World Sailing

Navigating Offshore

World Sailing's plan to support offshore sailing

2025 - 2028

sport / nature / technology

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Introduction

Offshore sailing delivers impacts which benefit the whole of the sport: the inspirational tales of sailors competing against the elements as well as each other; the opportunity for people to compete throughout their lives; and the reach of events like The Ocean Race, the Fastnet and Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race which bring new eyes to sailing.

This is World Sailing's plan to support offshore sailing, which has been a fundamental part of our federation since the foundation of the International Yacht Racing Union in the early years of the last century.

However, as the sport has developed over the last 100 or so years with the increased importance of Olympic sport at international and national federation level, the offshore sailing community has felt that priorities lay elsewhere.

There are many hands involved in the development of offshore sailing – sailors, event organisers, Classes, Rating Systems, national federations, manufacturers, host locations, sailing clubs and others.

Recognising these important stakeholders and the challenges facing the community, this strategy establishes World Sailing's plans and align expectations while setting a direction for our federation to be more ambitious in the future.

We have four priorities:

1. Clear governance – because in a sport as regulated as ours, rules must work for the sport, not the other way around.

2. Empowered stakeholders – because giving offshore sailing the best chance to prosper means our global sailing community must be supported to play its part.

3. Increased visibility – because offshore sailing showcases the best values of our sport.

4. Financial balance – because providing the best service requires adequate funding.

By outlining these priorities we set the waypoints for World Sailing's role in the development of offshore sailing in the coming years.

David Graham,
Chief Executive Officer.

"By outlining these priorities we set the waypoints for World Sailing's role in the development of offshore sailing in the coming years."

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World Sailing, CEO

The importance of offshore sailing to the health of our sport

Some of the most inspirational moments in sailing, and in the whole of sport, come from events such The Ocean Race, Vendee Globe and Jules Verne Trophy. These events, and others like them, provide unique opportunities to capture the public imagination and exemplify the World Sailing values of integrity, resilience, ambition, and resourcefulness.

At the other end of the spectrum, leisure and non-competitive sailing and the flexibility of formats like rallies and twilight sailing mean offshore sailing opens up the sport for participation as modern lifestyles change.

Offshore, big boat racing and offshore capable keelboat sailing are essential to the health of our sport as a whole:

- They support lifelong participation, as well as lifelong opportunities for entry into the sport.
- They bring together young and old, professional and amateur, those with disabilities and those without.
- They provide a platform for men and women to compete alongside and against each other as peers.

Offshore sailing must be supported as a valued and valuable member of our sport's family, for the benefit of all its stakeholders.

Our North Star

Offshore sailing inspires people to engage with sport throughout their lives as participants, professional sailors, volunteers and the many career paths it offers.

World Sailing takes an active leadership role in supporting the offshore community.

Offshore stakeholders recognise the value of World Sailing.

Vision

Offshore racing continues to be recognised as a fair, safe sport that attracts diverse participants worldwide with World Sailing recognised as a key enabler.

Mission

Empower sailors, Member National Authorities, Classes, Rating Systems and event organisers to lead the growth of offshore sailing.

Clear governance

Update and implement governance structures which support the growth of offshore sailing.

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Empowered stakeholders

Empower organising authorities, Member National Authorities, Classes and Rating Systems to support the offshore community.

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Increased visibility

Showcase events to inspire diverse participation and advocate for safety, fairness, and sustainability in offshore sailing.

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Financial balance

Ensure services provided to offshore sailing are sustainable for all stakeholders.

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Our priorities

1. Clear governance

Goals

In order to deliver up-to-date and implemented governance structures which support the growth of offshore sailing we will target the following goals:

- Safety is at the heart of offshore sailing with the World Sailing Offshore Special Regulations recognised as the industry reference point.
- Proactive governance tackles the challenges and opportunities of developing technology and modern yacht design.
- Robust safety guidelines and regulations adapt to modern designs and equipment developments to safeguard the integrity of the sport while supporting innovation in high-performance sailing.
- Up-to-date and relevant regulations and policies, including the Advertising Code, meet the needs of offshore stakeholders.
- Offshore stakeholders recognise and value the role of World Sailing in the governance of offshore racing.

