Using the Selene Owner's Discussion Forums

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Introduction

Of all the functions on the Selene Owner's site, the discussion forums are by far the most popular. The forums allow owners and guests to interact on a wide variety of topics.

Users can interact with the forums in two primary ways:

Figure 1. The forum list screen.

- Logging into the site, browsing the various forums, and reading and posting via the web site.

- Sending and receiving posts via email. We'll discuss the email functionality later in this document.
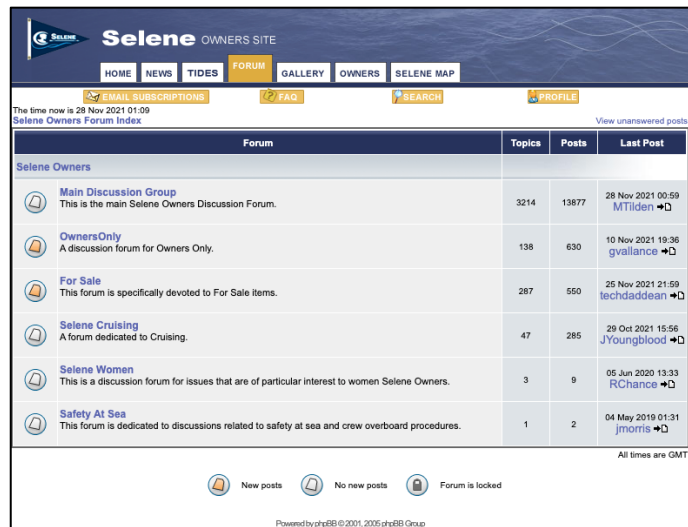
There are currently six forums available. Five of the forums are available to all users—whether guests or owners. One forum—the "Owner's Only" forum is visible only to validated Selene Owners. (See the Getting Started help document for more information on the ownership verification process).

Here are the current forums (as of November 2021). Please be careful to post in the correct forum so that people can easily find and respond to your postings:

1. ***The Main Discussion Group***. This is where the vast majority of interactions take place, and is the general forum for all topics (within the [Use Policy](#)) except those that are specific to other forums.

2. ***Owners Only.*** This forum is accessible only to verified owner. It is for general topics like the main discussion group, but some owners prefer to interact only with other verified owners via this forum.

3. ***For Sale.*** This forum is dedicated to buying and selling equipment and Selene Trawlers. Please do not post "for sale" or "wanted" postings in the general forum. Also note that the Use policy prohibits commercial postings from vendors to avoid this forum being used as a means of advertising products or services. The Use Policy also prohibits postings for other brands of boats (except for dinghies or other equipment that can be used on a Selene).

4. ***Selene Cruising.*** This forum is dedicated to information and discussion about cruising destinations, updates from Selene owners who are out cruising, and questions about cruising destinations or related topics.

5. ***Selene Women.*** This forum is dedicated to issues that the women among our group prefer to discuss away from the questions about diesel injectors and isolation transformers. All topics (within the [Use Policy](#)) are welcome except those for which there is a dedicated forum.

6. ***Safety at Sea.*** This is a relatively new forum that we created specifically to discuss safety at sea issues and how various owners prepare for emergencies.

Forum Heading Buttons

There are four buttons that appear near the top of every forum page:

EMAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS	This button opens the email subscriptions page where you can subscribe to receive postings from each forum via email. We'll describe the email posting function in more detail later in this document.
FAQ	This button opens a "frequently asked questions" page that provides help specific to the forum software.
SEARCH	This button opens the forum search screen where you can search for postings in a specific forum or all forums and search by author, time period and keywords.
PROFILE	This button opens the profile window with your profile information. This is equivalent to clicking the "Edit My Profile" link on the home page.

Reading posts on the website

To read posts on the web site, log in to the site and click the "Forum" tab at the top of the screen. The main forum list will appear.

Next to each forum title is an icon the indicates whether there are new posts that you have not yet read on the web site. We'll discuss later the option to have postings delivered to you via email, and these icons do not reflect postings that you may have seen via an email subscription. They only reflect un-read postings on the web site.

This icon indicates that there is one or more postings in this forum that you have not yet read on the web site.

This icon indicates that there are no postings in this particular forum that you have not viewed on the web site.

