



The Business of Boats

Spend any amount of time in South Florida and you'll quickly realize that the marine industry is an integral part of day-to-day life in our region. Marinas dot the landscape all along our rivers and the coast. Marine-related businesses can be found in nearly every direction, especially in Fort Lauderdale.

Some of these businesses have been around for decades and were part of the foundation of our area's growth. Others have a more recent lineage, created to fill needs in the industry and marketplace. All play their part in generating more than \$18.5 billion in economic output, which the marine industry in the tri-county area (Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach) contributes to the state's annual economy.

One of the longest-established of these businesses is Bennett Marine, a leader in trim tab systems since 1960. Founded by Charles Bennett in Dearborn, Michigan, Bennett Marine has been part of the South Florida marine industry since relocating here in 1977. Bennett Marine is also a founding member of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF).

Family-owned and operated for more than 50 years, Bennett Marine was acquired by Yamaha in 2017 following the death of Bennett's President and CEO Blake Bennett. Although ownership changed, Bennett Marine's reputation for high-quality marine parts and service remained unchanged.

Since the acquisition, Yamaha has invested heavily in all areas of Bennett's operations, including staff, processes, and product innovation. Guided by a 2030 Carbon Neutrality Commitment,

Yamaha has added solar energy power to its facility (returning excess power back to the grid), expanded stainless steel manufacturing capabilities, and enhanced employee benefits, training, and career growth opportunities.

The millions of dollars Yamaha has invested in Bennett's Deerfield Beach facility and staff to date serve to strengthen the brand even more. As David Rose, Director of Sales, notes, "Yamaha transformed Bennett Marine and positioned us to grow into the future."

Another established name in the Fort Lauderdale marine industry is Suntex Marinas, one of the nation's largest marina operators. With Bahia Mar Marina and Hall of Fame Marina already in its portfolio, Suntex was a natural choice to partner with the City of Fort Lauderdale to redevelop the Las Olas Marina area.

The marina project is the capstone of more than \$130 million in public amenity improvements that will connect pedestrians to the ocean via the Las Olas Corridor. A major part of the redevelopment is returning three acres of paved parking lot back into a water environment. The work completed by Suntex reverted the area back to its original natural shoreline.

David Filler, Chief Development Officer at Suntex, has been part of the project since its inception. He notes, "Suntex is honored to have the opportunity to develop Las Olas Marina into a state-of-the-art facility and destination. We are grateful for the support and guidance of key stakeholders, including government officials from the City of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County, the Marine Industries Association of South Florida,

and Informa Markets, producer of the annual Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show."

When fully completed in 2025, Las Olas Marina will feature more than 60 slips, 7,500 linear feet of dockage space, and on-water and upland amenities that cover more than 50,000 square feet. There will be three restaurants, including anchor tenant Ocean Prime, that will occupy 15,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor dining areas. Other amenities include retail and office space, a rooftop swimming pool, and private captains' quarters where visiting crew can relax and recharge in a dedicated lounge that includes a full kitchen, games, televisions, and a gym.

Again this year, Las Olas Marina will be part of the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS) in October. This marks the 65th consecutive year of the show. FLIBS will take over 75 percent of the marina, under the expertise and guidance of Informa Markets.

South Florida's marine industry isn't solely buoyed by stalwarts in the industry. There are also industry newcomers who are integral parts to the economic success of our region. One of these is FHG Marine Engineering, Inc.

Co-founded by Kathleen Hagan, Chief Operating Officer, and Richard Grennen, President & CEO, FHG has quickly grown from a trio operating out of a single maintenance truck in 2018 to a team of more than 20 today in the company's expansive Pompano Beach headquarters.

FHG specializes in concierge yacht repair, service, and maintenance for yachts, cruise ships, and commercial

vessels. The company is also the U.S. sales and service provider for a variety of companies, including HAMANN AG, QuantiParts, and Bollfilter.

The company's success is due in large part to their technical expertise. Richard Grennen is a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy with a degree in engineering. He also holds a U.S. Coast Guard First Assistant Engineer license. Before founding FHG, he spent many years working on cargo ships, cable laying vessels, cruise ships, U.S. Navy vessels, and in the engine rooms of superyachts.

FHG's success is also due to Kathleen Hagan's background in humanitarian and diplomacy work, her participation in a Semester at Sea on board the M/V Explorer, and her commitment to relationship building and mentoring and supporting future marine industry professionals.