Tactics

We will achieve our goals for clear governance by:

- Reviewing the challenges posed by modern technology and proposing changes – for example to the Racing Rules of Sailing, the Offshore Special Regulations – where necessary to support development while safeguarding the integrity of the sport.
- Clarifying the relationship between World Sailing and major oceanic event organisers as well as the role, benefits and responsibilities of Special Events.
- Establishing lines of communication with manufacturers to ensure industry feedback is considered during decision-making regarding equipment and its governance.
- Considering opportunities for meaningful representation of wider stakeholders in governance structures eg: manufacturers and offshore sailors.
- Proposing changes to regulations and policies to ensure the governance structure is fit for purpose.
- Reviewing the Advertising Code to ensure it is fit for purpose.

2. Empowered stakeholders

Goals

In order to empower organising authorities, Member National Authorities, Classes and Rating Systems to support the offshore community, we will target the following goals:

- Classes, Rating Systems and major oceanic events value being associated with World Sailing.
- Classes, Rating Systems and major offshore events collaborate for the benefit of the sport.
- World Sailing services meet the needs of offshore sailing and encourage its growth.
- Member National Authorities are supported to encourage the growth of offshore sailing.

Tactics

We will achieve our goals for empowered stakeholders by:

- Establishing an official World Sailing Oceanic Calendar for major events.
- Hosting meetings with major offshore and oceanic event organisers from both the high-performance or professional, and the amateur or participation sectors, to strengthen ties and collaborate on the challenges posed by issues including advances in technology, safety, sustainability and diversity.
- Reducing barriers to participation by simplifying regulations and encouraging greater collaboration.
- Promoting wider participation at events by co-ordinating a major double handed events calendar.
- Reviewing World Sailing training programmes to ensure race official training, coach development and other educational activity support offshore sailing.
- Reviewing the potential to link Personal Survival Course status with Sailor ID to assist organising authorities and participants in meeting safety and entry requirements.

3. Increased visibility

Goals

We will showcase events to inspire diverse participation, and advocate for safety, fairness, diversity and sustainability in offshore sailing by targeting the following goals:

- Offshore sailing is showcased by World Sailing to inspire participation and engagement with the sport.
- World Sailing advocates for safety and best practice in offshore sailing as well as championing safeguarding practices.
- Offshore stakeholders are leaders in the sustainable practices championed by World Sailing.
- The Offshore Double Handed World Championships is an event sailors around the world aspire to participate in while providing an opportunity for development and celebration of mixed gender crews.
- An offshore event has been tested and is eligible for consideration at future Olympic Games.

Tactics

We will achieve our goals for achieving increased visibility by:

- Tendering for the rights to host Offshore Double Handed World Championships for 2027-29.
- Using the Offshore Double Handed World Championships to promote youth participation, gender equity, race official development, sustainable practices for shared or supplied equipment, and to explore the viability of a potential Olympic event.
- Promoting offshore initiatives on World Sailing digital platforms, including those relating to sustainability, diversity and innovative approaches to participation.
- Investigate the possibility of creating an interactive version of the Offshore Special Regulations to promote better understanding and adherence to requirements.
- Support the growth of offshore sailing by creating an online hub within the World Sailing Academy to showcase successful development initiatives, innovative participation formats, events and pathways.

