

VT Halter Marine, Inc.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



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NOAA AND VT HALTER MARINE LAUNCH SECOND FISHERIES SURVEY VESSEL *Work Also Starts on Third Research Ship in Series*

VT Halter Marine, Inc. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration today launched the second of four planned NOAA fisheries survey vessels. The ship was christened *Henry B. Bigelow* by Catherine Silver of Winnacunnet High School in Hampton, N.H., on behalf of the ship's sponsor, Mrs. Judd Gregg, wife of the senior senator from New Hampshire. The ship will be one of the most technologically advanced fisheries survey vessels in the world when placed in operation in late 2006.

Mrs. Gregg was unable to attend the ceremony at the shipyard in Moss Point, Miss., but designated Silver as her representative. Silver was the team leader of students from Winnacunnet High School who won a regional NOAA contest in 2004 to name the ship. The students also participated in the ship's keel laying ceremony in May 2004. The contest was an educational initiative to help students learn more about their region's marine and coastal environment as well as to generate a greater interest in scientific studies.

"The christening of *Henry B. Bigelow* is a significant milestone in the modernization of our NOAA fleet," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "We appreciate the contribution Mrs. Gregg has made as the ship's sponsor and we are delighted that Ms. Silver was able to represent her, maintaining the close connection between the school and the vessel."

"We would also like to thank Senators Gregg, Cochran and Lott and Congressman Taylor for helping us obtain the funds to build this important asset as we carry out NOAA's mission to assess and protect the nation's living marine resources. *Henry B. Bigelow* and its sister ships will provide higher quality data to fisheries managers about targeted fish populations and the environment that sustains them," added Lautenbacher.

Henry B. Bigelow is the second of four planned 208 ft. fisheries survey vessels 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 specific data collection requirements of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service as well as to meet tough standards for a low acoustic signature set by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas. This feature will allow the ship to study fish quietly without altering their behavior. After calibration, the vessel will replace *Albatross IV*, and will be home ported in New England.

Construction of the third fisheries survey vessel was kicked off yesterday at VT Halter Marine's Moss Point shipyard. The vessel's base cost exceeds \$39 million. Approximately 150 VT Halter Marine employees will be working on the two NOAA ships over the next three years. This third research ship will be home ported in Pascagoula, Miss.

"VT Halter Marine has a proven global track record of designing and constructing ships that meet our clients' specific requirements. We are delighted to be working with NOAA on this sophisticated new class of quiet fisheries survey vessels that will greatly increase NOAA's technical capabilities at sea," said Boyd E. King, CEO of VT Halter Marine, Inc. "Work began yesterday on the next ship in this class, which speaks positively of NOAA's confidence in our ability to meet their high performance standards."

The ship's namesake, Henry B. Bigelow, was a renowned oceanographer who worked as a researcher, instructor and professor of zoology at Harvard from 1906 to 1962. He was also a founder of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1931. Bigelow transformed the Gulf of Maine from a scientific unknown to one of the most thoroughly studied bodies of water in the world and developed the interdisciplinary, ecosystem-oriented approach that characterizes modern oceanography. Several grandchildren of Bigelow attended the ceremony today, including Frederick S. Bigelow Jr. of Pennington, N.J., who was a speaker.

The NOAA fleet of research and survey ships and aircraft is operated, managed, and maintained by NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations (NMAO). 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.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, 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.

VT Halter Marine is the marine operations of Vision Technologies Systems. Based in Pascagoula, Miss., more than 2,600 vessels have been built at its facilities 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 survey vessels.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.com>

NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations: <http://www.nmao.noaa.gov>