This icon indicates that the forum is "locked" – meaning that at the moment, no one except the administrator can post to the forum.

You'll also see on the main forum list screen numbers that indicate the total number of topics and the total number of posts in that forum. Our main discussion forum has over 3,000 topics and almost 14,000 posts!

The far-right column shows the username and date of the user who made the most recent posting to this forum. The post number and last post column includes postings made via email.

To read the postings in an individual forum, click on the forum title in the main forum list screen. Clicking on a forum title opens a page that lists all the "topics" for that forum as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The topic list screen.

This screen shows a list of topics along with the number of replies to the original posting as well as the "views" of the topic. Keep in mind that the views do not include those who received the posting via email. We'll describe sending and receiving posts via email later in this document.

The original posting author's user name is also listed as well as the user name of the user who most recently replied to the posting topic.

This screen also shows similar icons to those on the main forum list screen that indicate the state of the individual topics.

 This icon indicates a topic that you have read. There are no unread posts or replies in this topic.

 This icon indicates a topic that has one or most posts that you have not read on the site.

 This icon indicates a "popular" topic that you have read. A popular topic on the Selene owner's site is one that has at least 15 replies.

 This icon indicates a topic that is popular (has at least 15 replies) and has one or more posting or reply that you have not read.

 This icon indicates a topic that has been set by the administrator as "sticky", meaning that this topic will remain at the top of the topic list. Only administrators can set a topic as "sticky".

 This icon indicates a topic that has been set by the administrator as an announcement. This is similar to a "sticky" topic, except that it appears at the top of every page of topics, not just the top of the first page of topics. Only administrators can set a topic as an announcement.

 This icon (next to the topic title) indicates that there's an "attachment" to the topic or one of its replies. Attachments are typically photos, but could be other types of files as well. (See adding attachments to your posts.)

To read a topic, simply click on the topic title. A screen opens that shows the original posting at the top and all the replies to that topic below. The earliest replies are first, and the later replies are appended at the bottom of the list. A typical topic screen with the original posting at the top and replies following is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. This is a typical topic screen with the original topic posting at the top and all the replies listed below. There are often dozens of replies to an original topic list in the order they were posted.

Buttons on the Topic Screen

Here are the buttons on the topic screen and what they do:

 Click this button to start a new topic. Your post will not be connected to the current topic, but will appear as a new topic on the posting list.

POST REPLY ▸ Click this button to reply to a topic. Your post will be tied to the current topic as a reply and appear under the original post.

QUOTE This button is similar to "Post Reply" except that when you click this button within a posting, the text of that posting will be automatically included as the first part in the Message Body box where you enter the text of your reply. The quoted text will be surrounded by BBCode [quote] tags. Do not remove these tags, as they will format the quoted text differently so it's easy to identify the text you quoted from a previous posting. You can edit the quoted text within the [quote] tags to shorten it or quote specific points or questions.

PROFILE This button opens a small profile window that gives information about the name of the person who submitted the posting or reply.

Creating a new topic on the website

You can start a new topic by clicking the "New Topic" button. Clicking this button will open the window to create a new topic shown in Figure 4.

Enter a subject for the new topic, which will appear in the topic list for the forum. Make your subject line descriptive of the issue or question your posting addresses.

Then enter the body text of the posting in the "message body" box.

Formatting text in the message body

You can format the text in your posting using a variety of formatting options—all of which insert special "BBCode" (Bulletin Board Code) tags into your text that tell the forum software how to format the text you're entering. If you're familiar with HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) that is used in web page creation, you'll see that BBCode is very similar.

You can manually insert BBCode or HTML tags into your body text for formatting, but there are a series of buttons included just below the Subject text box that will insert properly formatted BBCode tags into your text for you. You will not see the *effects* of the formatting tags until you post or preview your posting. The buttons simply insert the special "tags" that indicate the formatting you want.

Unless you're familiar with BBCode and/or HTML, we recommend you use the BBCode buttons to insert BBCode tags in the text. Note that most BBCode tags have a begin and end tag that mark the beginning and ending of the special formatting. The first time you click a BBCode formatting button, a begin formatting tag will be inserted, and an asterisk will appear next to the formatting button you chose. The next time you click the same button, an end formatting tag will be inserted into your message body text.

