

Several years ago, Sealegs released their 8.5 metre Alloy Cabin boat. Fast forward to the May 2024 Hutchwilco Boat Show and behold a new Sealegs 8.6m Alloy MAX model appears, the successor to the popular 8.5m vessel.

BY RON CZERNIAK, MARINE JOURNALIST



The 8.6 Alloy MAX was almost lost in the shadow of the latest Sealegs 12m Cabin RIB, which dominated their expansive exhibition area. Had it not been

for the striking, iridescent blue hull, one may not have taken much note at all, at first glance looking quite similar to the existing 8.5m Alloy Cabin craft. However, realising that this was perhaps something evolutionary from Sealegs, I took the opportunity to chat with Nicholas Glanfield, their Global Sales and Partner Manager, about this new Blue Boat. I quickly appreciated that the changes and significant enhancements to the new Sealegs 8.6m Alloy MAX craft made it worthy of a Pacific Power Boat sea trial - to be arranged as soon as Sealegs completed development for the local market.

Two months later, although still needing some tweaks, the 8.6m Alloy MAX was far enough along in its development to take her out for an initial boat test. So, on an absolutely brilliant, sunny July winter's day, with only a slight easterly breeze, we met at Takapuna Beach on Auckland's North Shore, to get up close and personal with this craft.

However, before the sea trial date, I took the opportunity to pop over to the Sealegs International head office for a preliminary look at the craft and get a briefing from Nicholas. My first question was: "Why an 8.6m when you've already got a very successful (88 sold to date) 8.5m Alloy Cabin craft?" Nicholas's answer was brief and simple.... "Customer feedback".

Turns out that although customers love the 8.5m model (and it will remain in the Sealegs range), many wanted more internal volume and better access (port and starboard) to the stern of the craft. In addition, it is well known that boats in this intermediate size range are, in

equal portions, popular fishing, diving and general family craft; so yes, useable internal volume was a key consideration. As you would expect in a boat costing up to \$485,000, the 8.6m Alloy MAX is packed with up-to-the-minute technology and boasts several innovative, as well as traditional features.

The 8.6m Alloy MAX was introduced into Sealegs's existing and extensive range of alloy amphibious craft to meet the demand for more space. So, not only does the new model combine the comfort of a sleek, enclosed alloy cabin sporting the latest in Sealegs Amphibious technology, it also features a huge 42% increase in aft cockpit space!

It is hard to believe that by simply increasing the length by 100mm and the width (beam) by 210mm that this much extra room has been achieved. But it has. By cleverly redesigning the cockpit area and carrying the sole of the craft all the way on to the transom, Sealegs have ensured that previously difficult-to-utilise space is now available via the extended cockpit. Given the success of the predecessor 8.5m craft, designing a hull form that compliments the application of the craft was paramount. The 8.5m Alloy Cabin was renowned for its performance in rough seas, punching well above its weight class. The Sealegs 8.6m Alloy MAX needed to carry on this design legacy and the redesign has resulted in a dryer, more fuel-efficient hull with greater stability.

Originally Sealegs intended developing and introducing a 9.0m model. However, having undertaken a weight study on this variant (and having shared the results with their customers), feedback was that a craft of that size was beginning to push the bounds of an easy to trail (yes there are Sealegs clients who have a requirement to trailer their craft) rig and the craft was

# NEW SEALEGS 8.6 ALLOY MAX:

*Same, same, but different.*

Responding to customer feedback



fridge or additional storage via large, easy to pull out drawers. The significantly deeper, full-length internally lined cockpit shelves are capable of safely storing long rods and all your other fishing and 'day boating' needs.

Looking aft one immediately notices that the attractively stylised "Fishing Station" has been redesigned to provide more cockpit space and also houses the upgraded 40 hp EFI petrol inboard engine, now providing even better traction on difficult terrain. This dual-purpose Bait Station/ Engine Cowling includes a drawer, cutting board and Live Bait tank as well as a five-fishing rod capable 'Rocket Launcher', two cup holders and a fish measuring ruler is engraved into the white, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) hard-wearing cutting board. Speaking of fishing, when doing so on a hot summer day, instant relief from the blazing sun is achieved by extending the easily deployable 'Wake Shade' sun canopy.

