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Kittery Point Yacht Yard Wins ABBRA Award with Ground Breaking Standards and Ever Growing Expectations

By Anna Townshend

Although Tom Allen described his journey to boatyard owner as “wayward,” his story is not an uncommon one in this business. *Successful businessman who has always loved boats is done with the business world and buys a boatyard or marina.* After an 18-year career in the financial services industry, Allen had “been there, done that” and was looking for a new opportunity. His neighborhood boatyard was struggling, and it was the perfect opportunity. “I didn’t want to see it change its current use, because that’s what often happens and a community loses another part of its history and identity,” Allen said.



Kittery Point Yacht Yard in Kittery, Maine, won the ABBRA Boatyard of the Year award. The yard has redefined environmental responsibility for marine businesses in the area.

John Glessner, general manager, worked for the previous boatyard owner and stayed on when Allen purchased the property. “He got a sense as to what it takes to run a boatyard and he wanted to learn all aspects very quickly, which he did,” Glessner said. Glessner left Kittery

for a time to work as an operations manager for Hinckley Company and returned in 2007, when Allen purchased another yard nearby in Eliot, Maine.

The original yard in Kittery was established in 1963, and Allen acquired it in 2004. The boatyard had a fantastic location, but a lot had been neglected. “Like a lot of boatyards, it sat at the lowest point in the neighborhood; it became the point source for pollution, where it collected runoff from the entire neighborhood,” Allen said.

When Allen purchased the property both facilities were unpaved and with no stormwater controls in place. “It was a bit of a mess,” he said.

New Levels

Today, both facilities represent nine waterfront acres, 50 deepwater moorings, 25 wet slips, 42,000 square feet of indoor heated storage and a booming service business, with attention to proper environmental controls, above and beyond state and federal standards.

To address the stormwater issues at its Kittery facility, the yard installed a detention peninsula and a berm constructed with geotextile fabrics to act as filters for the overflow. The yard was re-graded, paved and oriented in such a way that it directed stormwater to the

KITTERY POINT YACHT YARD: AT A GLANCE

- Two waterfront facilities, five miles apart (Maine’s southernmost yards, an hours drive from Boston);
- Boatyard services: all mechanical and electrical, including repower/engine builds, genset service and repair, custom exhaust fabrication and repair, gear replacement, under-performance and vibration analysis, hydraulic problems, drive-train; new system installs, including bow thrusters, water makers, alternative energy solutions, stabilizers, lighting, powering, monitoring and more; structural repairs to hydrolysis solutions, fiberglass, deck/keel repair and replacement, wheel house modifications and more; and rigging, carpentry, refinishing and refits;
- Dealers for CAT, John Deere, Yanmar, Westerbeke, Yamaha and Suzuki;
- +40,000 square foot of indoor storage;
- 50 deepwater granite block and ground tackle moorings in the back channel, located off the north side of the mouth of Piscataqua River, across from New Castle, New Hampshire; accommodates vessel up to 60 feet;
- 25 wet slips for season and transient boaters, maximum size 80 feet LOA; Lighthouse Power Pedestals with 50 amp, 30 amp, and 120 service (new in 2016);
- New permanent EDSON pumpout;
- dinghy dock;
- restroom/shower facility, open 24/7;
- Broad range Wi-Fi.

berm, not to the marine railway at the water. “That had an instant impact,” Allen said. “It was actually amazing to see. Within 12 months after making those improvements, we were seeing squid, lobster and fish swimming up the railway at high tide.”

As part of its stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) permit, both yards must monitor water quality and do testing once a month.

Very recently, Kittery Point Yacht Yard removed its marine railway. “I loved it from a heritage standpoint, but you have greased wheels operating underwater and it was tide restricted, so we eliminated the rail and put in a deepwater ramp with a submersible hydraulic trailer,” Allen said.

The Kittery facility can haul boats up to 50 feet, and up to 60 feet at the Eliot facility. With the removal of the railway, Kittery significantly expanded its hauling capabilities. Having been through one season with the new system, “we’re just getting a new understanding of how efficient it’s become,” Glessner said.

Previously, the yard backed its submersible hydraulic trailer atop the marine railway, disconnected from the trailer, and it all went into the water. Without the railway and its tracks, it automatically gained two feet depth, and the new longer ramp made access even easier.

Supporting Service

The yard also significantly expanded on the 7,000 square feet of indoor storage

space at the property. Allen invested in covered, climate-controlled storage, now more than 40,000 square feet, for two reasons, he said: to keep the crew busy full-time over the winter months, and to feed his service business, which makes up 80 percent of the company’s revenues. It has also cut down on the amount of shrinkwrap used each year, which creates wear and tear on boats over time and is not always easy to recycle, Allen said.

“You need to make a year-round commitment,” Allen said, as much for the business as for its employees. If boatyards want the best employees, those workers want full-time employment.

The facility has environmentally friendly features to assist with heating in the winter. Large solar gain translucent bay doors allow more light and heat to transfer. The plastic panels of the door promote a greenhouse effect and heat efficiency. The doors help keep the overhead infrared heaters in the building at a reasonable range.

