Fiberglass Composite Pilings Bring Eco-Friendly Options to the Waterfront

More than a million marine vessels are registered in the state of Florida, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. That equates to one boat for every 18 people in the state. Overall, boating contributes more than $18 billion to Florida's economy, according to the Marine Industries Association of Florida. This economic impact is greater than the citrus and cruise ship industries combined.

The importance of Florida's waterfront is obvious, and makes infrastructure materials used in marine construction a primary environmental focus. In general, the advances of green building materials are not being adapted easily in our waterways. Outdated building techniques and chemically treated wood products continue to damage our water supply and eco-habitats.

With the green movement in full force nationwide, Florida has an enormous opportunity to lead the charge in bringing this environmental consciousness to the waterfront — without restricting development.

Pearson Pilings of Fall River, Mass., is helping to lead this environmental initiative. Everett Pearson was an early pioneer in the marine industry, having basically invented fiberglass use in boats in 1957. Pearson now manufactures a structural fiberglass piling that is utilized in many different areas of construction, including marinas, docks, boat houses, boat lifts, artificial reefs, reef markers and building foundations. These pilings are environmentally benign. Marine growth and biodiversity are not affected in any way.

Beyond the pilings' physical properties, there are numerous examples of how using Pearson Pilings reduces environmental impact during and after construction. They weigh less than pilings made from steel or concrete, are easier to handle and mobilize, and install faster than traditional solid pilings. Pearson Pilings are also stronger than wood, steel or concrete, providing design options that use fewer pilings and get the job done quicker.

In addition, these fiberglass composite pilings have a much longer life expectancy than common construction materials, since they have been designed to have a life expectancy of more than 100 years. This reduces the environmental impact of reconstruction 5 to 15 years down the line and reduces overall costs in the long term. Imagine the opportunity for marine habitats that have decades to grow before being disturbed, compared to the frequent traffic of contractors who have to rebuild because of the short life cycle of outdated building materials.

The marine construction industry *is choosing Pearson fiberglass composite pilings where superior strength and durability are required. Contractors, builders and architects are using the pilings to build marinas, docks and piers, as well as above-grade building foundations. The pilings can also be used for special applications, such as reef markers and even elephant containment walls in zoos.*

In the past few years, counties and municipalities have tried to limit development and even impose moratoriums on waterfront construction to slow the environmental impact of the waterfront economy and leisure industries. These entities seem to ignore the obvious advantages of applying both sound economic and environmental decisions. A better option is to create incentives for utilizing the new wave of eco-friendly construction products that leave no impact on the environment.

Perhaps the only drawback to these new materials is their higher cost compared to more traditional building materials. However, there are sources of funding for using environmentally friendly products through government and private foundations. So please do your part to wean us off bad construction practices and help keep our waterways clean and flourishing.

Pearson Pilings fully supports green certification systems and encourages customers to design projects using sustainable green building and best management practices. Pearson has also teamed up with the TECHBlue Center in Jacksonville, Fla. TECHBlue encourages environmental alliances and has formed Waterfront Learning Laboratories using green building products. Funding solicitation packages are then developed for clean water construction projects.

For more information on Pearson Pilings, visit www.pearsonpilings.com or call 508-675-0594. For more information on the TECHBlue center, visit www.cleanwaterfront.net/TECHBlue.

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