She holds board positions for both the MIA SF and the Young Professionals in Yachting USA, is a 2023 appointee to the Broward Workforce Development Board's Education and Industry Consortium, and a member of the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA). She is also involved in the MIA SF's Yacht Service Technician Apprenticeship Program and oversees a current participant who is working full-time at FHG while he progresses through the program.

In reflecting on the current gap in availability of skilled trade workers, Hagan notes, "It's not enough to simply talk about a problem, you need to be part of the solution." There is no doubt that FHG is walking the talk in this regard.



Growing the Blue Economy in 2024 and Beyond

Imagine South Florida without its vibrant streams, rivers, and coastlines—unthinkable! These waterways are not just scenic treasures; they are the lifeblood of our economy, contributing over \$18.5 billion through the marine industry alone. Our economic health and opportunities hinge on using this essential resource sustainably while preserving it.

The “Blue Economy” extends beyond Florida’s shorelines; it’s global. Florida’s leadership in safeguarding and expanding this vital sector is taking shape at the local, regional, and state levels. Collaborative efforts from organizations like the Marine Research Hub, 501(c)3, and their partners are supporting these various initiatives. Building collaboration across multiple sectors from academic institutions, businesses, and other organizations promotes the opportunities for investable solutions and ecosystem growth in Florida that will have a global impact.

The economic impact and opportunities can be seen through a Marine Research Hub-supported organization, Ocean Exchange. The annual Ocean Exchange event, October 27-29th, 2024, in Fort Lauderdale, recognizes and advances innovative solutions and technologies to support the health of our oceans and the Blue Economy. The event brings investable solution companies from all over the world and awards over \$320,000 in funds. There are 3-\$100,000 award prizes for early-stage companies and 2-\$10,000 collegiate awards for newer potential solutions. This event is building a global ecosystem dedicated to accelerating innovation for the Blue Economy and relocated to South Florida in 2019 with the support of the Marine Research Hub. These new companies bring solutions for regional challenges like water quality, coastal & shoreline infrastructure, aquaculture, and energy, with the potential for both positive economic impact and high-paying job creation in our region. For example, in Florida alone, there are over 9,000 miles



Marine Research Hub - DeAngelo Marine Exhaust

of seawalls and shoreline infrastructure, and with that, an estimated \$75 billion market for solutions that will be more environmentally compatible, protect our coastlines, promote marine biodiversity, and ultimately more durable and last longer for significant long-term cost savings. This is just one example of the opportunity, and with the Blue Economy estimated to reach \$3 trillion and 40 million jobs by 2030, Florida is primed to be the hub for solutions.

A potential game-changing partnership in the marine industry is tied back to Marine Research Hub. A recent collaboration between two companies, both located in Fort Lauderdale, the “Yachting Capital of the World,” was established between DeAngelo Marine Exhaust, a 38-year-established Fort Lauderdale company with 70 employees that manufactures high-quality exhaust systems, and SailPlan, a technology startup with currently 12 employees. With the implementation of new statewide emission standards, DeAngelo recognized that its customers needed help meeting these new requirements. Through an introduction by the Marine Research Hub, Justin Montes, CEO of DeAngelo, met Jacob Ruytenbeek, CEO of SailPlan, at the 2023 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS). The pair

went on to discuss possible solutions.

Each party brought unique strengths to the table. DeAngelo has expertise in building exhaust systems, while SailPlan offers cutting-edge technology to monitor yacht exhaust and performance. Together, the two formed a mutually beneficial collaboration.

SailPlan integrated its sensors into DeAngelo’s exhaust systems. This allows dashboard monitoring of all critical exhaust parameters, providing detailed information and alerts on exhaust performance and monthly health scorecards that provide maintenance recommendations. This gives yacht crews early warning to remediate situations before they become critical.

This joint solution goes beyond hardware. The new “DeAngelo Smart Exhaust System powered by SailPlan” also offers a subscription monitoring service. It uses real-time data analytics to provide yacht owners, captains, and crew with the information they need to avoid unexpected and expensive problems they might otherwise not know about until it is too late.

On the legislative side, there have also been some notable wins, including the newly

established Office of the Ocean Economy, created under Florida’s education bill (HB 1285). This bipartisan initiative, co-sponsored by State Representatives Chip LaMarca (R) and Kelly Skidmore (D), aims to “connect the state’s ocean and coastal resources to economic development strategies that grow, enhance, or contribute to the ocean economy.” The office will, among other things, track academic research with commercialization potential across Florida’s educational institutions and promote the state as a hub for marine-focused solutions. Katherine O’Fallon, Executive Director of the Marine Research Hub, supported the new office during committee hearings in Tallahassee about the industry’s global significance and potential growth. “Collaboration across sectors is key to elevate new technology and research-based solutions to establish Florida as the ‘Silicon Valley for the Blue Economy,’” she notes. The new office will be housed at Florida Atlantic University, tracking and supporting solutions with potential commercialization.