Figure 4. Create a new topic posting by clicking the New Topic button, which opens this screen to compose your posting.

Here are the formatting buttons and their definitions:

This button inserts a starting (and ending) bold tag to make a segment of text bold. The first time you click it, a [B] tag is inserted and an asterisk appears next to the "B" in the button. The next time you click it, a [/B] tag is inserted to close the bold text section.

This button inserts a starting (and ending) italics tag to format a segment of text in italics font. The first time you click it, a [I] tag is inserted and an

asterisk appears next to the "I" in the button. The next time you click it, a [/I] tag is inserted to close the italics text section.

This button inserts a starting (and ending) underline tag to format a segment of text with an underline. The first time you click it, a [U] tag is inserted and an asterisk appears next to the "U" in the button. The next time you click it, a [/U] tag is inserted to close the underlined text section.
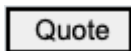
This button inserts the text between the opening and closing quote tags as a "quote". This is most useful when you are responding to a specific question or statement in a previous post. The quoted text will be shown indented in a quote "box" with the word "Quote:" above the box. If you are responding to an previous post (as compared to creating a new topic), the Quote button also inserts the body text from the previous posting between the start and end Quote tags. You can always edit the text that is within the quote tags. It's a good idea to only quote a single sentence or short section so that readers understand what you are responding to.
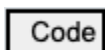
This button formats the text between the open [code] and close [/code] tags similarly to a quote section with a fixed-width font so that all characters are the same width and it's easier to line up various rows of text. This is most commonly used for showing programming code, but you can use it for any purpose. Note that the actual output may depend on the reader's browser.

This button starts an unordered (bulleted) list. Each line between the opening [list] and closing [/list] tag will be formatted starting with a bullet.

This button is similar to the List button except that it starts an ordered list. The list can be either numbered, by inserting a "1" after the equal sign in the opening tag (i.e. [list=1], or the list can use successive letters or roman numerals if you add the letter "a" for an alphabetically numbered list or "i" for a roman numeral numbered list.
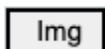
This button inserts an image in your posting from the internet. Click the Img button and then insert a URL to a picture that is publicly available on the internet. The click the Img button again to close the image tags.
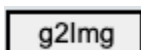
This button inserts an image from the Selene Gallery. However, unlike the IMG button above, this button not only inserts the tag, but it also opens an "image browser" window that lets you navigate through the images contained in the Selene gallery and insert a link to one of those images in your posting. You can insert multiple images from the gallery by selecting an image and clicking the "Insert" button in the image chooser dialog. When you're done inserting images, click the in the image chooser window.

URL This button inserts a link to another web page. Click the button once, then type or paste in the address (URL) of the page you want to link to. Close the link by clicking the URL button again, to insert the closing tag.

Note

While these BBCode buttons allow you to insert a variety of formatting into your posts, be aware that the formatting may not be preserved for postings that are sent to users via email. Users can choose to receive posting email in "plain text" format, in which case, they will see the BBCode tags—not the formatted text. Also, images may be either imbedded in the post or sent as attachments, depending on the user's email subscription settings.

Learning more about BBCode

Want to know more about BBCode? Here's a reference page for BBCode: https://www.phpbb.com/community/help/bbcode#f3r0. Keep in mind that not all of the tags and options described on this page are implemented on the Selene Owner's site.

Choosing options for your posting

In addition to the formatting options described above, there are also several options that enable or disable certain formatting options. If you intend to use either BBCode or HTML to format your posting, be sure that the options to disable BBCode or HTML are not checked before you submit the posting.

There is also an option in this list for receiving notification when a user replies to your posting. Note that this functionality is different than subscribing to receive postings via email. This option simply notifies you when someone replies to your posting. You'll still need to login to the web site to read the postings and replies.

Adding Attachments to your posting

You can add attachments to your posting using the "Add an Attachment" section of the posting screen. Only certain types of files are allowed and the size of attachments is limited to 4 Megabytes. Click the "Allowed Extensions and Sizes" link to see details of what file types are allowed and the size limitations.

To add an attachment to your posting, click the "Choose File" button under "Add an Attachment". Choose a file from your computer to attach. You can optionally add a comment about the file in the comment box. Click the "Add Attachment" button to add the attachment to your posting.

