

# VT Halter Marine, Inc.



## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Contact: Jeanne Kouhestani, NOAA  
(301) 713-3431, ext. 220  
(301) 538-6979 (cell, May 21)  
[jeanne.g.kouhestani@noaa.gov](mailto:jeanne.g.kouhestani@noaa.gov)  
Cynthia Borries, VT Halter Marine  
Margaret Gambrell, VT Halter Marine  
(228) 596-9549 (cell, May 21)  
[c.borries@vthaltermarine.com](mailto:c.borries@vthaltermarine.com)

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### **VT Halter Marine and NOAA to Hold Keel Laying Ceremony for Second New Fisheries Survey Vessel**

*Henry B. Bigelow Named by New Hampshire School in Ship-Naming Contest*

Pascagoula, Miss. – To celebrate a major milestone in constructing the second of the world's most technologically advanced fisheries research vessels, VT Halter Marine Inc. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are holding a traditional keel laying ceremony at VT Halter Marine's Moss Point shipyard today. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Senator Trent Lott (R-Miss.), Senator Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) and his wife, Kathy, who is the sponsor of the ship, will attend the ceremony as the keel-laying authenticators whose names will be engraved on the keel plate. With help from one of the shipyard's welders, they will strike welding arcs on a steel plate to complete the spelling of their names. That plate will be incorporated into the ship during construction.

Mrs. Gregg will christen the ship when it is launched next year from the VT Halter Marine shipyard.

"We'd like to thank Senators Gregg, Lott and Cochran for their support in obtaining funding for this new ship," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Today's event is especially significant for NOAA in several respects. Building this second vessel will help us better assess the health of the country's marine fish stocks and is a much needed step in modernizing our aging fleet of NOAA research vessels. But to make it special, we asked New England students to help us name the vessel as a way to encourage them to learn more about the science behind the marine and coastal resources at their backdoor."

The ship is the first vessel to be named by students through a NOAA educational outreach contest. A team of five students and their marine biology teacher from Winnacunnet High School in Hampton, N.H., won the "Name NOAA's New Ship" contest, which ran from October 2003 through January 2004. The contest, created to encourage interest in scientific studies, was opened to students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the six New England states. The winning team produced an innovative project that encourages learning, and also supported their selection of a ship name honoring a distinguished oceanographer from New England. The students and their teacher will attend the keel laying ceremony today as guests of NOAA.

The ship is named after Dr. Henry Bryant Bigelow, a renowned oceanographer, who worked as a researcher, instructor and professor of zoology at Harvard from 1906 to 1962, and founder of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1931. He transformed the Gulf of Maine from a scientific unknown to one of the most thoroughly studied large bodies of water in the world, and in doing so, developed the interdisciplinary, ecosystem-oriented approach that characterizes modern oceanography.

*Henry B. Bigelow* is the second fisheries survey vessel that VT Halter Marine is building for NOAA to either augment or replace aging vessels in the fleet. If funded, an additional two ships of the same class will be built. The ships will support NOAA research, which is the scientific basis for conservation and management of fisheries and marine ecosystems. *Bigelow* will be home ported in New England, replacing the 43-year-old *Albatross IV*. The ship will conduct fisheries research primarily in northeastern U.S. waters.

“We at VT Halter Marine are excited to commence work on this second very sophisticated fisheries survey vessel intended for the vital mission of protecting our world’s fisheries,” said Boyd E. King, CEO, VT Halter Marine. “VT Halter Marine’s design has met NOAA’s exacting specifications, allowing them to continue their important research and work. The men and women of VT Halter Marine are proud of their continued work on U.S. government projects that include multi-mission ships that serve our nation’s interests domestically and internationally.”

The 208-ft. ship is being built to meet the requirements of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service as well as tough acoustic quieting standards set by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES). This is a European-based organization that has developed a set of standards to optimize the effectiveness of fisheries research. NOAA fishery ships have highly specialized capabilities, such as performing hydro-acoustic surveys of fish, bottom and mid-water trawls, and running physical and biological-oceanographic sampling during a single deployment.

The ship’s many fisheries research missions will be run by the NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations, whose mission is to operate, manage and maintain the NOAA fleet of research and survey ships and aircraft. NMAO is composed of civilians and commissioned officers of the NOAA Corps, the nation’s seventh and smallest uniformed service. NOAA Corps officers - all scientists or engineers - provide NOAA with an important blend of operational, management and technical skills that support NOAA’s mission at sea, in the air and ashore. To learn more about NMAO and the NOAA Corps, please visit <http://www.nmao.noaa.gov>.

VT Halter Marine Inc., based in Pascagoula, 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, logistic support vessels and research ships. It is a subsidiary of Vision Technologies Systems Inc. (VTS), a provider of integrated engineering solutions, specializing in the fields of aerospace, electronics, land systems and marine. Headquartered in Alexandria, Va., VTS has locations throughout North America. VTS offers a broad range of proven innovative services to both the commercial and government sectors. To learn more about VT Halter Marine, please visit <http://www.vthaltermarine.com>.