Storage space abounds in this boat. Everywhere you look, not only in the cockpit, but in the cabin helm station area, as well as in the forepeak under the double 'V' berth in the bow area. In the cockpit, huge open lockers, beneath the redesigned port and starboard gunwales, provide storage for everything from spare fishing rods to six packs of beer. Under the cockpit floor, nicely finished with non-slip cushioned, black 'U-Dek' decking, can be found two voluminous lockers (one starboard and one port), designed to declutter the deck but also useable as 'kill bins' for those quick fishing trips and at 1400mm long, large enough to store scuba tanks and dive bags. On the port stern quarter there is a cleverly designed 3-step, flip-up boarding ladder allowing divers simple access to the cockpit post dive or, when the boat is on land up on its wheels, the owner and crew can easily climb aboard before driving out to sea.

### PERFORMANCE

Sealegs, both RIB and Alloy hull version craft, have now been around long enough that one automatically expects that all their models will perform well. The 8.6 Alloy MAX is no exception and with the hull having been redesigned and further enhanced, performance was all but guaranteed.

*The upgraded 40 hp EFI petrol inboard engine now provides even better traction exiting the water, even on difficult terrain.*

*On-land manoeuvrability is made easier thanks to the 60% improvement in the craft's turning circle, courtesy of the recently released Sealegs front wheel 'Super Steering' system*

*The "Fishing Station" has been redesigned to provide more cockpit space and also houses two voluminous lockers.*

*Relief from the blazing sun is achieved by extending the easily deployable 'Wake Shade' sun canopy.*

simply getting too large and heavy – approaching 3500kg. So back to the drawing board and the discovery that the original 8.5m hull, modified, updated and reconfigured, would still achieve what their customers were wanting.

But increased space wasn't the only thing existing and potential customers indicated they wanted in a craft of this size. Sealegs listened and took the opportunity to incorporate a significant amount of overall customer feedback into the new 8.6m Alloy MAX. So now, when you stop to look around the more spacious cockpit you will immediately notice features such as dual access through the transom, both to port and starboard, as well as the extremely comfortable helm and aft facing Queen Seats complete with options for an under seat 49L



I liken these vessels to Lamborghini vehicles. What?! For those who don't know, Lamborghini began as a tractor manufacturer (Lamborghini tractors are still manufactured in Italy), even though the brand is now mainly known for its luxury and supercar performance vehicles. But what's the connection? Well, just watch the new 8.6 Alloy MAX lumbering across a foreshore on its large extra knobbly tyres, as it heads for the water. I for one cannot help but think of a tractor. Even the well-muffled 40 hp EFI petrol engine located in the stern of the vessel gives off a distinctive somewhat tractor-like exhaust note as the craft steadfastly crawls towards the waves at a maximum speed of 10 kph. Don't like the engine noise? The obvious solution to this would be an electric, on-land, drive set-up and according to Nicholas, an electric version will soon be available.

However, once the 8.6m Alloy MAX hits deeper water, the three wheels fully retracted and the throttle hammered forward, we're talking performance! The 350 hp Yamaha Four-stroke outboard mounted on our test boat had the vessel up on the plane and, in very short order, as I pushed the throttle lever to the max, we topped out at 46 knots, the big Yamaha surging to 6000 rpm. Needless to say, fuel usage at this speed wasn't great, but throttling back to a

comfortable cruising speed of 27 knots and 3500 rpm; consumption was in an acceptable 46 litres/hour range.

It is one thing to achieve impressive straight-line performance, but harking back to my Lamborghini analogy, what about sharp turns, banging through waves and all the other manoeuvrability you expect? Well, like the Lamborghini Urus Super Sport Utility Vehicle, the 8.6m Alloy MAX can be said to have off-road capability as well as on water performance. Yeah, ok you are not going to drive a Urus into the water, but I think you get my drift (pun intended).

As mentioned previously, Auckland's winter weather on our test day was superb, making for a most enjoyable day out on the water. It also allowed me to put the 8.6m Alloy MAX through its paces without hammering the #%&@ out of myself or the crew; not only when accelerating hard but throwing the craft into tight "S" turns and pounding it through self-generated wake waves which, when combined with the slight ocean chop, provided realistically average Hauraki Gulf conditions.

