

Updates to the ORC VPP were adopted at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the ORC Congress on January 29, 2026. These changes will serve to more fairly handicap older yachts and temporarily address, for 2026, an anomaly affecting a limited number of designs while additional research studies can be done.

ORC works through a professional staff and volunteer board of directors, but ultimately decisions are made democratically by a Congress appointed by the nations that use the rule. An issue was identified with a certain type of yacht at the 2025 Annual General meeting held in Dublin in November. Some boats with relatively broad forward hull sections were seen by the 2025 VPP as having more drag than in fact they have. The Congress directed that the ITC examine the issue. The ITC is made up of yacht designers and naval architects from around the world.

The ITC took a science-based approach to the issue identified and focused on tuning the 2026 ORC VPP to address the few designs that fell outside the reliable range of the resistance force model. Working with the designers of the yachts affected (primarily the XR-41), the ITC ran further studies to determine a solution to the identified issue. The ITC reported back to the Congress at the EGM with a recommendation for a revised set of parameter limits that would provide a more equitable rating for those few boats as an interim step towards implementing a new resistance force model in 2027. This change has absolutely no impact on the vast majority of boats with ORC certificates, affecting only a small handful of models. The Congress unanimously approved the ITC's recommendations for the 2026 VPP.

Additionally, the Congress unanimously ratified a prior electronic vote of the Congress to adopt a change that extends the age allowance from 15 to 20 years. This change would provide additional benefit to older yacht designs, and it was initiated at the request of the US delegation to the ORC. This shows the ORC is responsive to the sometimes-unique needs among our fleets.

Both of these changes are intended to benefit the bulk of the fleet and to ensure competitive racing in 2026. The VPP will be finalized in the next few days, and after testing and validation, local ratings offices (such as US Sailing's Offshore Office) will begin issuing 2026 ORC certificates soon thereafter. The 2026 ORC rules will also be available online soon at www.orc.org/rules, and some revisions to the USA-CAN scoring model ratings on Page 2 of certificates will also be shown once 2026 certificates are available. The complete set of the 2026 scoring model formulations will be posted on the ORC page of the US Sailing Offshore website and in a 2026 edition of the ORC Race Management Guidebook for USA-CAN.

For further details on the ORC changes for 2026, visit <https://orc.org/agm-2025>. The minutes of the committees, supporting information and more is all available there as part of ORC's commitment to transparency. Minutes from the January 29 meeting and supporting documents should be posted in the next few days for those that want a more technical read-out of the changes coming in 2026.