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Every spring the Mobile Boat Show at the Mobile Convention Center is visited by thousands of people. It's a great weekend activity for families that are interested not only in boats, but also in wildlife and water quality, fishing tips and gear, Coast Guard rescue demonstrations, and even world famous waterskiing squirrels.

The Mobile Boat Show is March 30 through April 2 this year. My office coworkers and I plan on attending and will be at the Auburn Marine Extension and Research Center (AUMERC)/Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium booth by the ticket counters. Bring your family and stop by our booth, we have some interesting people in our office that work on a variety of projects, from aquaculture in local high schools to oyster research and clean boating.

At this year's Boat Show, AUMERC will be giving out free bilge socks to boat owners, one per family while supplies last. Bilge compartments collect not only rain and seawater that enters the hull of your boat, but also fuel and engine fluids that may leak within the boat. The incidental or inadvertent pumping of oily bilge water is one of the most common ways these pollutants get into our state's coastal waters, and often causes the oily sheen seen in some lakes, harbors or near some marinas. Keeping your bilge clean and free of oil is easy, and will help you avoid a hefty \$25,000 fine for illegally discharging pollutants. Absorbents placed in the bilge compartment will soak up spilled oil and fuel. These products are not expensive, and may last the average boater for an entire boating season. A bilge sock like AUMERC is giving away is one type of absorbent that many boaters use.

If you're a boat owner and can't make it to the boat show, you can still get a free bilge sock. AUMERC is located at 4170 Commanders Drive in Mobile, and we're open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. We'd love for you to come visit.

For more clean boating tips please visit <http://www.masgc.org/cleanmarinas/cleanboat.html>. Contact Shonda Borden at the Auburn Marine Extension and Research Center at (251) 438-5690, or by email at [bordesm@auburn.edu](mailto:bordesm@auburn.edu) for more information.