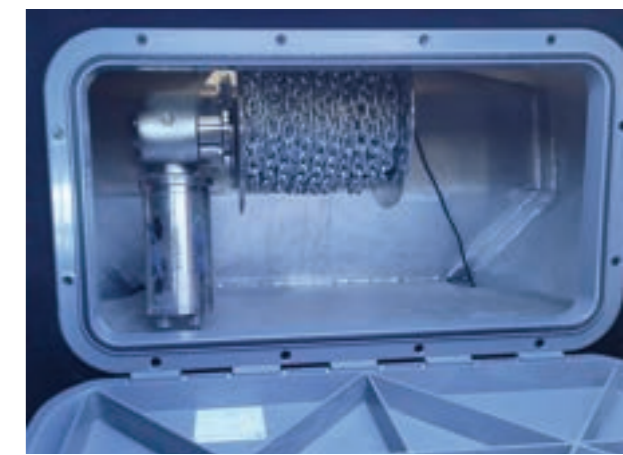
This is not a light boat and with three of us, and a bit of kit on board, we were in the 3,000 + kg range on test day. So, what happens when travelling at around 40 knots you want to wrench the thick, easy-to-

*The 8.6 Alloy MAX gets quickly up on the plane driven by the Yamaha 350hp Four Stroke Outboard.*

*On the port stern quarter there is a cleverly designed 3-step, flip-up boarding ladder.*

*Ron about to rapidly turn the wheel to starboard to test for manoeuvrability under full power.*

*Concealed behind the forepeak bulkhead hatch cover is a Savwinch rope/chain drum reel anchor winch, mounted in the chain locker cavity.*





The cleverly designed, knee-activated sea water hand wash.

Extremely comfortable helm and aft-facing Queen Seats complete with options for an under-seat 49L fridge or additional storage via large, easy-to-pull-out drawers.

grip power steering wheel hard to port or starboard? With a nod from Nicholas, he and our third mate/photographer, braced themselves and with a bit of trepidation on my part, I rapidly turned the wheel to starboard, gripping it as though someone was going to try and steal it from me, waiting for all hell to break loose. Pregnant pause! Although being hugely exhilarating and the boat being well-heeled through the turn, all that happened is that the extra width stern (no doubt aided by the 350-kilo weight of the stern wheels and hydraulic mechanisms) just dug in with nary a hint of prop cavitation. Nor a feeling that the stern was going to break loose and have us flailing over the ocean surface as we just kept on slicing through the water. Yippee-ki-yay ('Die Hard' fans will understand), let's try that again! But try as I might, and even at one stage purposely attempting to hit a wave broadsides during another sharp manoeuvre, other than being hugely uncomfortable and somewhat scary, the boat shuddering with the impact, everything was just fine. Now let's be clear here. I am not advocating this type of tomfoolery out on the water; my only justification being this was a boat test. Emphasis on test!

Not only does this craft perform and manoeuvre well, but it is also very dry and comfortable. Which brings us to the interior. First and foremost, this is a cabin boat and the whole cabin is capable of being fully enclosed and lockable. The cabin top is slightly lower and has a sleeker appearance than the 8.5m, helped by the aesthetically pleasing fully curved windscreen, kept clear in rainy or rough weather by two wipers.

Up forward is a spacious two-person V-berth overnight sleeping area upholstered in Mariner black material. A cleverly concealed, accessible via the removable starboard berth squab, electric Jabsco toilet sits to starboard. There is no holding tank, so users will have to obey the Coastal Maritime legislation when using the 'head'.

Concealed behind the forepeak bulkhead hatch cover is a Savwinch rope/chain drum reel anchor winch,



mounted in the chain locker cavity, which has an ample length of 15 metres of 8 mm chain and 75 metres of 8 mm nylon rope connected to an 8 kg Savwinch S/S anchor. A trapezoidal Vetus hatch provides ample light in the forepeak and ventilation when required; conditions permitting. Even though natural light is provided by the Perspex hatch and additional artificial light by way of switchable white/red interior cabin lights, I found this space to be somewhat dark and foreboding and those who are a bit claustrophobic, may find this area a bit off-putting. However, Nicholas informed me that customisable upholstery, ranging from standard Mariner black through to a wide range of customer-selectable colours, in Silvertex premium diamond stitch upholstery, are available with lighter colours significantly brightening the space.

Exiting the forepeak, re-entering the cabin area and glancing to starboard, one cannot fail to notice the ergonomic dashboard and helm station control console. At first sight, it may appear overwhelming, but once everything is identified and after a bit of instruction, the helmsperson soon realises that you don't need an Airbus A380 pilot's licence to operate the 8.6m Alloy MAX. Dominated by the 400 mm (16 inch) Simrad Model NSS 16 EVO3S MFD, all other surrounding controls and instruments are laid out in an intuitive and ergonomically functional manner.