Creating a Poll

There are times when it's helpful to ask a question and allow users to "vote" for one of multiple answers. The "Add a Poll" function allows you to create this special kind of post. Users can vote on the poll by logging into the site.

Note

*Polls are not supported in email-delivered postings. Your
poll question will be sent to email subscribers, but users
have to log into the web site to vote for one of the options.*

Previewing Your Post

It's often helpful to see what your posting will look like before you submit it. You can click the "Preview" button at the bottom of the screen (next to Submit). The posting screen will be re-drawn with a section at the top that shows what the posting will look like on the web site. Again, keep in mind that this preview will not necessarily reflect what the posting will look like when it is delivered via email.

The preview screen also includes the same post editing fields below the preview window, so you can make changes to your posting and preview it again to view the changes.

Help! My partially complete posting disappeared!

The Selene Owner's site has a one-hour inactivity timeout. This means that if you don't submit a page or move to a new page on the site within one hour, your login session is automatically terminated for security reasons.

One side effect of this security timeout is that if you work on a posting or a reply for over an hour without ever submitting the posting, you may find that when you submit the posting, the site takes you back to the login screen and your posting disappears.

You can avoid this situation by periodically clicking the "Preview" button, which causes the posting page to be submitted and re-drawn (though your posting is not actually submitted to the forum) and the security timeout is reset for another hour.

Another approach is to compose longer postings in a separate text editor and cut and paste the text into the Message Body box on the posting screen. However, there can also be challenges with this approach because many text editors—especially more advanced editors like Microsoft Word or similar applications—insert a variety of non-standard characters into the text that when pasted into the message body for a posting may give unexpected results.

Replying to posts on the website

Replying to a post is very similar to creating a new topic. To reply, open a topic by clicking on the topic in the forum's topic list screen. Then click the Post Reply button to reply to the main posting. Your reply will be added to the bottom of the reply list.

You can also click the "Quote" button in any of the postings, including the original post or any of the current replies. When you click the Quote button, the text of the posting or reply that you clicked the Quote button in is inserted in Quote BBCode tags at the top of the message body box. You can add your response or even edit the quoted text. You

should not edit the BBCode tags unless you are familiar with BBCode syntax and options.

Even when you reply to an earlier reply, your reply will be added to the bottom of the list of replies. The replies are always shown in the topic screen in the order they were received, starting with the original posting and proceeding down the screen toward the latest received reply.

The topic screen is configured to show a maximum of 15 postings, including the original topic and all replies on a single posting page. If the number of replies exceeds 14, additional pages will automatically be created and a link to the later pages of replies is shown at bottom of each topic screen and also on the topic list screen.

The options for formatting, adding attachments, and previewing the post are all the same as described earlier for creating a new topic.

Receiving Postings Via Email

Users have the option of subscribing to receive postings via email from each individual forum. Click the "Email Subscriptions" button at the top of each forum page, or at the top of the main profile page to view and modify your email subscriptions. Figure 5 shows the email subscriptions page.

The screen is divided into three sections. Let's begin with the bottom section: current subscriptions.

Current Email Subscriptions

If you are currently subscribed to receive email from any of the forums, the forums you are subscribed to will be listed in the bottom section of the screen. By default, new users are not subscribed to any of the forums, so this section of the screen may not even be shown if you're not subscribed to any forums.

Notice that the name of the forum (e.g. "Main Discussion Group") is listed on the left with arrows pointing toward the name of the email list and the email address for that list. In this case, the "Main Discussion Forum" uses the email address: forum@seleneowners.org.

Unsubscribing to a forum is easy. Simply click the checkbox next to the forum you want to unsubscribe to and click the "Unsubscribe selected" button. When you do, a few seconds later, the screen will be redrawn and the forum you unsubscribed to will disappear from this list, and re-appear in the New subscriptions list in the section above this.

New Subscriptions

The middle section of the screen (or the bottom if you are not currently subscribed to any forums) shows the available forums that you can subscribe to and shows the email address that corresponds to that forum.

To subscribe to receive email postings from a forum, click the checkbox next to the forum you want to subscribe to and click the "Subscribe selected" button to subscribe to email from the selected forum(s).

