

# Boaters & Bikers Take Freedom Ride

The second Boaterz 'n Bikerz Hull of a Tour: "The Freedom Ride" brought together a few dozen media and marine industry executives for an historic 2000-mile, nine-day boating and motorcycling adventure from Sarasota, FL to Washington D.C. Participants could ride a leg or two or the full route, which included scenic backroads up the east coast, coupled with boating stops at Freedom Boat Club locations in Sarasota and Saint Augustine, FL; Savannah, GA; Myrtle Beach, SC; and Annapolis, MD.

Organized and produced by BWI member Wanda Kenton Smith and routed by Road Captain Jim Krueger of Regal Marine, title sponsor was Freedom Boat Club with media sponsor *Soundings Trade Only*. Kenton Smith, columnist for *STO*, blogged and posted pictures daily.

Several Freedom Boat Clubs hosted waterfront barbecues or meals en route. At

the Annapolis club, boat rides enhanced a performance by the Blue Angels as part of the U.S. Naval Academy's annual commissioning ceremonies.

*Boating* magazine's John Page Williams and *Yachting*'s John Wooldridge joined the riders for these festivities. In keeping with its theme, riders visited other historic sites including the U.S.S. Yorktown in Charleston, SC; the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills, NC; Williamsburg, VA; the Gettysburg Battlefield; and Monticello in Charlottesville, VA.

A highlight for many was active participation in Rolling Thunder, a ride from the Pentagon to the Viet Nam Memorial Wall. The largest peaceful demonstration in the country, 900,000 motorcycles rode in the parade held Memorial Day weekend



**Bikers assemble at a Freedom Boat Club marina before heading off to a day's cruise.**

to raise awareness of POWs, MIAs and pay tribute to veterans and the military.

Besides marine industry editorial coverage, the event was picked up and featured in news sites throughout the U.S. and in several countries abroad. BWI member and event rider Marilyn DeMartini, owner of PR Power, is writing two features for motorcycle media *Thunder Press*, while Kenton Smith is writing a feature for *Born to Ride* magazine, which has already included coverage in its Women's World edition.

## New Boat Sales Gain 6.4%

NMMA's recently issued 2014 Recreational Boating Statistical Abstract reports growth for the \$35.4 billion U.S. recreational boating industry, with an estimated 171,500 new powerboats sold in 2014, an increase of 6.4 percent over 2013.

"We're seeing sales increases across a number of boat categories with the largest increase from smaller fiberglass and aluminum outboard powerboats," said NMMA president Thom

Dammrich. "Marine manufacturers have been introducing smaller, more versatile boats at lower price points that can be used for activities from fishing to cruising with family and friends, making boating accessible for newcomers."

In other categories, new sailboats sold at retail increased 33.9 percent to 7,500 units and new personal watercraft sales increased 21.6 percent to 47,900 units.

Leading states in 2014 sales of new powerboat, motor,

trailer and accessories, were: Florida, \$2.3 billion, up 22.5% from 2013; Texas, \$1.3 billion, up 11.9%; Michigan, \$762.4 million, up 13.1%; Minnesota, \$601.5 million, up 3.9%; New York, \$597.8 million, up 7.3%; North Carolina, \$580.2 million, up 16.9%; Wisconsin, \$560.3 million, up 2.9%; California, \$546.8 million, up 20.9%; Louisiana, \$529.9 million, up 11%; Alabama: \$457.7 million, up 19.6%.

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