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Easy Steps for Lowering Your Fuel Costs

Higher fuel prices are taking a bigger bite out of everyone's boating budget. Grousing won't help, but here are some take-control measures that will lower your fuel consumption and measurably reduce the cost of every single outing.

- 1. Keep the bottom clean.** A fouled bottom has about the same effect on fuel consumption as towing a room-sized carpet. Moored and slipped boats in salt water require the protection of fresh antifouling paint. Be careful about leaving your normally dry-stored boat in the water for more than a few days as drag producing fouling occurs in an astonishingly short time on an unprotected hull. Keep your running gear free of barnacles.
- 2. Tune your engine.** Gasoline engines deliver their best economy and their best performance only when they are in good tune. Diesel engines are less tune-sensitive, but having the injectors serviced and cleaning or replacing the air filter is likely to boost fuel economy.
- 3. Replace fuel filters frequently** during the first few tanks of ethanol fuel. Install a fuel/water separator filter, and carry replacement elements. Be prepared to change filters on the water if your engine loses rpm, sputters or hesitates. We also strongly recommend installing a spin-on fuel vacuum gauge so that you can see when the filter needs to be changed.
- 4. Change your Oil.** Changing engine oil every 100 hours increases fuel economy as well as engine life. Oil loses its lubricity as it wears. Contaminants in the oil cause additional friction and wear.
- 5. Drive smart.** Handle throttles smoothly, applying only as much power as circumstances require. Don't be too tentative, getting up on plane quickly actually saves fuel – but pushing the throttle control to the stop almost certainly wastes fuel. Learn to cruise at your boat's most economical speed.
- 6. Don't push water.** Proper trim is essential to good fuel economy. Plowing, kiting and porpoising all result in higher fuel consumption. If your boat does not trim properly, invest in trim tabs. Outboard-powered boats can benefit from bolt-on hydrofoils.
- 7. Check your prop.** Unless the blades are perfectly true, the prop will fail to provide maximum thrust. Blades with nicks and dings create power-robbing turbulence. Have the prop reconditioned. Make a test run with your boat loaded the way you use it to be sure the fitted prop doesn't allow your engine to exceed the recommended wide open throttle (WOT) rpm. From the perspective of fuel economy, a bit too much pitch is usually preferable to a bit too little. If you need to change props, consider a cupped or a four blade wheel for more efficient mid-range performance.
- 8. Lighten the boat.** Hauling around stuff that doesn't need to be aboard burns extra fuel, so do some earnest housecleaning. Take aboard only enough fuel to provide a comfortable margin of safety for your planned outing, not as much fuel as the boat can carry. This not only lightens the boat and improves fuel economy, but your engine benefits from a steady diet of fresh fuel. You will also get better mileage with lighter fishing buddies, but maybe that is over the top.
- 9. Install a fuel flow meter.** A flow meter tells you in real time exactly how much fuel your engine is consuming. This information allows you to accurately adjust both throttles and trim for maximum economy even as wind and sea conditions change. A flow meter also keeps up with total fuel consumed and it has the added value of providing early warning of developing engine and running gear problems or fouling.
- 10. Maintain your trailer.** Make sure your tires are pumped to the correct pressure and are not excessively worn. Inspect the axle and bearing for excessive wear or play. A well-maintained trailer not only delivers better gas mileage while towing, it also reduces the likelihood of a breakdown, which wastes your time and money!

Call our Service Department today to schedule a courtesy fuel-saving and trailer-safety inspection.