

Advancing Marine Safety

The Whale and Vessel Safety Taskforce will demonstrate its 24-foot Contender research vessel at the Viking and Valhalla VIP Boat Show and the Miami International Boat Show.

(New Gretna, N.J. – January 16, 2026) – The Viking Marine Group is advancing marine safety through its Whale and Vessel Safety Taskforce (WAVS) with on-water demonstrations of its research vessel at the Viking and Valhalla VIP Boat Show in Riviera Beach, Fla., Jan. 30–31, and the Miami International Boat Show, Feb. 11–15.

A Viking-led initiative formed in 2022, WAVS is showcasing a 24-foot Contender research vessel as part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness of developing technologies designed to improve object detection on the water and reduce the risk of vessel strikes involving whales, marine life and other hazards.

Powered by a 300-hp Yamaha outboard, the vessel serves as a mobile test platform for evaluating vessel-based detection, classification and communication systems under real operating conditions.

“We’re proud to see a 24-foot Contender supporting the WAVS team in developing technology that protects the waters and wildlife we all rely on,” said Joe Neber, president of Contender Boats. “Any effort that helps make boating safer and strengthens the future of our sport is one we’re glad to stand behind.”

AI-based visual and thermal detection technologies from SEA.AI and Lookout are among the systems being evaluated, using camera feeds to identify and classify hazards such as whales, floating debris, buoys and small vessels. Performance continues to improve as additional on-water data is collected.

WAVS is also testing data-sharing capabilities using the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to deliver whale management area alerts and sighting information to vessels operating nearby, offering a practical and scalable approach to distributing safety-critical information.

System integration aboard the research vessel was supported by leading marine electronics and technology partners, with installation and networking completed to ensure seamless operation across platforms. WAVS also continues to work with the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA) to support standardized data protocols that will allow safety information to be shared more efficiently across vessels and manufacturers.

Earlier phases of the initiative were conducted in the Northeast, where the vessel regularly operated in areas with active whale populations. WAVS has hosted representatives from government agencies, research institutions and regulatory bodies as part of its effort to connect technology developers, researchers and policymakers around practical, vessel-based solutions.

The demonstrations at the Viking and Valhalla VIP Boat Show and the Miami International Boat Show mark an important step in expanding industry awareness of emerging tools aimed at improving safety for mariners while protecting marine life.

The Viking Marine Group and WAVS thank Joe Neber and Contender Boats – along with all our other partners – for their continued support of the initiative and for providing a platform that enables this important work on the water.

Project Partners

AmeraTrail

Atlantic Marine Electronics (AME)

BRNKL

Brunswick

Contender

Fathom Science

Garmin

GOST

Lookout

Maritime Information Systems (MIS)

National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA)

Safe Harbor Marinas

SEA.AI

Simrad

Simsi

Teledyne FLIR

Viam

Yamaha

For more information about the WAVS initiative and its research vessel, visit www.wavstaskforce.com.