

US Navy to Christen Future USNS Billy Frank Jr.



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MOBILE, Ala.—The U.S. Navy will christen the future USNS Billy Frank Jr. (T-ATS 11) during a ceremony on Saturday, March 29, at 10:00 a.m. CDT at Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama.

The Honorable William Frank III, former chairman of the Nisqually Tribe and son of the ship's namesake will deliver the principal address followed by remarks from Dr. Brett Seidle, acting assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition; Rear Adm. Thomas Anderson, program executive officer, Program Executive Office, Ships; Rear Adm. Mark Haigis, deputy commander, Military Sealift Command; and Michelle Kruger, president of Austal USA.

In a time-honored Navy tradition, Ship Sponsor Peggen Frank will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow. Frank is the executive director of Salmon Defense and daughter-in-law of the ship's namesake.

The ship is named in honor of Korean War veteran and Nisqually tribal member Billy Frank Jr., who received an Albert Schweitzer Prize for humanitarianism; a Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Service Award; and, posthumously, a Presidential Medal of Freedom for his over 30-years of service to the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

The Navajo-class ship is a multi-mission, common hull platform that will deploy to support a range of missions such as towing, rescue, salvage, humanitarian assistance, oil spill response, and wide-area search and surveillance. Navajo-class ships will be capable of towing U.S. Navy ships and will have 6,000 square feet of deck space for embarked systems.