**SUMMARY:**

Sealegs has responded to customer feedback, producing a craft similar to their popular 8.5m Alloy Cabin, but which is definitely a significant step up in terms of space and refinement, differentiating it enough to appeal to a select market segment. Owners will enjoy a 42% significantly enlarged cockpit/rear deck space area compared to the 8.5m Alloy Cabin, opening up the 8.6 Alloy MAX platform to incorporate even more customer-specific requirements including cray pot hauler davits and electric reel plug-in points. On-land manoeuvrability is made easier thanks to the 60% improvement in the craft's turning

**Helm Station:**

1. Simrad NSS16 EVO3 Chartplotter
2. Yamaha Command Link 5 (CL5) Outboard Information Gauge
3. Sealegs On-Land Selector (F/N/R) with Diff Lock
4. Sealegs Bow & Stern Wheels Up/Down Buttons
5. All Wheel Drive (Switchable to 2-wheel Drive) and Digital Speed Up/Speed Down Throttle
6. Inboard Engine Start/Stop
7. Simrad VHF Radio
8. ZipWake Automatic Trim Tab
9. Ancillary Control Buttons. E.g. Bilge Pump, Windlass, Cockpit/Roof Lights, Horn, Windscreen Wiper, Etc
10. Sealegs Emergency Steering Override
11. Warning Lights
12. Fusion Stereo
13. Live Bait Tank Lights & Fill and LED Lights Roof and Gunwales
14. Yamaha Autopilot - Level 4 Buttons and Autopilot Joystick Control
15. Forward/Reverse Outboard Throttle



circle, courtesy of the recently released Sealegs front wheel 'Super Steering' system.

The new ergonomic dashboard design seamlessly accommodates the Yamaha Helm Master. Onboard switching and control are cleverly achieved through the use of BLINK digital control systems that faultlessly integrate the craft's onboard marine and amphibious systems allowing you to effortlessly switch between 'All Wheels Up' and 'All Wheels Down' with a single push-button operation. These systems deliver an intuitive, easy-to-operate user interface, most importantly providing reliability and safety.

In addition, you will enjoy immersing yourself in the ambience of the optional lockable and fully enclosed cabin, courtesy of new mood lighting, featuring LED roof strips and side pillar lighting, while enjoying the music of your choice via the Fusion, 4-speaker sound

system. Navigating at night is easier with improved visibility due to an integrated 2200 lumen 'Light Bar' affixed to the cabin top forward of a slimline solar panel, providing extra battery top-up.

Flexibility and comfort are assured with Queen Seats equipped with pull out drawers (complete with a 90L chilly bin), or simply settle for additional storage under the seat. The aft stylised 'Fishing Station' includes a drawer, table, rod holders and an optional live bait tank. The list of standard accessory items, such as cup holders, additional rod holders, freshwater cockpit shower, knee-activated sea water hand wash, additional cabin top rocket launcher, as well as a plethora of other handy features makes this craft worth every penny of its up to \$400,000 plus price tag. Just as that Lamborghini Urus is worth its \$400,000 price tag. Get my drift? 🌀

The helmsperson doesn't need an Airbus A380 pilot's licence to operate the 8.6m Alloy MAX.



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**COMPARATIVE CHART: 8.5 ALLOY CABIN AND 8.6 ALLOY MAX**

Feature	8.5 Alloy Cabin	8.6 Alloy MAX
Length (LOA wheels up)	8.5m	8.6m
Beam	2.29m	2.5m
Draft	0.8m	0.8m
Height (on wheels)	3.16m	3.16m
Deadrise (at transom)	16 Deg	16 Deg
Rear deck space	1240mm x 1800mm	1740mm x 1920mm
Dry weight	2450kg	2590kg
Max payload	500kg	600kg
Fuel capacity	250l	400l
Outboard (recommended/max)	250hp/300hp	300hp /350hp
Speed on water (max/cruising)	40/25 kts	54/25 kts
On-land engine	35hp	40hp EF
Speed on land (max)	10kph	10kph
Priced from	NZD \$339,00	NZD \$349,000

**PERFORMANCE DATA**

Engine RPM	GPS Speed (kts)	Fuel Flow (litres/hour)
1500	8.0	19.5
2000	9.0	26
2500	13.0	32
3000	22.5	36
3500	27.0	46
4000	32.5	58
4500	37.0	68
5000	42.0	89
5500	43.5	119
6000 (WOT)	45.8	125

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