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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 19, 2007

Action needed to alleviate slip shortage

Charleston, S.C. – In many coastal communities, demand for boat slips far exceeds supply. Several factors are contributing to this situation, including:

- Rising waterfront property values tempting marina owners to sell to condo and hotel developers
- Boaters buying larger vessels taking up more marina space
- Environmental regulations restricting marina construction
- Replacement of public marinas with dockominiums (privately owned slips or drystacks purchased by boaters)

As a result of these trends, some boat enthusiasts have no convenient place to berth their craft, and this situation is a detriment to the economies of coastal communities. In Florida, where the public berth shortage is most acute, several possible remedies have been proposed, including:

- Property tax breaks for marinas and boatyards
- Temporary fee increases in boat registration or fuel surcharges to fund public access
- Building more drystack storage off the water
- Building more offshore mooring fields
- Permitting changes to make it easier for existing marinas to expand or renovate

Though the slip shortage is worsening in many areas, some communities have implemented solutions. For example, the City of Miami, with more than 1,000 public berths at three fully occupied marinas, is expanding capacity at its popular Dinner Key Marina by constructing a 225-vessel offshore mooring facility. Such large, innovative projects are lengthy, complex endeavors requiring extensive planning. But ultimately, these efforts are the answer to the problem.

“The bottom line is that the slip shortage will only be alleviated by adding more slips and/or drystacks, likely through a combination of private and public marina expansions,” says Sam Phlegar, Senior Vice President and Director of ATM’s Marine Division. “Communities will need to plan wisely and devise creative solutions to ensure that all boaters continue to have access to the water.”

About ATM

Applied Technology & Management, Inc. (ATM, www.appliedtm.com) is a coastal, environmental, marine, and water resources engineering firm.