Lastly, significant recognition from the federal level for 2024, is the South Florida ClimateReady Tech Hub, a quad-county (Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach) coalition designated as a technology hub by the Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA). The EDA awarded \$19.5 million in federal funding to support the deployment and scaling of climate-related technologies, sustainable infrastructure and jobs for economic growth, and protection of the region in the face of climate-related challenges. The ClimateReady Tech Hub collaborates with private, public, academic, and philanthropic partners to achieve these goals. Katherine O’Fallon from the Marine Research Hub serves on the ClimateReady Tech Hub’s steering committee for regional perspective.

For more information, email info@marineresearchhub.org and visit Marine Research Hub (www.marineresearchhub.org).



Laying the Foundation for a Career in the Marine Industry

Florida's marine industry provides more than 270,000 jobs throughout the state, with the highest concentration of 142,000 in the South Florida region. From manufacturing and distribution to sales and service, the diversity of jobs available within the marine industry is unmatched.

Equally diverse are the paths people take to embark on their careers within the marine industry. Some know early on that working on or around boats is their calling. Others discover they are suited for a marine industry career later in life or through a chance introduction.

As the marine industry continues to grow, the demand for workers—especially in skilled trades—grows, too. This makes it essential to bring awareness of marine career paths to as many people as possible.

Several programs have been implemented throughout Broward County and beyond to address this need. Working together, the marine industry, local schools, government organizations, and private individuals have developed solutions focused on increasing visibility and opportunities to follow a marine-related career path.

- Marine magnet programs—New River Middle School and South Broward High School both offer Marine Magnet Programs that allow students to enhance their learning by focusing on marine and maritime education.
- Marine-focused college programs – Programs like the Broward College Marine Engineering Management Program let students continue their marine-related studies and transition



Anthony Santiago, host of Salty Jobs

into a marine technician role after graduation.

- Yacht Service Technician Apprenticeship Program – This two-year, hands-on program is part of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida's (MIASF) efforts to ensure the continuous flow of skilled workers into the industry.

There are also non-profit organizations, like Captain Sandy's Charities, that emphasize expanding access and education to marine and yachting employment. Helmed by Captain Sandy Yawn, the organization plans to release a comprehensive STEM-focused curriculum for high schools designed to introduce students to the diverse employment opportunities available in the marine industry.

Captain Sandy's Charities also contributes and supports other maritime-related educational opportunities. The organization sponsors travel expenses and crew housing for qualified applicants participating in programming at the Maritime Professional Training School.

To fund programs like this, Captain Sandy's Charities worked with the state legislature and the MIASF to develop and promote a specialty "Boating Capital of the World" Florida license plate. The new specialty license plate was approved in 2024.

How impactful are programs like these? Here are two success stories.

Anthony Santiago pursued his interest in the marine industry from an early age. He was an annual participant in the MIASF's Plywood Regatta and a graduate of the New River Middle School and South Broward High School marine magnet programs.

During high school, with the encouragement of one of his favorite teachers, Anthony took part in the MIASF's annual Elevator Pitch contest. He won and was awarded a \$500 scholarship.

Anthony is pursuing a degree in Marine Biology at Broward College. During college, he did an internship with the MIASF and then transitioned into a permanent, part-time employee. Today, he is the host of the Telly-award-winning video series Salty Jobs.

Another success story to come out of marine-focused educational programs is Erena Fridman. A graduate of the Broward County Marine Engineering Management Program, Erena then joined the MIASF

Yacht Service Technician Apprenticeship Program.

During her time in the program, she worked full-time while completing classroom instruction and on-the-job training. She was one of the first graduates of the program. She worked her way up from an entry-level job at Derektor Shipyards to today, holding a leadership role as Project Manager at the company.

Lori Wheeler, Vice President at the MIASF, notes that the apprenticeship program is an excellent way to build your career in the marine industry. "This program offers you a 100% likelihood of employment upon successfully completing the course. In fact, we make sure every apprentice has a job secured before the program begins."

Program requirements are not onerous. No prior experience in the marine industry is needed. Each apprentice is simply required to be at least 18 years old and demonstrate the attitude, aptitude, and willingness to learn, according to Wheeler.

Opportunities are broad, too. Career paths include basic electric, general maintenance, hydraulic systems, pumps and plumbing, running gear, machining, shipyard lifting, shipyard safety, welding/fabrication, woodworking/carpentry, yacht painting, and HVAC.

