - Professional Certification\*
- Implementation and Documentation
- Accreditation or Certification
- Continuous improvement



# Step 1: Self- Assessment

- **Conduct a full-facility walkthrough** – utilize existing checklists from state-level or AMI program.
- **Compare current practices to nationally recognized BMPs**
- **Identify gaps and risks** – utilize AMI checklist, flag areas that need improvement
- Look for “quick wins” – low-cost, high-impact improvements
- **Document your findings** – baseline and create a list of priorities, this is the start of your action plan.



# Step 2: Planning

- **Categorize improvements** – low-cost, operational fixes, capital projects?
- **Prioritize based on risk and impact** – focus on reducing risk and increasing safety
- **Phase improvements over time** – focus on a realistic timeline, short, mid, long-term
- **Integrate into existing operations and budgets**
- **Identify funding and support opportunities** – internal funding, state or federal grants, or local incentives
- **Create a clear action plan** – roles, milestones, and how you will track progress



# Step 3: Training (and Professional Certification)

- **Train frontline staff on BMPs**
- **Define roles and responsibilities** – clarify expectations and roles for key staff
- **Leverage professional certification (AMI CRMP)** – Training key staff can build in-house expertise and leadership
- **Build awareness and consistency to create a culture of compliance and stewardship.**
- **Focus on ongoing training, not one-time.**



# Step 4: Implementation and Documentation

- **Develop clear policies and procedures** – Fueling, waste handling, stormwater, and emergency response plans.
- **Establish consistent recordkeeping** – training logs, inspection/maintenance records, response drill logs, incident reports, and other service documentation
- **Organize your documentation for easy access.**
- **Prepare your application** – Complete the required checklist and forms, provide documentation, and photos to demonstrate how you are implementing and putting BMPs into practice.
- **Coordinate with program administrators** – Work with your state or AMI Clean Marina staff person. \*For AMI's program, we would like you to contact us and fill out an intake form.



# Step 5: Certification or Accreditation

- **Many state programs offer Certification. AMI's program offers online Accreditation.**
- **States often offer an in-person evaluation (site visit)** – Evaluators will come to your property to review evidence that BMPs are implemented.
- **AMI uses a Review Committee and online folder submission portal** – Review committee will evaluate supporting documentation you provide to see if you meet minimum Accreditation standards.
- **How to prepare** – Be organized.
- **The process is a partnership.**



# Step 6: Continuous Improvement

- **Accreditation is a milestone – not the finish line.**
- **Maintain and reinforce** – Make sure that BMPs are consistently followed
- **Track performance** – Self assessments, walkthroughs, identify areas of improvement
- **Document, document, document**
- **Prepare for Re-certification or Re-accreditation** – most programs offer at a 3 – 5 year window. AMI offers Re-Accreditation every 3 years.
- **Plan for long-term resilience** – Incorporate lessons learned into capital planning that addresses evolving risks.



# Case Study

- This is an example of what to expect when applying for the designation for the first time.
- The Starting point – Conduct a walk-through inspection of the property using the BMP check sheet. Evaluate where your marina stands. Some things that I found when performing the first walk-through;
  - Stormwater program out of date or not compliant.
  - No water treatment for washdown areas. Washdown areas were allowed to run off back into the water or absorb into gravel lots or foliage.
  - Poor housekeeping in service areas, waste collection areas
  - Lack of containment during spray painting operations, fiberglass or chemical use.
  - SPCC or spill plan out of date or not complaint.
  - UST operator training.
  - Not enough spill material.



# Business Perspective – Biggest Challenges

- Culture change takes time and resources
  - Requires investment in training, equipment and materials
  - Behavioral change doesn't happen overnight
- Employee resistance
  - More experienced staff may be reluctant to change established processes
  - Requires clear communication
- Funding constraints
  - Budget limitations are a common challenge
  - Requires planning, prioritization, and phased implementation



# Business Perspective – How could you overcome?

- Start small and build momentum
- Training and communication are important
- Needs long-term planning
- Expect and manage surprises
- Persistence and patience is critical
- Learn from others in the industry



# Getting Started – First Steps

- **Start with a simple walkthrough** – Use a fresh set of eyes.
- **Use a checklist or framework** – Leverage AMI's or a State Program checklist as a reference point.
- **Identify 3 – 5 immediate improvements.**
- **Engage your team early on** – Involve staff in identifying issues and solutions, communicate goals and expectations.
- **Get trained and build internal expertise** – Participate in training programs, take AMI's Clean and Resilient Marina Training Program, and become a Certified Professional.
- **Connect with available resources.**



# Getting Started – Build Momentum

- **Start with low-cost, high-impact actions.**
- **Develop a phased plan** – break larger improvements into manageable steps.
- **Integrate BMPs into daily operations.**
- **Track progress and celebrate wins** – Share the success with your staff and customers.




