

# Boat show expected to draw 60,000 from community

## More than 500 boats on display at D.C. expo

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As winter's chilly temperatures set in, more than 60,000 people dreaming of warmer weather are expected to descend on the Washington Convention Center this week for the 45th Annual Washington Boat Show.

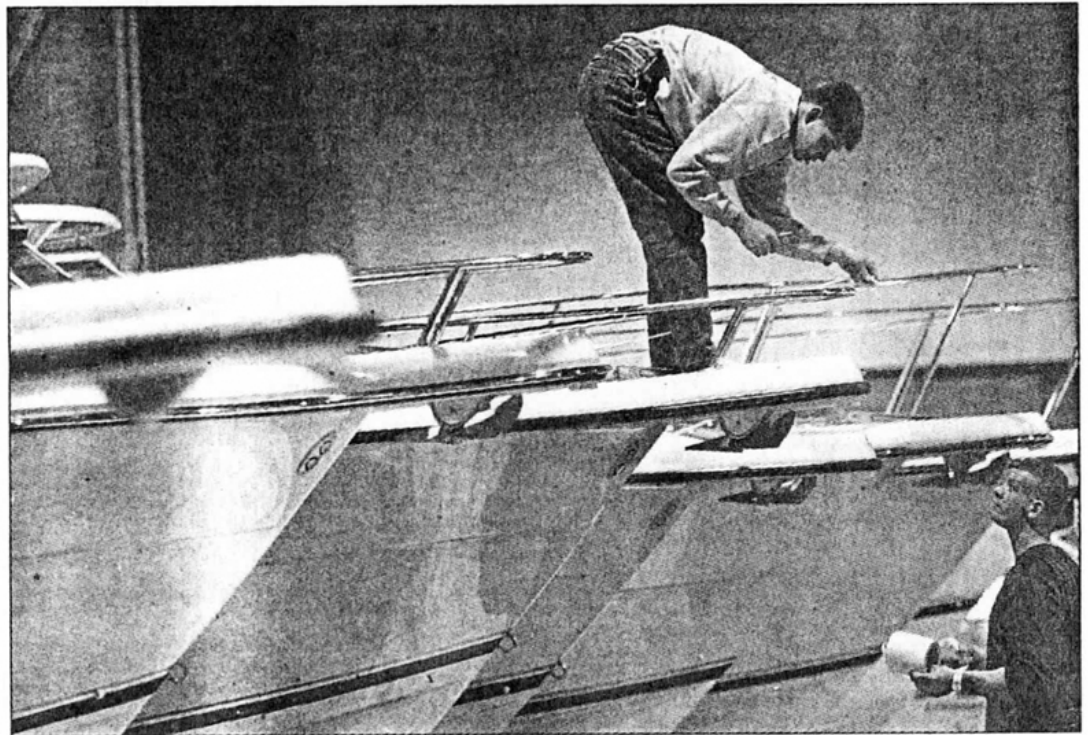
"More boats are sold in the winter shows than any other time," said Tom Stafford, the show's producer. "All the new models are on display. [The dealers] are anxious to make a deal. This is the time to buy."

The Washington Boat Show — the third-largest on the East Coast, behind shows in Miami and New York City — starts Wednesday and is expected to draw boaters in the market to buy, as well as potential new boaters.

"When you come to this event, you don't have to be a hard-core boater," said Stafford. "The real purpose is to bring new people into the sport."

More than 500 boats will be on display Wednesday through Sunday, priced from below \$10,000 up to \$1.2 million, and sales are expected to reach \$100 million. But those numbers shouldn't scare off would-be boaters, said Stafford.

While most boats run in the thousands, you can also dip a paddle into the boating community with a kayak — one of the hottest sellers right now — for just a few hundred dollars. The popularity of the kayak, he said, has lowered the average age of new boaters.



Greg Whitesell/Examiner

David Conner, top, and Eric Steinlein, from Rhode River Marina in Edgewater, Md., prepare boats for display at the 45th Annual Washington Boat Show Monday at the Washington Convention Center. The show begins on Wednesday.

### BOATING SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 500 boats will be on display at the Washington Convention Center Wednesday through Sunday, including express cruisers, motor yachts, runabouts, performance boats, fishing boats and family boats.
- Hundreds of display booths will feature boating accessories, as well as experts in everything from financing to maintenance.
- This year's "queen" of the show is a 52-foot Sea Ray Sundancer,

featuring state-of-the-art navigation system and three staterooms, priced at \$1.2 million.

- The fastest boat in the show — a 38-foot Cigarette "Top Gun GT" — can reach speeds up to 85 mph.

- Las Vegas master illusionist Lawrence Gregory will make a 17-foot boat disappear in twice-daily shows. On the final day, the boat, valued at \$12,000, will be auctioned off.

- For hours and ticket prices, visit [www.washingtonboatshow.com](http://www.washingtonboatshow.com).

Women in the market for boats have also driven sales upward, he

said. While the traditional boat-buyers are couples between the

ages of 35 and 65 who are "settled" in their lifestyle, the number of single women buying boats in the last five years has gone up.

"Most couples buy boats," he said. "Guys want a boat with a big motor. But women are looking for the accouterments. These boats now are so user-friendly."

Selling boating as a family activity also drives sales, said Bob Bagley, co-owner of Prince William Marina, because it creates customer loyalty.

"Boating is a family lifestyle," he said. "It keeps families together longer. We are now selling to sons and daughters of folks I sold to 20 years ago."

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