VT Halter Marine, Inc.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jeanne Kouhestani, NOAA
(301) 713-3431, ext. 220
Cynthia Borries, VT Halter Marine
(228) 897-4985

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VT Halter Marine and NOAA Launch Hi-Tech Fisheries Survey Vessel; Announce Contract Award for Second Vessel

Gulfport, MS, October 17, 2003 - VT Halter Marine Inc. and the U.S. Commerce Department's NOAA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, today launched the first of four planned NOAA fisheries survey vessels. Christened *Oscar Dyson* by Mrs. Peggy Dyson-Malson, wife of the late Alaska fisheries industry leader for whom it is named, the ship will be one of the most technologically advanced fisheries survey vessels in the world.

Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), the scheduled keynote speaker, was unable to attend the ceremony at the VT Halter Marine shipyard in Moss Point, Miss. because of a late breaking vote on the Senate floor. The senator was instrumental in gaining congressional funding for the new ship; his wife, Catherine Stevens, is a sponsor of *Oscar Dyson*.

"Oscar Dyson was a North Pacific fisheries pioneer and an industry leader and a great personal friend," Stevens said from his Washington D.C. office. "It is an honor to his memory and for Alaska to have this NOAA research vessel named after him. The community of Kodiak will be proud to have this vessel honoring one of its favorite sons homeported in their harbor."

At the ceremony, retired navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator, announced that NOAA has exercised its contract option with VT Halter Marine Inc. to build a second fisheries survey vessel of the same design for $38.8 million. VT Halter Marine began construction of the new ship (FSV #2) yesterday, kicking it off with a steel-cutting ceremony. FSV #2 will replace *Albatross IV* in New England, which is more than 40 years old.

Approximately 150 VT Halter Marine employees will be working on the two NOAA ships over the next three years. If the additional two planned FSVs are funded, that time span will extend to more than six years.

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"Improvement of marine fisheries management is one of the President's four core focuses for the Department of Commerce as well as a NOAA strategic goal," Lautenbacher said. "Launching *Oscar Dyson* today and exercising the option for the second vessel are both important steps forward in supporting this goal with modern platforms. These ships will provide higher quality data to fisheries managers about targeted fish populations and the environment that sustains them."

"VT Halter Marine's unique ability to design and construct sophisticated 'quiet' oceanic research vessels such as the *Oscar Dyson* is recognized globally and affirmed by the fact that NOAA selected us for this very significant program," said Boyd King, VT Halter Marine chief executive officer. "The *Oscar Dyson* is a leading edge research vessel with the ability to conduct fisheries research and oceanography simultaneously throughout the world's oceans."

The christening and launching of a ship is the second major milestone in its construction (the keel laying is the first). *Oscar Dyson* is expected to be commissioned and become operational in late 2004. The ship, which will not replace an existing NOAA ship, will be home ported in Kodiak, Alaska; its primary mission will be to monitor the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska fisheries and ecosystems, particularly the multi-billion dollar Alaskan pollock fishery, one of the nation's largest.

Oscar Dyson is the first of four planned 208 ft. fisheries survey ships to be built by VT Halter Marine that will either augment or replace aging ships in the NOAA fleet. Its capabilities will far exceed those of older NOAA ships. It has been built to meet very specific data collection requirements of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service as well as to meet tough standards for a low acoustic signature–an important feature as a quiet ship won't disturb the fish it is trying to study--set by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas.

ICES is a European-based organization that has developed a set of standards to optimize the effectiveness of fisheries research and facilitate international exchange of comparable data. *Oscar Dyson* and its future sister ships will also be able to do heavy trawling while collecting environmental data, a combined capability unavailable in the private sector.

"We're very pleased with the partnership between NOAA and VT Halter Marine, and expect *Oscar Dyson* and its sister ships will reflect the quality that VT Halter is known for," said Lautenbacher. "We are looking forward to the delivery of this new class of ship, as it will help NOAA provide excellent data to our scientists to assess the health of fisheries populations that sustain livelihoods. We're also glad to be contributing to the economic health of Mississippi through this major contract."

The third planned FSV is expected to replace *Oregon II,* homeported in Pascagoula, Miss.

The NOAA fleet of research and survey ships and aircraft is operated, managed, and maintained by NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations. NMAO includes commissioned officers of the NOAA Corps and civilians. The NOAA Corps is the nation's seventh and smallest uniformed service, and, as part of NOAA, is under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Corps is composed of officers – all scientists or engineers – who provide NOAA with an important blend of operational, management and technical skills that support the agency's environmental programs at sea, in the air, and ashore.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit http://www.noaa.gov.

VT Halter Marine Inc., based out of Gulfport, Miss., is a leader in the design and construction of small- to medium-sized ships in the United States. VT Halter Marine designs, builds and repairs a wide variety of ocean-going vessels such as patrol vessels, oil recovery vessels, oil cargo vessels, ferries, ocean barges and research ships. It is a subsidiary of Vision Technologies Systems Inc., a preferred provider of integrated engineering solutions, specializing in the fields of marine, aerospace, electronics and land systems. Headquartered in Alexandria, Va., VTS is located throughout North America. VTS offers a broad range of proven innovative services to both the commercial and government sectors. VTS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Singapore Technologies Engineering. To learn more about VT Halter Marine, please visit http://www.vthaltermarine.com.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Pictures of the launch will be posted this afternoon on the NOAA Web site by approximately 3:00 p.m., EST. Please see lead story on www.noaa.gov for the appropriate links. A five-minute satellite feed of launch highlights will be available today at 5:00 p.m. EST, as follows:

Date: 10/17/03
Time: 1700 - 1710 EST
(5 p.m. - Washington, D.C.; 4 p.m., Gulfport/Biloxi; 2 p.m. - Seattle;
1 p.m. - Anchorage/Kodiak)

Telstar 6
K19 D01

Downlink Frequency: 12042.125 Vertical
Data Rate: 5.5 MBPS
FEC: 3/4 (3 over 4)
Symbol Rate 3.9787