

PONTOON

and DECK BOAT®

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advice for newbies*

PERFORMANCE ROUNDUP
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HAVE A GREAT PRODUCT IDEA?
What you should do next

WORM VS. LURE
The Great Angler Debate



BY VANESSA OLER

BETTER THAN PLYWOOD

DECKING ALTERNATIVES THAT WON'T MAKE YOU CRINGE

Summer is winding down and a feeling of dread is washing over pontoon owners everywhere. This might be the winter where we finally have to peel back the carpet or vinyl flooring and assess the state of our plywood deck. The possibility of mold, mildew, cracking, splitting and general water damage lurking under there is enough to turn anyone six shades of green. And this is why we put it off, year and after year.

We've seen some ingenuity in solving this problem in the past. Some of those ideas, though, were likely better left on the drawing board. A common solution-that's not terrible- has been to use composite decking boards. You know, the type you build the back patio with. By attaching boards such

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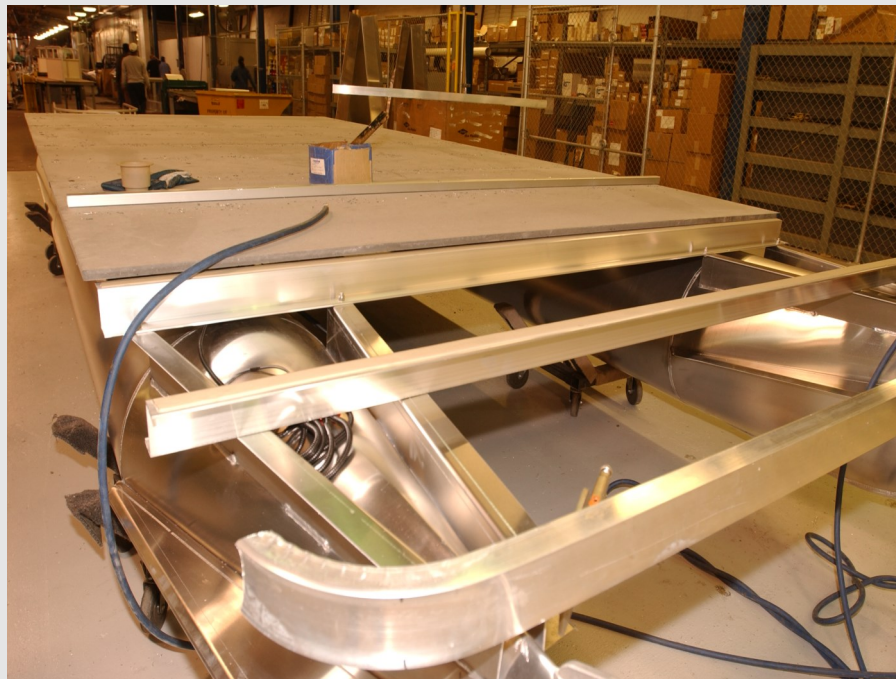
as Infinity Decking from Fortress (www.fortressdeck.com) directly to the pontoon frame, you've saved yourself a step. The boards act as a subfloor and floor, while adding a certain level of posh to the pontooning experience. But the weight is an issue you can't get around. These decking boards were designed for landlubbers and little if any consideration is made for making them lightweight.