The rewards are great, making skilled trades in the marine industry an appealing career path. Hourly rates when starting the program are between \$18 and \$20. Earning potential after graduation offers hourly rates in the range of \$35 to \$45 and annual salaries between \$73,000 and \$94,000.



FLIBS at 65

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS). As owners of the world's largest in-water boat show, the Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF) is proud to reach this milestone in 2024.

For five days each fall, with the expert guidance and assistance of our long-time show partner, Informa Markets, we turn Fort Lauderdale into the epicenter of the global boating market. We welcome more than 100,000 attendees to explore seven locations covering more than 4.5 million square feet of show space. Attendees can view more than 1,300 vessels, meet over 1,000 exhibitors, and attend networking and social events throughout the show.

But FLIBS is more than a glittering spectacle of vessels on display. The show itself is a major contributor to our local and state economy.

Here are just some of the impressive numbers related to FLIBS.

\$1.79 billion is the economic output FLIBS generates throughout the state through purchases and expenditures at the show. The number of full-time Florida jobs associated with this economic output tops 10,000.

Total sales for all show participants are nearly \$900 million. Sales figures for Florida companies during the show are an estimated \$709.7 million, with \$513.9 million attributable to tri-county (Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach) companies, and \$233.9 million to Broward County companies. State and local taxes generated within Florida because of show sales are nearly \$86 million, with \$24.5 million of that in Broward County.

Of the 100,000+ attendees at the show, 50% are from Florida, 40% domestic U.S. and 10% arrive from international



J CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHY

destinations. These visitors spend on average \$241 per day on hotels, restaurants, retail, and transportation. Visiting attendees and exhibitors account for more than \$11 million in hotel lodging. Non-local and exhibitor expenditures at the show is approximately \$47.3 million.

More than half of show exhibitors come from outside the tri-county region and spend \$9.7 million on exhibit space and local goods and services. This includes hotels, restaurants, retail, and local transportation.

The show's total value-add is \$251.8 million for Broward County, \$607.9 million for the tri-county region, and \$932.6 million for Florida.

These numbers are impressive. So are the numbers and planning behind what it takes to put together the world's largest in-water boat show. Informa Markets, a global leader in tradeshow production, is the powerhouse behind our show's success.

Informa's Senior Vice President of Operations, Robert Correa, has helmed the

production of FLIBS since 2010. Correa's background in design, manufacturing, and procurement, plus a career in the U.S. Air Force, gives him the strategic mindset and skills to bring FLIBS to life each year.

Producing FLIBS is a year-round endeavor. Work for next year's show begins the day after the current show ends. Correa shared his master show production list with us to give an idea of what goes into producing the world's largest in-water boat show. There are a whopping 2,155 action items, broken down into seven categories.

The work begins with pre-event planning, including stakeholder engagement and setting the budget for the show. The show has consistently stayed within three percent of the budget each year for the past decade, a testament to Informa's skill.

Then comes logistics and transportation. FLIBS requires two staging yards and four off-site equipment storage yards to produce the show. There are also 425 truckloads of equipment needed for setup. In total, there are 4 million pounds of

freight needed, with 69% of this on the water. It takes four 70-ton cranes and 48 forklifts and drivers to get things set up.

Staffing is another big part of FLIBS. The show requires 24/7 coverage during setup, execution, and breakdown. This requires more than 1,000 Informa employees and 2,500 contractors that are recruited and trained for the show.

On-site operations begin well before the show kicks off. Dock setup starts four weeks before the show, with tents, electric, and flooring installations going in three weeks ahead. Exhibitor equipment is delivered and set up begins two weeks before the show. Safety is a paramount concern, and work is guided by the safety inspection standards outlined in the Florida Building Code.

Once the show is underway, Informa stays on top of things from a central on-site command center, using radios, dedicated hotlines, and mobile apps to stay connected with staff and exhibitors. Digital displays and mobile apps keep attendees informed about show schedules and updates. High-speed internet and Wi-Fi networks are monitored 24/7 to ensure performance.

After the show closes, it's time to pack things up. A detailed teardown schedule is implemented, and another 425 truckloads of equipment are loaded and removed from the seven show sites. Final inspections are conducted to ensure venues are returned in excellent condition.

Then it is time to debrief. Feedback is collected from exhibitors, attendees, and staff to gauge the event's success. Areas for improvement are identified, and all insights are used to enhance future events. Reports for stakeholders are prepared, and Correa's core planning team begins work on next year's show.