4. Financial balance

Goals

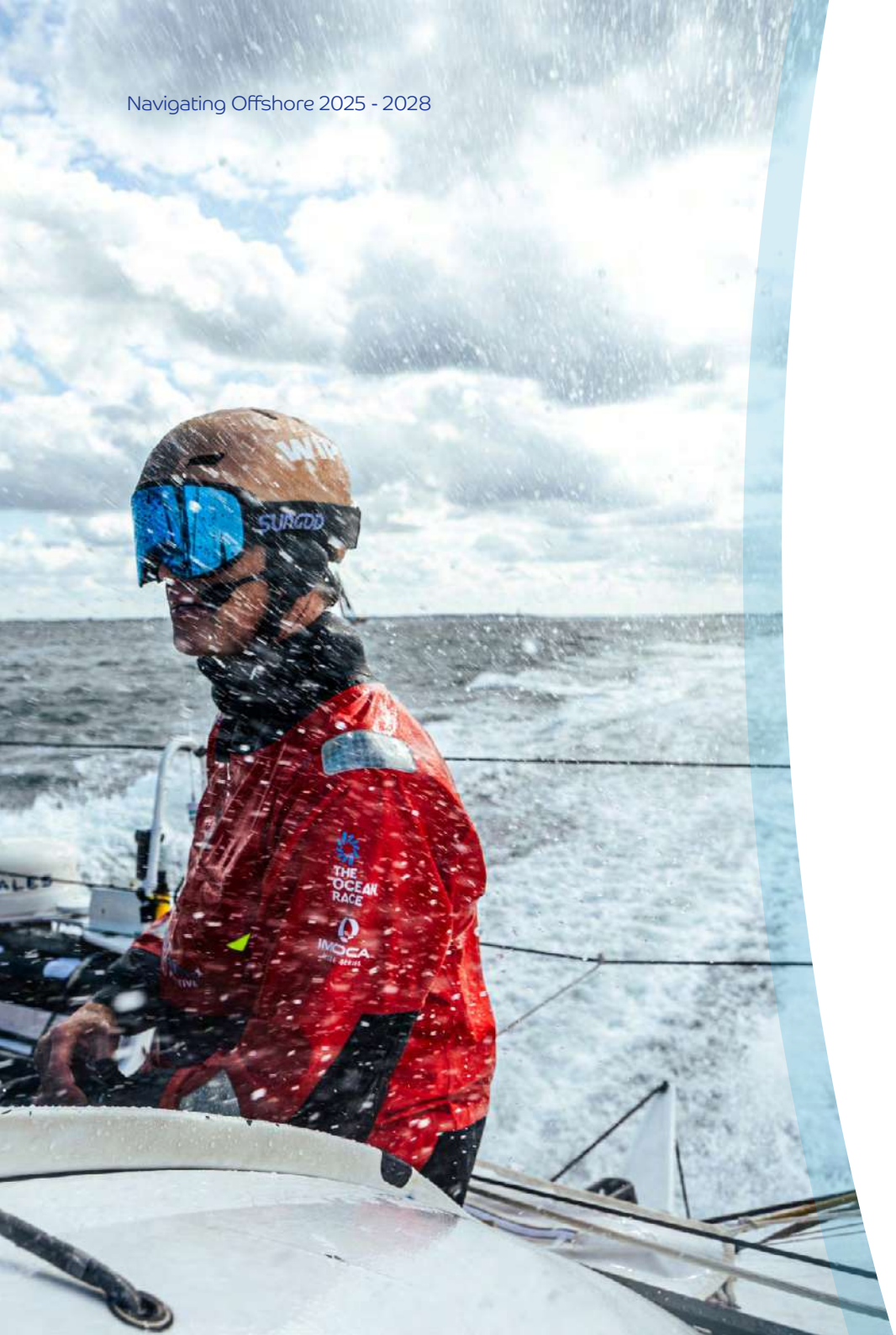
We will ensure services provided to offshore sailing are fairly supported by all stakeholders by targeting the following goals:

- Services provided by World Sailing to offshore sailing are financially sustainable.

Tactics

We will achieve our goals for financial stability by:

- Reviewing the contribution of various stakeholders to ensure revenue sources reflect services provided.
- Requiring new offshore initiatives and programmes to include a sustainable funding model.
- Exploring partnership opportunities to facilitate wider ambitions to support offshore stakeholders.



Recommendations for short-term action

- Submit a proposal to integrate representatives from the Oceanic and Offshore Committee in other World Sailing governance structures. Eg, the Racing Rules Committee, Growth of Sailing Committee.
- Appoint a cross-committee working group to review the relationship with Special Events, Major Events, Classes and Rating Systems.
- Appoint a working group to review the Advertising Code and its future.
- Create an email list for wider stakeholders to receive direct updates to encourage engagement in the governance process.
- Consider the needs of offshore stakeholders in decision-making processes across all departments and work areas.