You can individually select to receive email from some forums and not others. You can always read all the forums you have access to on the web site, even if you don't subscribe to receive postings via email.
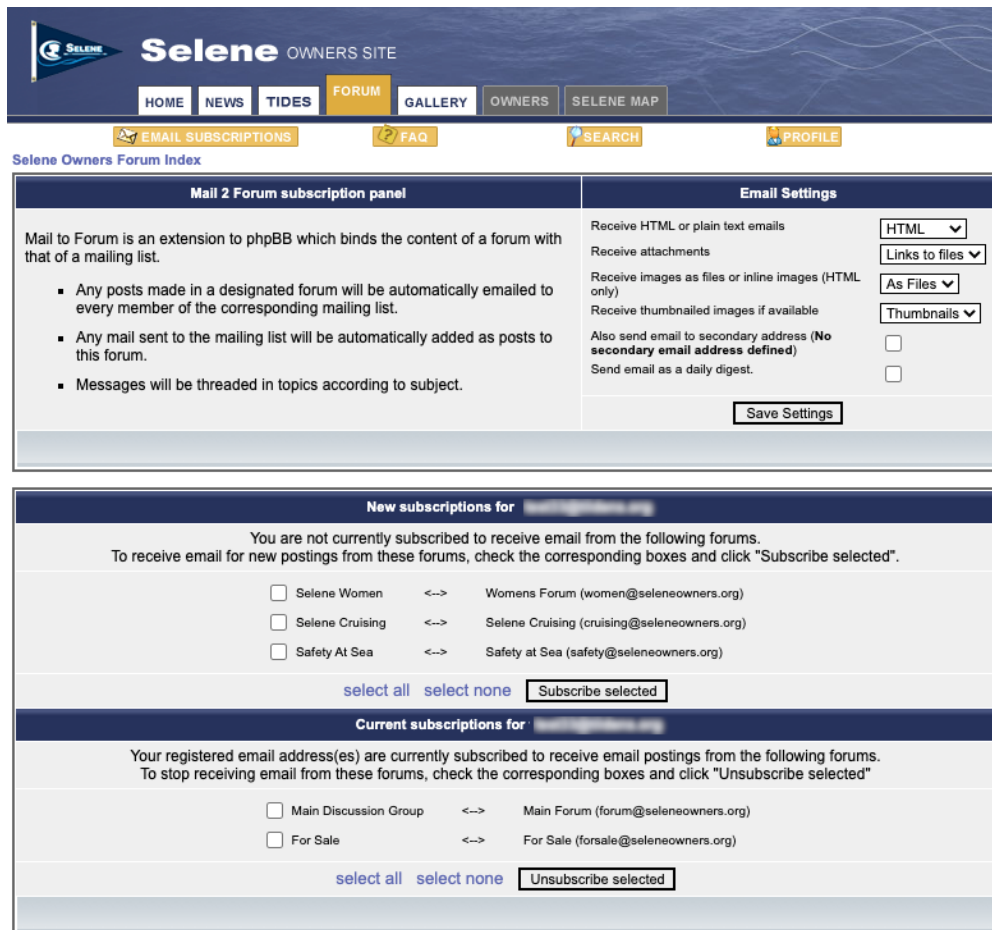

Figure 5. The Email subscriptions page allows you to subscribe to receive postings via email from each of the forums individually, as well as set a variety of options for your email subscription.

Email Settings

The box in the upper right corner of the Email Subscriptions screen provides several options for how you receive emails. These settings apply to <u>all</u> the forums you subscribe to. You cannot choose these settings individually for each forum.

HTML or plain text email

You can choose to receive emails in HTML or plain text format. Plain text is the most universal and will work with virtually any email client application. HTML format preserves more of the text formatting, but may not be compatible or may be more difficult to read with some email programs. You can always change this option if you have difficulty reading the email postings.

Receive attachments

You can elect to receive attachments to postings as links to files on the web site, attachments to the email, or ignore attachments altogether. Links to files reduces the size of the incoming email, but requires you to download the attachments separately, while attachments to the email are downloaded with the email.

Receive images

You can also elect to receive images that are in postings either as "in-line" images (i.e. the images are imbedded directly in the email body) or as attached files. Note that this setting applies only if you select HTML format for receiving emails.

Receive thumbnail images

If thumbnails (i.e. small versions of the image) are available, you can elect to receive thumbnails instead of the full-size image. Thumbnails are only available in some circumstances, so full-size images will be included or attached if thumbnails are not available.