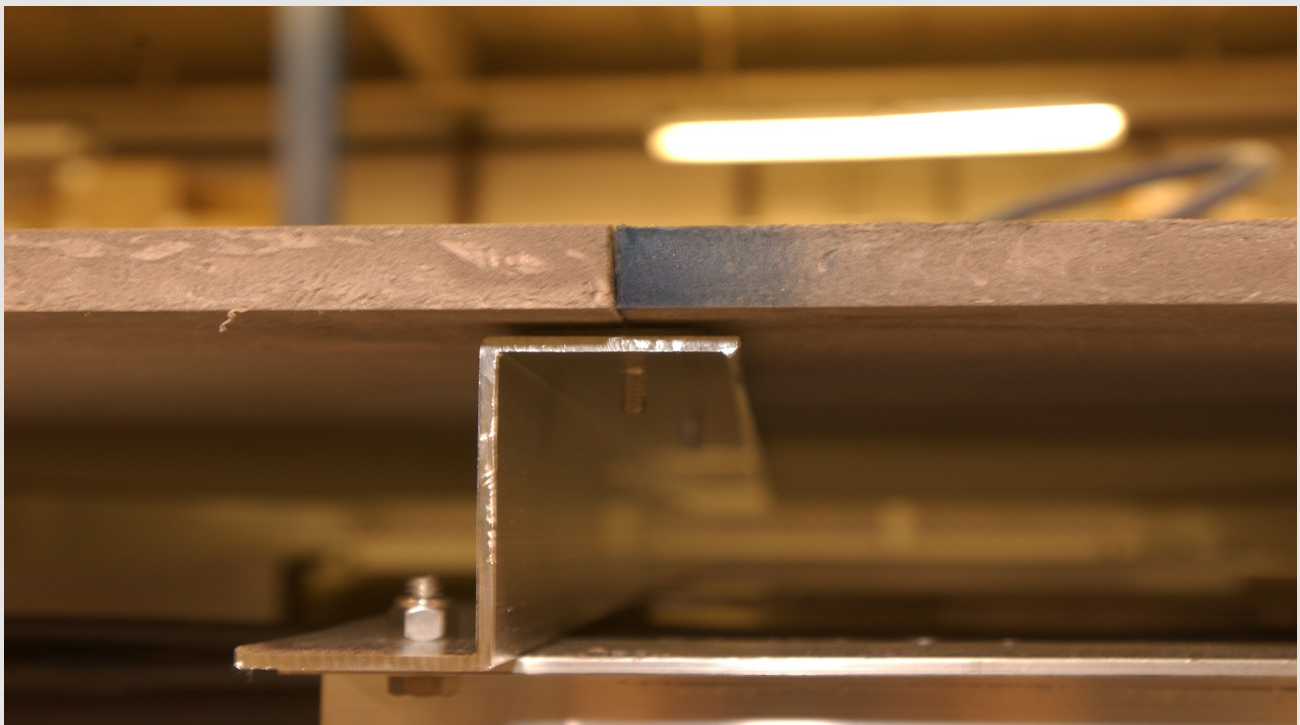
However, as we looked across the wide world of marine industrial products, we found a few companies who understand this small detail: a boat still needs to float. Armed with new technology and cutting edge synthetic materials, your days of dread are coming to a close. Take a look and then take a deep breath. You can do this!

COOSA COMPOSITES

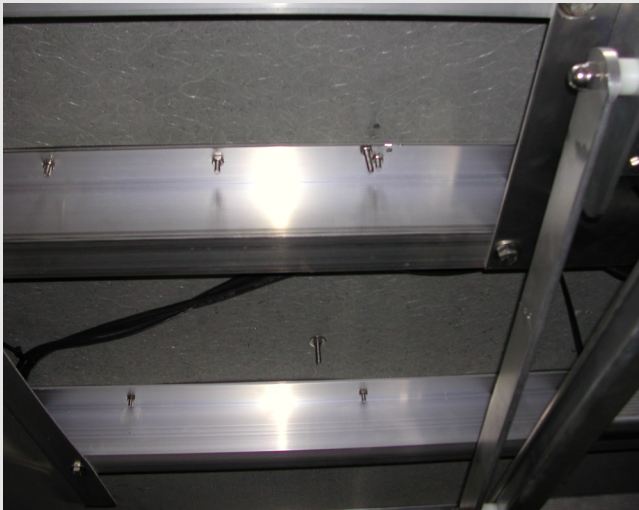
Based in Birmingham, Ala., Coosa Composites understands the need for a no-rot alternative to plywood. And they've kicked the science up a notch too. Coosa manufactures structural panels made of high-density, polyurethane foam reinforced with layers of fiberglass. The lightweight and water repellent properties of high-density foam combined with the structural integrity of fiberglass make Coosa's Bluewater and Nautical panels hard to beat. Coosa produces panels in 4 by 8 feet up to 5 by 12 feet in most configurations and can be pre-cut or sent with kit instructions depending on how much you're feeling like a weekend warrior in the garage.

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Coosa's panels are approximately 40 to 60 percent lighter than plywood, depending upon density ordered. The panels do not absorb water to any significant degree, are infinitely more mold- and mildew-resistant than plywood and, of course, resistant to insect infestations.



Bluewater 26 is the strongest and stiffest panel Coosa makes and most like plywood, and can be ordered in the same thickness as the plywood you're replacing. If spanning 14 or more inches, Bluewater 26 is the top suggestion; however, if spanning 12 or fewer inches, Bluewater 20 might be sufficient depending upon your particular circumstances. Other applications might lend themselves to the Nautical series. No matter what you're working with, Coosa will help you sort out exactly which of their incredible boards is best for your pontoon. The added benefit of Coosa's Bluewater 26 is you don't have to upgrade any of your current tools. The same tools used for cutting plywood can be used for cutting a Coosa panel. Most typical marine resins work well with Coosa panels, including epoxy, vinyl-ester and polyester resins. (www.coosacomposites.com)



Three different composite panels were profiled in this article. Coosa's composite panels were the only solid core, fiberglass reinforced panels designed for the demands of today's pontoons.