Both facilities have dedicated space by boatyard department – mechanical, fiberglass, carpentry, varnish, paint, rigging, refit – so they can work year-round. The paint bay uses radiant floor heating, which Glessner said is efficient at maintaining the needed warmth. The other bays are heated by overhead infrared heaters, which heat the objects, as opposed to the whole space. “It really makes a big difference,” he said.

A few years after Allen bought the yard, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection began

regulating bottom wash water, which KPYY embraced fully. “We were one of the first boatyards to come up with a closed loop bottom washing system,” Glessner said.

Near the hauling ramps, powerwashing takes place on a concrete pad, where a large drain collects the bottom wash water. It collects in the drain sump and is pumped from one 300-gallon tank to another, and through three different filtering processes before it is reused.

The yard has moved away from heavy copper-based bottom paints, and Allen said it has seen good success with water based products. He said the yard also encourages customers to stop bottom painting every season. “We’ve gone to multi-season paints,” Allen said. “Bottom painting has been oversold and overused. There isn’t a need in many cases.” He also recommended using a flag coat of bottom paint in one color with another color overtop. “You repaint it when you start to see the flag coat,” Allen said.

Improving air quality for workers is also a concern with painting, as well as water quality. The yard is using more low or no volatile organic compound (VOC) paints.

To help educate customers, the yard’s annual customer appreciation events often include paint vendors or companies with finishing, buffing or waxing products to discuss alternatives and performance with boaters.

Award Winning

In addition to two awards from the



In 2007, Tom Allen bought another boatyard nearby in Eliot, Maine.



The 40,000-square-foot facility keeps the yard busy during the winter, providing climate controlled space storage and work.

American Boat Builders and Repairers Association (ABBRA), previously for its Innovation Award and this year as the Boatyard of the Year, Kittery

Point Yacht Yard is also very proud of its Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program

(SHARP) designation. It originally received the title in the fall of 2011, after over a year of working toward it.

For the designation, the yard welcomed SafetyWorks!, through the Maine Department of Labor, to perform an audit, as OSHA would in its inspections. "They would give us a punch list of things they saw, and they give me a certain length of time to get that corrected," Glessner said of the process. The certification can last up to two years, but with even one minor accident, an audit will be required every year. "It's a very lofty status," Glessner said. It essentially assures the yard has done everything it can to ensure a safe environment for its employees.

When the yard originally received the designation, it was one of only nine companies in the state to do so. The employees at Kittery Point Yacht Yard are invested in safety too. "They are very appreciative that we take safety seriously and proud that we have a flag in our shop that comes from the federal government," Glessner said. ⚓



The boatyard removed its marine railway and rebuilt a deeper ramp, increasing the hauling efficiency.


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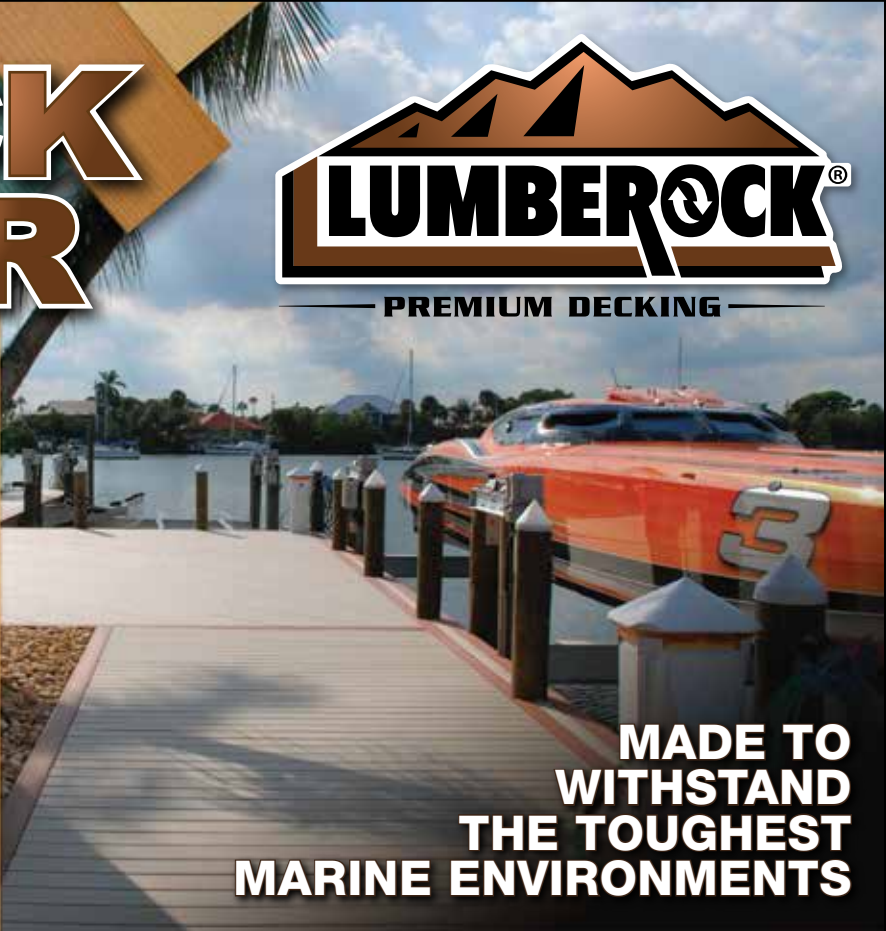
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