

Fishermen choose Boatracs over other systems



Recently Andy Benavidez of The B Corp sat down to discuss his views of satellite communications and VMS systems. The B Corp is a 15 year old family business home ported in Seaford, Virginia. The business was originally started by Andy's father, Tim Benavidez. Today The B Corp is run by Andy and his wife Stephanie, along with other family members that work the boats. They currently have four boats in service and a fifth boat due to be christened in September.

Q: How long have you had the Boatracs systems on your vessels?

A: I want to say ten or eleven years. I remember it was one of the first major investments that I made. I can honestly say it was probably one of the best investments I have made as a boat owner, to be able to see where my guys are and make sure they are where they are supposed to be. Boatracs eliminates not knowing where your boat is and keeps the honest guys honest and the crooked guys a little more to the right.

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Q: You are a long time Boatracs customer, why did you buy another VMS system?

A: We heard of all these new features that were being offered. It was recommended by my electronics dealer. I liked everything about what I was hearing when he talked to me about it, it sounded good, but I never did shut off my Boatracs, I kept it on because I knew that Boatracs was reliable. The other system was one of those “too good to be true stories”, and it didn't work well.

Q: Why did you turn off the other systems?

A: It would literally take, most times, 15 to 25 minutes to get a message from one end to another. And then I would wait for the emails to come back. So, my ASAP messages were turning into 35 or 45 minutes. We literally just quit using it.

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Q: What about Positioning and NMFS notification?

A: What I did on the ALMA B, was ask NMFS to use the SkyMate as my official NMFS device. After the boat was out four days NMFS called and said that “you know its not working for you, you know that don't you?”...I said yes, I can see that it's not working....The only reason we could continue to fish was that I still had Boatracs onboard and NMFS could still see those positions.

Q: How frequently were the positions wrong?

A: Quite a bit...I don't know exactly how frequently they were wrong but, quite a bit...quite a bit. ... That's when I said I was going to switch it off... I called my dealer and told him I wanted to shut it off. He felt bad and was all apologetic and sorry he sold it to me. I turned it off, I never thought twice about why I turned it off. I knew it was the right thing to do. That's why I never cut the Boatracs service off!

Q: How valuable are your Boatracs systems?

A: Very valuable! In addition to the day-to-day communications and NMFS we have used them for emergencies too. We had a vessel go down in December 2003. We were using our Boatracs to literally communicate with the captain instantaneously. I was on the end of the dock with my cell phone and Stephanie was on the computer. The captain didn't want to leave the boat, but I told him through Boatracs to “get off the Boat now!” Fortunately, no one even got wet; they just stepped onto the Navy dinghy that put them onto a USCG vessel. But the boat was lost.

Q: Anything else you want to say about Boatracs?

A: To me the critical thing is that we don't get any violations; we make sure we are where we are supposed to be. When I get up in the morning or during the day I can make sure the boats are where they are supposed to be. That is the most critical thing. Currently, I have no qualms, no beefs, no nothing, but good things to say about Boatracs. And certainly for the price we pay, the cost per month, which is nothing to sleep at night and know your boats and crews are fine.

