

NOAA holds keel-laying ceremony for new charting and mapping vessel



A welder from Thoma-Sea Marine Constructors, LLC, welds the initials of the Surveyor's sponsor, Tracey L. Brennan, onto a steel plate that will be incorporated into the ship, in keeping with maritime tradition, at a keel-laying event for the new ship on August 14, 2025, in Houma, Louisiana. (Image credit: NOAA)

From Keeley Belva, NOAA, Aug. 14, 2025

NOAA leadership was joined by partners today to celebrate the keel-laying for Surveyor, a new charting and mapping vessel being constructed for NOAA. The vessel is being built by Thoma-Sea Marine Constructors, LLC., in Houma, Louisiana.

The keel-laying is a centuries-old maritime tradition that formally recognizes the start of a ship's construction. During today's ceremony, the initials of the ship's sponsor, Tracey Brennan, the widow of NOAA Corps [Rear Admiral Rick Brennan](#),

were welded onto a steel plate that will be incorporated into the ship during construction.

A welder from Thoma-Sea Marine Constructors welds the initials of the Surveyor's sponsor onto a plaque. Credit: NOAA

In 2023, NOAA announced [two new charting and mapping vessels](#) would be added to the NOAA fleet. Surveyor is expected to be completed in 2027 and Navigator in 2028. The ships will be used primarily for ocean mapping and nautical charting as part of NOAA's mission to deliver tools and information to help mariners safely navigate the nation's ports and harbors.

"NOAA ships are instrumental in surveying thousands of square miles of our nation's waters every year," said NOAA Corps Rear Adm. Chad Cary, director of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps and NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations. "These new, state-of-the-art ships are another milestone in NOAA's effort to recapitalize our aging fleet and ensure that we can continue to meet our mission to support safe navigation for years to come."

The name Surveyor points to one of NOAA's key missions – to conduct surveys of coasts and waterways – and is also the name of two former ships. Like its former namesakes, the new Surveyor will be homeported in Ketchikan, Alaska.

About NOAA's charting and navigation work

Data collected by NOAA ships are integrated into nautical charts and other products that are essential to mariners in U.S. waters. Since 1807, originally as the U.S. Coast Survey, NOAA has kept people and commerce moving safely through U.S. waters. Today, the agency supports nearly \$5.4 trillion in economic activity generated by U.S. ports each year, and ensuring safe, efficient navigation remains a central focus.