

Is the Challenge Worth It?

At the conclusion of the paint removal ordeal (two full weeks), I asked myself, “Is this scale of commitment really what your typical DIYer should tackle?” The answer? An uncertain “maybe.”

The job certainly can be turned over to pros and is a prime candidate for media blasting, but many yards don’t want the airborne residue associated with the process. Tenting the boat or moving it into a building adds expense. And when all is said and done, the epoxy barrier coat is pretty immune to baking soda and may require blasting with a more aggressive grit that can tear into the gelcoat as well as remove the barrier coat. The slow and arduous combo of chemical stripping and sanding used to rid *Wind Shadow* of 26-year-old barrier coat left the gelcoat intact and provided an even surface over which to reapply the same epoxy system that had endured for over two decades.

Now that more and more barrier-coated boats are reaching the end of the paint’s lifespan, owners will be looking for answers about what to do next. If there is a significant amount of interlaminar blistering in addition to barrier-coat blistering, it may be time for a “peel.” This even more aggressive approach cuts all the way down to FRP laminate, removing barrier coat, gelcoat, and the pocked first layer of FRP laminate. Once the offending surface has been cleared away, the remedy is to re-laminate whatever schedule of material was removed. The new composite skin incorporates vinylester or epoxy resin, and the complete job includes re-fairing the surface, barrier coating, and finally bottom painting the underbody—a job that dwarfs the efforts bestowed on *Wind Shadow*, and one that will require professional intervention.

Those considering such a project as removing barrier coats

PS DIY			ESTIMATE		
HULL STRIPPING & RECOATING					
ITEM DESCRIPTION	ITEM AMT	SUB TOTALS			
EQUIPMENT		\$ 200			
TOOLS (IF RENTED)	\$200				
MATERIALS		\$2,241			
SANDING DISKS/SAND PAPER	\$125				
STRIPPER + PAPER/ COVER	\$420				
TAPE / PLASTIC	\$46				
BARRIER COATING	\$720				
BOTTOM PAINT	\$730				
LABOR		TOTAL			
MAN HOURS	140	140 hours			

should first evaluate their skill level, and then weigh the man hours and cost of the project versus what it would cost to have a professional do it. In my case, removal options included subcontracting a soda blasting, which would cost \$2,500 and would only rid the hull of antifouling paint, not the failed epoxy barrier coat. A heavy-grit media blasting to remove the epoxy—along with much of the gelcoat—was considered too aggressive. Leaving the whole job to the pros would’ve been pretty costly: A “peel” or blast approach and the followup fairing, resurfacing, epoxy barrier coats, and bottom paint would run about \$10,000-\$15,000. By doing it myself, the bill ran about \$2,500 for tools and materials (excluding boat yard use) and cost me two weeks of my time and sweat. (See DIY bill above for price breakdown.)