

# The Data Gathering and Review Process

Collecting the data to create the Marina Reports is a multi-step process. A system of checks and balances keeps the information as accurate and as objective as possible. The intention is not to provide a promotional vehicle for marina and boatyard facilities — the intention is to provide a consumers' guide. Reasonable efforts have been made to confirm and corroborate the information. That does not mean that there won't be mistakes. The Marina Reports are a "snapshot in time" and things do change. It is also possible that, despite our best intentions, we just got it wrong. We hope that hasn't happened often, but a vehicle has been provided for you to tell us (and your fellow cruisers) if that is the case. Log-on to the ACC WebSite and add a Cruiser Note to the appropriate Marina Report (or send us an email). The data gathering and review process that ACC follows is outlined below:

- ▶ **Questionnaire:** A new marina, which has not been reviewed in an earlier edition, will be asked to fill out a very detailed four-page questionnaire — either before or after ACC's initial site visit and survey. The information provided is entered into ACC's proprietary database.
- ▶ **Site Visits:** Every facility included in the *Guide* is personally visited at least once (but, more likely, two to four times) by an ACC Reviewer who tours the marina or boatyard, walks the docks, pokes about the sheds, checks out the heads, showers and laundry, inspects the lounges, pool, beach, restaurants and hotel, and interviews the manager and/or dockmaster. The reviewer also takes photographs — one of which is included in each Marina Report in the Book and up to 16 more in full-color on the CD-ROM and also on the continually updated website. The information that has been provided by the marinas is reviewed, confirmed, corrected and/or supplemented. If the reviewers arrive by boat, their affiliation with the Atlantic Cruising Club is not disclosed until the end of their stay. If they arrive by car, they introduce themselves before touring the facility. Over time, marina managers and dockmasters have come to appreciate that ACC's goal is to provide objective, boater-biased in-depth reviews rather than "marina ads." Toward that end, ACC writers/editors have visited more than 2500 facilities ... at least once — in the most cases, several times.
- ▶ **Data Confirmation Report:** After the completion of the Questionnaire and the Site Visit, each facility receives a Data Confirmation Report (DCR) that includes all the information in our database for that facility — up to 300 data points — with a request for updates and corrections. If there are significant changes, a new visit is scheduled as early as is practical.
- ▶ **Independent Research:** Information that is included in the final Marina Report is derived from many sources. In addition to the Site Visit, the Questionnaire and the DCR, independent data is also collected. Local tourist offices, chambers of commerce and websites are surveyed and interviewed. Independent researchers are assigned to gather specific data for the "Mid Section" — the "what is where" material. Forty categories have been selected as the most important for cruisers; independent researchers seek out names, phone numbers, rates and distances (from the marinas) for each of these. This data is used to supplement and/or corroborate the information from all the other sources.
- ▶ **The Photographs:** About 98% of the photographs in the book and on the CD-ROM have been taken by ACC Reviewers at the time of their site visits (in some cases the photographs will be from more than one visit). In a few cases, marinas have contributed aerial shots which provide a very useful overview. The photographs are not travel or tourism photos or even photojournalistic images. They are "location shots" or "snapshots." The intention is to show you what is there — as accurately as possible. The old saw "a picture is worth a thousand words" certainly applies here. We shoot what you would have seen had you arrived at the same time we did. The quality varies — the weather was not always perfect — but the sense of the place is usually correct.

We try to provide enough visual information so that you can both make an informed decision and recognize the place when you arrive. There's always a shot of the landside facility, of the view from the docks, and a close-up of a dock to show the quality of the slips and pedestals. And, finally, there are shots of the primary recreation facilities and restaurant, if they exist.

- ▶ **The Review and the Ratings:** As noted earlier, the ACC reviewers assign a three-part rating to each facility — A Bell Rating, a Boatyard Rating and a Sunset Rating. Then the Reviewers take all the material that has been gathered, including some subjective impressions, and write the bottom section's three-part Marina Review — "Setting," "Marina Notes" and "Notable."
- ▶ **The Draft Marina Report:** All of this material has been input into ACC's proprietary program called Datastract™, developed by the Atlantic Cruising Club's parent company, Jerawyn Publishing Inc. (JPI). The data is captured via a custom-designed multi-table input program which then collates, formats and outputs it as the single-page Marina Report. Every piece of data — including all the graphics and photographs — is placed in its precise position in the Marina Report by Datastract™. A Draft Report is sent to the marina facility for a final review for content accuracy before publication. Corrections are corroborated before the Marina Report is changed.
- ▶ **The Final Marina Report:** Datastract™ creates the final Marina Report, pulling all the corrected data and the photograph from the ACC database, and printing it to an Acrobat PDF file. Marina Reports are collated with the front and back ends and then sent to the printer. Datastract™ replaces traditional publishing software resulting in a product that is more accurate and more timely.
- ▶ **The CD-ROM and the WebSite:** A very user-friendly version of the marina database resides on the enclosed CD-ROM and also on the ACC WebSite. The Search Interface permits users to select up to 100 of the 300+ possible data points as search criteria for querying the database for suitable marinas. The search engine will return a list of the facilities that meet the requested criteria. A "double-click" on a marina name will generate a color two or three-page Marina Report — with up to 17 full-color photographs each. "Marina Reports" are created "on the fly" and can be viewed on the screen or printed out.