# Key Takeaways

- Accreditation is achievable
- Small steps lead to big impact
- Benefits extend beyond compliance
- Stewardship strengthens your business



# THANK YOU



Eric Kretsch, Legislative, Outreach, and Clean Marina Program Manager,  
[Ekretsch@MarinaAssociation.org](mailto:Ekretsch@MarinaAssociation.org), (202)-350-9623

Ken Brown, Director of Environmental, Health & Safety, Safe Harbor  
Marinas, [KBrown@SHMarinas.com](mailto:KBrown@SHMarinas.com)

# Clean and Resilient Marina Program

## Congratulations to our Clean Marina Professionals and Accredited Facilities

96 – Accredited Facilities

209 – Clean and Resilient Marina Professionals



## Next Courses:

- June 1,2 & 8,9, 2026 – Virtual (Registration Open)
- Fall Course Available Soon



Educating & Connecting  
Marina Professionals

# Maintaining Accreditation

- Ongoing requirements
- Re-accreditation and Long-term Planning
- Maintaining Engagement



# Ongoing Requirements



# Re-accreditation and Longterm Planning



# Professional Certifications

**Clean and Resilient Marina Professional (CRMP)**

Completed Clean and Resilient Marina Course (100% Completion)

**Certified Marina Manager (CMM)**

Completed IMM and AMM Course, meets career requirements, marina size requirements (> 100 slips, > \$1 M in revenues)

**Certified Marina Operator (CMO)**

Completed IMM and AMM Course, meets career requirements, marina size requirements (> 50 slips, > \$500,000 in revenues)



# The Certification Process

## Basic Marina Management

Designed for individuals looking to enter the field of marina management or for managers/owners with limited experience.

## Intermediate Marina Management

Focuses on marina operations, policies, procedures (required for certification)

## Advanced Marina Management

Profit-management training course designed for marina professionals, focuses on long-term planning and leadership (required for certification)

## Post-Graduate

Advanced courses focused on specific topics designed for certified professionals

## Marina Boatyard and Study Tour

Two-day, mobile training course that takes participants on exclusive tours of marinas.

## Marina 101

Four-hour introductory course geared toward individuals with little or no marina experience



# Maintaining Your Clean Marina Status

- AMI's Training Institute (formerly International Marina Institute) provides training, education, and certification opportunities to marina employees, from dockhands to managers.
- This fall we are launching our first "Graduate" level course titled "Adaptive Leadership for Advancing Marina Management"



Educating & Connecting  
Marina Professionals

# What is Clean Marina Certification?

The Clean Marina designation is a voluntary certification which shows your marinas dedication toward your environmental responsibilities and sustainability. There are two levels of designation in the Clean Marina program. The first is the Clean Marina Designation. This designation can be obtained by meeting regulatory requirements and implementing at least 60% of the voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP). The second is the Clean and Resilient Marina designation which focuses more on the education of boaters and strengthening the facilities ability to withstand natural disasters. Facilities that chose to participate in this designation are encouraged to strive for continuous improvement.



# What is Clean Marina Certification?

The BMPs address critical environmental issues such as:

1. Sensitive habitats and aquatic invasive species prevention.
2. Waste management
3. Stormwater controls
4. Petroleum controls, fueling practices and spill prevention.
5. Sewage and waste water handling
6. Solid and hazardous waste handling and collection.
7. Boaters education
8. Resilience

Many but not all states have their own clean marina program. Each states program structure varies depending on local state and NOAA guidelines. Their primary focus is the certification of facilities. AMI’s program structure focuses on training and certifying individuals as Clean and Resilient Marina Professionals or CRMP’s. This allows for the individual to self-certify their facilities through the AMI clean marina program.

As state programs are only available in their state or region. AMI is a nationwide program.



## AMI Clean & Resilient Marina Best Management Practices Checklist

Design and Siting Considerations for New and Expanding Marinas	Status	Yes	No	N/A	Evidence
<small>Marina development and expansion projects along coastal or inland shorelines, including dredging, will require a joint permit from the U.S. Army Corps (USACE) and a state natural resources or environmental management agency. These agencies have regulatory responsibilities to ensure compliance with federal and state laws.</small>					
1. Do you have the proper federal and state and/or local permits for all your current marina construction, erosion control, and dredging?	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <small>Provide proof of recent permits.</small>
2. Do you pledge to obtain those proper permits (federal, state, and local) for all your future marina construction, erosion control, and dredging?	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<small>States are typically trustees of the bottomlands and waters of the state and have perpetual duty to manage these resources for the benefit of its citizens. A permit is required from the State for altering the bottomlands, such as dredging, construction of a marina, or shore protection, and a bottomlands conveyance (lease, deed, or agreement) is required for certain occupations of a state's public trust bottomlands. The conveyance may require an annual fee to the agency and will contain conditions for the use and occupancy of the subject bottomlands. Consult your state Submerged Lands Program for additional information.</small>					
3. If required, do you have a valid bottomlands lease with your respective state? <small>If YES, please provide evidence when submitting this checklist. If NO, please explain why in the notes section below.</small>	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <small>Provide bottomlands lease document.</small>
4. Have you checked federal and state rules regarding wetlands and considered steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate their disturbance?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Does your marina own undeveloped natural habitat areas? If the answer is NO, please proceed to question #6.	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5a. If you answered YES to #5, have you placed or explored the protection of this land in a conservation trust/easement?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Do you pledge to have new facilities be located on brownfields or previously disturbed sites?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<small>Chromated copper arsenate (CCA) – treated lumber or creosote-treated lumber or other petroleum-based substances and asphalt should not be used in structures in aquatic resources. Alternative asphalt coatings do not contain coal tars, which leach harmful volatile organic compound chemicals into water runoff.</small>					
7. Do you pledge to use environmentally neutral materials and avoid using exotic timbers or wood treated with CCA or creosote?	R	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Design &amp; Siting BMP Comments and Notes:</b>					