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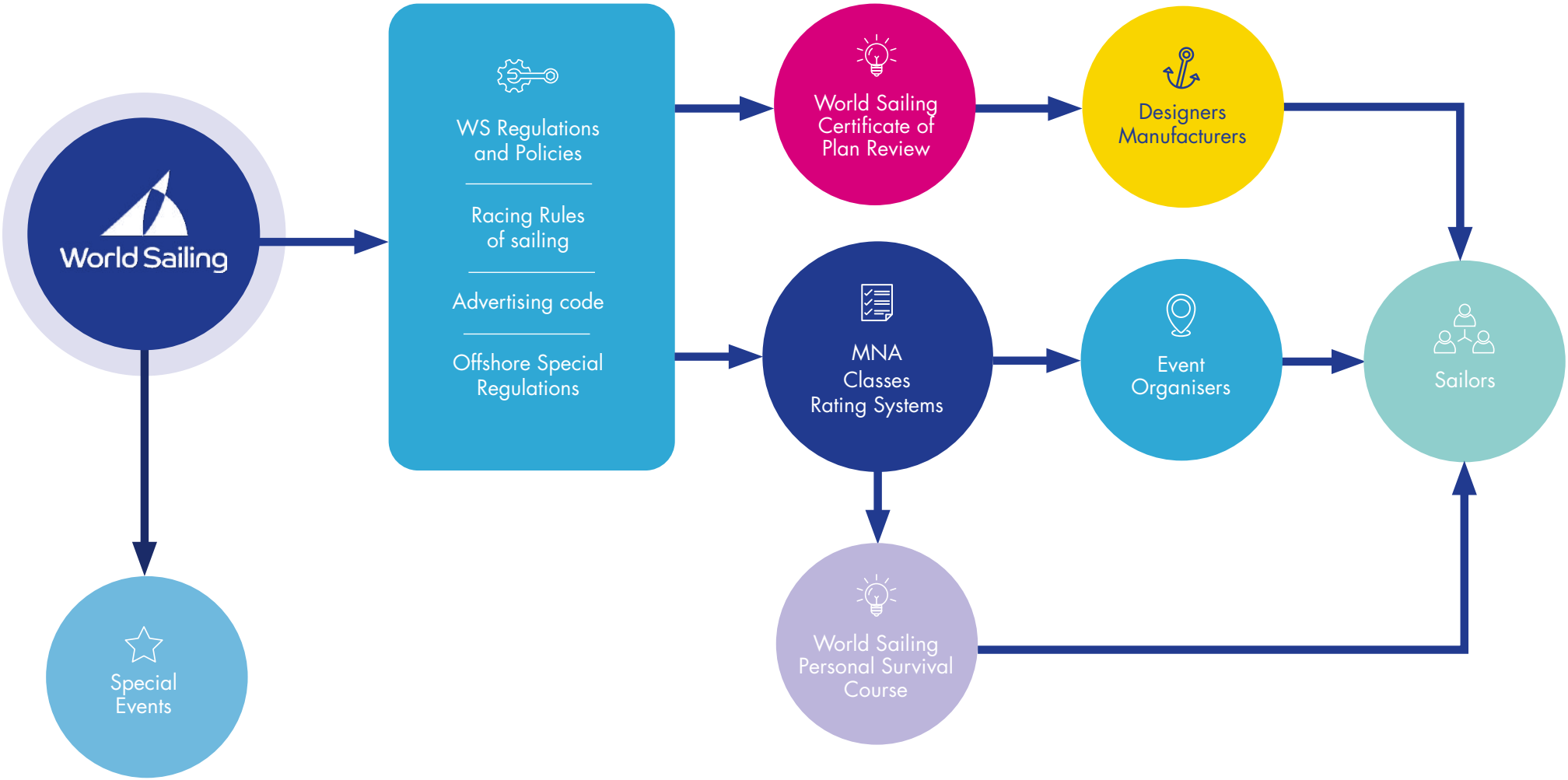
1. Stakeholder map

2. World Sailing governance structure

How offshore sailing fits in the World Sailing governance structures



3. Current challenges

Clarity on role and alignment with stakeholders

Due to the revenues available, some of the sport's focus has moved more to Olympic competition and away from keelboats. This has led to a patchwork of governance structures and expectations by stakeholders.

Governance structures fit for purpose

Absence of maintained, updated and enforced governance structures over time has diminished World Sailing position in the offshore community. As a result, some stakeholders do not engage in the governance process which further weakens the support World Sailing can provide. Limited representation of offshore stakeholders within World Sailing structures which weakens the impact they can have on decisions, and the support World Sailing can provide.

Special Events

Lack of clarity on role and eligibility.

Major oceanic and offshore event organisers

They are recognised as key stakeholders however the role and governance of the relationship is not clear.

