

Boston Whaler 150 HP Yamaha Motor

Four cycle Yamaha boat motors are designed to operate at 85% throttle or 5100 RPM for hours at a time. The 2009 Yamaha on the Police Whaler is used primarily in the canals of Punta Gorda at 20% throttle or 1200 RPM for 3.5 to 4.0 hours at a time. This near idle speed operation is compensated for by using Yamaha recommended Ring Free fuel additive and by taking the boat out in Charlotte Harbor after each patrol and running it at 5500 plus RPM to charge the batteries, clear the plugs, expand the rings, and reduce the possibility of glazed cylinder walls. This daily high speed operation is not always possible due to weather, and time constraints.

The boat is used five days a week averaging 332 miles per month. Miles average is computed from the end of month miles taken from the GPS chartplotter for 2013. Currently the Yamaha motor has 2770 hours displayed on the hour meter. Internet search of commercial Yamaha 150 HP motor users indicated an average life of 3000 hours with 4000 hours reported as an achievable exception.

After four years continuous service in the waters of Punta Gorda, the Yamaha fuel pump began to fail intermittently and the wiring harness that connected the fuel pump and its sensors became corroded causing the motor to stall and then stop without being able to restart it. The boat was out of service from 9 December 2013 until 23 January 2014. Holiday shutdown of the supplier of the repair parts and additional problems encountered requiring additional parts delayed repair of the motor.

The availability of only one police boat during the holiday season was unsatisfactory as there are two lighted boat parades plus increased night time boat traffic in the canals for holiday lighting decoration viewing. Law Enforcement marine resources from the County and FWC had to be recruited to fulfill the safety requirements of the parades and decoration viewing.

When the Boston Whaler is unavailable for duty, the Marine Volunteers use the Marine 1 Nautica patrol boat, when Marine 1 is not using it, to maintain a police presence in the Punta Gorda waters every day of the week. This presents logistical problems in having the one boat at the disposal of two user entities with different operating bases. Using the one boat seven days a week presents problems in performing periodic maintenance on the single boat not to mention the undesirability of having both boats out of service.

September 16, 2013, the lower unit of the motor locked up at 2316 hours on the motor. The lower unit was replaced by Gator Creek Marine and the boat returned to service on 11 October 2013. The lower unit performed satisfactorily until 8 March 2014 when the drive shaft broke in two pieces and the stainless steel prop and half the drive shaft parted from the motor in Charlotte Harbor while the boat was under way.