Send email to secondary address

You can optionally specify a secondary email address in your user profile. If you specify a secondary address, you can check this box to receive the email postings at both your primary and your secondary email address.

Send Email as a daily digest

By default, you will receive an individual email for each posting or reply within a few minutes of when the posting is submitted. You can also elect to receive a "daily digest" which is a single email sent each day around midnight US Central Standard Time that contains all of the postings submitted during that day, with links imbedded to the various postings on the web site. This reduces the amount of email you receive from the forum, but mean that you won't receive postings until a set time each day.

It's also a little more difficult to reply to postings via email because you'll be replying to a combined email with all of the postings. It's best to extract from the digest email the

specific posting you want to reply to or reply via the web site using the links imbedded in the digest email.

Keep in mind that this setting applies to all of the forums you are subscribed to. You cannot choose to receive a digest for one forum and individual emails for another forum.

Sending Postings Via Email

Regardless of whether you subscribe to receive postings via email, a registered user can always send postings or replies via email by sending email to the appropriate address for each forum. The email addresses for each forum are listed on the Email subscriptions page.

You must send email posting from one of the email addresses in your profile. If you send a posting from an email address that is not in your profile, the email will be ignored. You will not receive any bounce or other message in response. This is to protect the forum from being used to distribute junk mail.

If you regularly use more than one email address (e.g. a home email and a work email), it's a good idea to add your secondary email address to your profile, even if you don't turn email delivery on the secondary email address. You can always submit postings from either your primary or secondary email address, whether you receive messages on the secondary address or not.

Caution

If you regularly set a "vacation" auto-responder when you are on vacation, please remember to disable your email subscriptions to the Selene Owner's forum. Otherwise, your auto-responder may submit "I'm on vacation" auto-response messages to each posting it receives. The site cannot differentiate these from valid replies, so your vacation auto-responder may flood the site with unnecessary vacation response emails.

It can 15 minutes or more for a posting you submit via email to appear on the site because the software checks the posting inboxes approximately every 15 minutes, so if your email arrives immediately after the last check, it may be 15 minutes before your posting is read and inserted into the forum.

Also, outgoing messages can take considerably longer because the site must "throttle" the volume of outgoing mail to stay within the restrictions of our low-cost hosting provider. As a result, it could take as much as an hour for new postings to be sent to email subscribers. In most cases, the time is considerably shorter, but on busy days with many postings, email output may be delayed by the limits of our hosing provider.

Searching the Forums

The Selene Owner's forum function includes a relatively simple search feature that can help you locate postings in any or all of the forums. To use the Search function, click the Search button at the top of any forum page.

You can search for postings based on keywords and require the search to match all the words you enter, or match any individual word. You can construct more sophisticated searches using the keywords "AND", "OR", and "NOT" to define specific patterns of words that should be included in the search results.

You can specify whether the keywords can be found in the message body only or the message body or the topic title.

You can also search for postings by Author, where the "author" is the username of a particular user (i.e. not their real first or last name).

You can search an individual forum or all the available forums. Only owners can search the "Owners Only" forum.

You can also search all postings or limit the search results to postings made within the most recent period you specify, from 1 day to 1 year.

The search results are return in a format similar to the topic list screen when you click on a forum in the main forum list screen.

Note

Unfortunately, the forum search engine is not as sophisticated as some of the more modern search engines available today that will search for alternate spellings or phrases. Your search result is based on exactly what you type, though it is not case sensitive.

I wish the forum had this feature…

The Selene Owner's site was built with a combination of some "open source" key components as well as a significant amount of custom software to integrate the components and provide unique functionality.

The forum software is based on an open source package called phpBB. See (https://www.phpbb.com/). It's also a relatively old version of phpBB (V2.0.23) because it was pretty significantly modified for our uses, so upgrades are challenging to integrate.

The email posting functionality is based on another open-source package called "Mail 2 Forum" (see: https://sourceforge.net/projects/m2f/), which was also fairly extensively modified for our specific purposes.

As a result, adding features may, or may not be practical. We're always open for suggestions, but please keep in mind that this site was built and is maintained on an entirely on a volunteer basis. There is no paid staff enhancing or maintaining the site.