# Why it Matters

Business Manager perspective:

1. Why you pursued certification – Most boaters are pro environmental compliance. They understand the importance of preserving our waterways and the environment as a whole. They are more likely to keep their boats at a marina that holds the same values. Insurance companies, as well as state and federal inspectors look highly on those who have promoted environmental stewardship.
2. Customer response and tenant expectations – As a clean marina, our job is educating our customers and tenants this is not always an easy task as some tenants do not value the protection of the environment as highly as we do. This gives you the opportunity to understand the seek the type of tenants you want in your marina in the future.
3. Staff buy-in and culture shift – pursuing the designation, the training involved and strive for continuous improvement helps build your safety and environmental culture at your marina.
4. Measurable benefits, cost savings, efficiency, and reputation - There are some business benefits to receiving a clean marina designation:
  - a. Many boaters are attracted to marinas that have and promote good environmental stewardship.
  - b. The Federal Boating Infrastructure Grant Program gives those applying for funding points for having a clean marina designation.
  - c. Some insurance companies have been known to offer a reduced rate on environmental liability coverage for facilities with a clean marina designation.
  - d. Marina buyers are more likely to consider a certified clean marina over a non-certified marina.
  - e. Most States offer clean marina discounts on submerged land leases.
  - f. Boaters tend to go to the marina with the best reputation.

# Case Study

This is an example of what to expect when applying for the designation the first time.

The Starting point – Conduct a walk-through inspection of the property using the BMP check sheet. Evaluate where your marina stands. Some things that I found when performing the first walk-through;

1. Stormwater program out of date or not compliant.
2. No water treatment for washdown areas. Washdown areas were allowed to run off back into the water or absorb into gravel lots or foliage.
3. Poor housekeeping in service areas, waste collection areas,
4. Lack of containment during spray painting operations, fiberglass or chemical use.
5. SPCC or spill plan out of date or not complaint.
6. UST operator training.
7. Not enough spill material.



# Biggest Challenges

The biggest challenges – Changing a culture takes time and money. From training the employees to purchasing the needed material and equipment, this process can take time. Some employees can be difficult to change, older or more experienced employees will be reluctant to changing processes.

The key to making improvements is persistence and patience. Set goals to accomplish one thing and then another. Don't try to take to big of a bit in the beginning. Select something that can easily be changed, maybe an operational process. Work with the employees involved, train them explain why you are making this change. Once the change has taken hold, continue to reinforce the new process or habit and chose your next goal. Funding is always a problem, plan for the future. Make a list of what you will need, price it all out and what it will take to install. Create a long-term goal for the next quarter or in 6 months.

Along the way you may experience some surprises. Some things that you thought would take forever to get accomplished may not end being as hard as you think and then some things may take longer. Don't let surprises discourage you.

Our industry is big and there are many marinas and boatyards out there that have already received their clean marina designation.

Lessons learned from clean marina programs emphasize that success relies on proactive pollution prevention, consistent staff training on best management practices, and active education for boaters.

# Maintaining Certification and Continuing Education/Improvement

Business perspective –

1. Keeping your staff engaged – Reoccurring training and spot checks to ensure that new processes and changes to old processes are taking place. Culture change needs constant reassurance.
2. Once you have all aspects of the changes you want in place and your employees are engaged. Maintaining those changes in your culture and working processes should be easy.
3. Other than minor maintenance requirements for new systems, your cost to maintain what you have accomplished should be minimal. Improvements to processes and/or equipment/ property should be taken in the same manner as when you started the clean marina program. Identify what you want to do, price out what you need to do it and make a goal to accomplish it.

Getting started: Practical first steps.

1. Conduct your walk-through inspection with the BMP check list.
2. Identify 3 to 5 immediate improvements that you can make.
3. Get trained and certified as a CRMP through AMI.
4. Engage staff early in the process. Let them know what you are planning to do and the importance of their assistance in making things happen.
5. Connect with AMI or state programs
6. Start with small steps and build momentum.