Events outside World Sailing governance structure

Member National Authorities, organising authorities and Classes are facing increased challenges as a result of events that fall outside the World Sailing governance structure. This is further impacting on the growth and viability of many major oceanic events in an increasingly challenging economic environment.

Visibility and Advocacy

Promotion or advocacy of offshore sailing or safety initiatives on World Sailing platforms or within World Sailing programmes.

4. Assessment of current services

Racing Rules of Sailing

International standard rules to facilitate fair competition.

Often changed by offshore classes and organising authorities sometimes contrary to World Sailing's requirements.

Equipment Rules of Sailing

International rules regarding equipment and its use. Aims to standardise the terminology and measurement techniques.

Not widely used by offshore classes or events.

Sustainability

Set standards and provides education to the sailing community.

Sustainability sessions to educate and highlight successfull programmes including offshore.

Guidance developed includes offshore concerns eg: marine mammal guidance.

Advertising Code

International rules to manage the interests of different stakeholders.

Not applied by offshore classes nor enforced by Member National Authorities.

Participation and development

Programmes to support the growth of sailing including Emerging Nations, Para-inclusion, Steering the Course and the online training platform.

Olympic pathway focused.

Limited focus on or examples of offshore sailing.

Licensed Builders

Assists Classes in monitoring and approving of equipment suppliers.

Used by some keelboat classes.

Certificate of Plan Review

Allow owners and organising authorities to check compliance with Offshore Special Regulations requirements.

Recognised as key safety requirement for monohulls.

Well established system.

Good relationships with recognised organisations.

Certificate list online does not support search functions.

Personal Survival Course

Supports offshore racing by setting standards for vital training.

Reference training course worldwide.

Syllabus controlled by Offshore Special Regulations, providers approved and audited by Member National Authorities.

Inconsistent availability and quality control.

Offshore Special Regulations

Regulations to provide a framework to Classes, Rating Systems, Member National Authorities, organising authorities to promote safe racing.

Recognised as leading document for offshore safety.

Often changed by Classes and organising authorities. Procedure for changes is not clear or consistent.

Not intended for modern/ high-performance designs.

International Regulations Commission

Commission dedicated to monitoring changes across International Marine

Organisation, ISO etc and acting on behalf of sailors worldwide.

Critical role that advocates for the sport on the international scale that is not always recognised.

Monitor standards regarding equipment and building standards.

Issues support including the Polar Yacht Guide and piracy guidance.

Safety reporting

Facilitates the collection of information, monitoring of trends and sharing of best practice identified from incidents.

Reporting system is not user friendly.

Limited reporting by stakeholders hinders understanding of incidents.

Limited sharing of lessons learned.

Race officials development

Training and recognition for International Officials to support the development of the sport and facilitate fair competition.

World Sailing does not appoint to offshore events, limiting development and engagement in particular with international race officers and international measurers.

World Sailing training programmes not targeted to support offshore racing needs.

Sailor ID

System to identify and track participants and race officials in the sport.

Not widely used by offshore events.

Plaques

Provides a system to track and regulate equipment use.

Agreements updated with major offshore classes regarding plaques.

In House Certification Scheme

Scheme to assist participants and sail manufactures to comply with requirements.

Used by Rating Systems and some keelboat classes.

Class Rule management

Process to recognise Class Rules and ensure they meet World Sailing standards.

Offshore Classes previously operating outside Class Rules Changes process are slowly returning.

Limited offshore representation in Equipment Rules Sub Committee.

Universal Measurement System

Ambition of minimising barriers to participation due to difference in Rating Systems.

Differing views within the community of the benefits of reducing to one system.

Progress has been slow, however recent success with Universal Measurement System sail sticker.

eSailing

Annual eSailing World Championship and Nations Cup based on Olympic Events.

2026 eSailing Nations Cup will be an offshore event.

Large participation base within existing offshore events.

World championships

Events recognised or awarded by World Sailing to recognise talent and inspire participation.

Offshore Double Handed World Championship awarded by World Sailing.

Keelboats and Rating Systems hold world championships but major offshore classes do not.

Large number of world championship titles and categories can cause confusion with the general public.

Sailor Categorisation

Provides events and Classes with an international system to clearly distinguish between their 'professional' and 'amateur' status.

Used by some keelboat Classes and offshore events.

World Sailing

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