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WAVS Taskforce Wins MRH Award

Viking Marine Group initiative recognized for innovation and sustainability at the 2025 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – October 30, 2025 – The Whale and Vessel Safety (WAVS) Taskforce won the Marine Research Hub (MRH) Innovation & Sustainability Award during the 2025 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Presented in partnership with Informa Markets and the Marine Industries Association of South Florida, the award recognizes companies leading in marine innovation and environmental stewardship.

Formed in late 2022, the WAVS Taskforce is a Viking Marine Group initiative created with leading industry partners to advance technology that reduces vessel strikes on North Atlantic right whales and other marine life, improving safety for mariners and wildlife. WAVS operates a 24-foot Contender with a 300-hp Yamaha research vessel equipped with advanced detection systems, radar and AI classification software to collect real-world data on vessel speed, detection and avoidance.

“WAVS stood out for education, outreach and convening industry stakeholders around a critical environmental challenge,” said Catherine O’Fallon, Executive Director of Marine Research Hub. “Viking’s leadership has raised awareness and gathered actionable data for boating and conservation efforts.”

“We’re working on utilizing technology for better detection of whales and objects in the water – technology that helps improve safety for whales and mariners alike,” said John DePersenaire, Viking Marine Group’s Director of Government Affairs and Sustainability.

NOAA’s 2022 proposal would have rewritten the existing 2008 vessel speed rule, extending 10-knot limits to all boats 35 feet and larger from Cape Cod to northern Florida, up to 100 miles offshore, for as much as seven months a year. The proposal was withdrawn in January

2025. The 2008 10-knot rule remains in place, applying to vessels 65 feet and larger within smaller, seasonal management areas along the Eastern Seaboard.

The WAVS Taskforce continues to make tangible progress in developing and quantifying tools that reduce the risk of vessel strike and provide greater situational awareness. The marine industry, working through WAVS, has stepped up to engage in this issue and accelerate the development of tools that address the conservation needs of the right whale while better accommodating the operational needs of boaters.

Taskforce members and collaborators include Viam, Garmin, Yamaha, Brunswick, FLIR, BRNKL, Simard, Motion Information Systems, Atlantic Marine Electronics (AME), Fathom Science, LOOKOUT, SEA.AI and the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA). Together, these partners are developing new systems for real-time whale detection, data sharing and vessel alerts to reduce collisions and improve maritime safety.

More details on the WAVS Taskforce and its partners are available at wavstaskforce.com. Viking Yachts' sustainability initiatives are featured at vikingyachts.com.

About the Viking Yacht Company

Established in 1964 on the banks of the Bass River in New Gretna, N.J., and following Co-founder Bill Healey's mantra of building a better boat every day, Viking has become the leading semi-custom production builder of sportfishing yachts and center consoles in the world, with 6,000 boats delivered. The Viking fleet consists of yachts from 46 to 90 feet, and the company in 2019 launched a lineup of premium high-performance outboard yachts – Valhalla center consoles and sport yachts. Princess Yachts America, the U.S. distributor of the British-built yachts, is also part of the Viking portfolio. A vertically integrated company where the vast majority of every boat is built in-house, Viking operates several subsidiaries, including Valhalla Yacht Sales, Atlantic Marine Electronics, Palm Beach Towers and the Viking Yacht Service Center.

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