

WHOI Takes Delivery of R/V Neil Armstrong



Following the successful completion of acceptance trials, the USA's newest research vessel, the Neil Armstrong, was officially turned over by the U.S. Navy on 23 September 2015 to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), which will operate the vessel as part of the national academic fleet.

WHOI will operate the *Neil Armstrong* for the benefit of the U.S. ocean science community, coordinating its schedule through the University National Oceanographic Laboratory System (UNOLS). WHOI's experienced crew, many of whom served on the *Knorr* and have won high praise for their professionalism and service to ocean science, will serve on the *Neil Armstrong*, with Captain Kent Sheasley in command.

Over the next month, the new ship, which is 238 feet long and can undertake missions of up to 40 days, will be outfitted with the essentials it needs for operation, spare parts, food stores and other basic equipment and consumables. In November, the ship will begin the transit to the U.S. East Coast, with scheduled stops in San Francisco and the Panama Canal. The vessel is scheduled to arrive in the southeast U.S. in December at a port and shipyard to be determined, where the ship's science equipment will be installed and tested, in particular its sonar systems and other sensors.

The ship is expected to undergo a series of shakedown and science verification cruises starting in February and March 2016, which will allow scientific users to test the ship and its systems and make any necessary adjustments before it is declared fully operational. The *Neil Armstrong*'s first science mission is planned for May 2016 in the North Atlantic.

In May 2010, the Office of Naval Research selected WHOI to operate the new vessel which is designed to meet the range, endurance and technical requirements for advanced oceanographic research around the world. Named after the Apollo astronaut who first walked on the moon, the *Neil Armstrong* replaces the recently retired R/V *Knorr*, which had been in operation since 1970. The new ship is to meet the academic community's need for a general-purpose research vessel based on the East Coast of the United States.

Image: Neil Armstrong docked. Image courtesy: Steve Berentson, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

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