

# High-tech Coastal Mapping Ship Commissioned



NOAA has commissioned a coastal mapping vessel, NOAA Ship Ferdinand R. Hassler, during a special ceremony at NOAA's Marine Operations Center-Atlantic in Norfolk, USA. The new ship's primary mission will be to detect and monitor changes to the sea floor. Data collected by the ship will be used to update nautical charts, detect potential hazards to navigation, and enhance understanding of the ever-changing marine environment.

Kathryn Sullivan, PhD, assistant secretary of commerce for environmental observation and prediction says that with the growth in the size of commercial vessels and the importance of waterborne commerce to the economic security, there is a critical need for accurate information about coastal waterways.

*Ferdinand R. Hassler* will operate mainly along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, Caribbean Sea and Great Lakes in support of the NOAA Office of Coast Survey's nautical charting mission. The 124-foot ship will conduct basic hydrographic surveys of the sea floor using side scan and multibeam sonar technologies. The ship is also equipped to deploy buoys and unmanned submersibles and conduct general oceanographic research. *Ferdinand R. Hassler's* twin-hull design is particularly suited to NOAA's mission to map the ocean floor, as it is more stable than a single-hull vessel.

The ship was named by a team of tenth-grade students and a teacher from Naugatuck High School in Naugatuck, who won a regional NOAA contest to name the vessel. The ship's namesake, Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler (1770-1843), served as the founding superintendent of the Coast Survey, the precursor to today's NOAA. The ship's sponsor, Catherine H. Sununu, wife of former New Hampshire U.S. Senator John Sununu, christened the vessel prior to the reading of the commissioning orders.

NOAA Ship *Ferdinand R. Hassler* is part of the NOAA fleet of ships and aircraft operated, managed and maintained by NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, which includes both civilians and the commissioned officers of the NOAA Corps, one of the seven uniformed services of the United States. The ship will be homeported in New Castle, New Hampshire.

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