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NERNR07-09
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 6, 2007

**NEW NOAA RESEARCH VESSEL *HENRY BIGELOW* SCIENCE LABS
OPEN FOR PUBLIC TOURS
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center is sponsoring guided public tours of the new NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow* on Saturday, August 11th from 2:30 until 6:00 PM at Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay.

Tours will include the ship's main science and support labs, and the state-of-the-art fish handling station. Scientists and technicians will be on hand with displays and demonstrations, ready to answer questions about the vessel's new capabilities and how they will be used.

Visitors should wear closed-toed shoes and adults need to bring a photo ID. All children visiting the vessel must be accompanied by an adult. The ship is not wheelchair accessible. Visitors will board and debark over railed gangplanks. Doorway hatches have 5-to-15-inch thresholds that must be stepped over.

The 208.6-foot, \$60 million ship was built to meet the research requirements of NMFS and will operate principally in the Northeast, supporting the research mission of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center.

The ship is the second of four in its class commissioned by NOAA and designed and built by VT Halter Marine Inc. in Moss Point, Miss. The *Henry B. Bigelow* and her sister ships are so quiet that they can study fish and other marine animals without significantly altering their behavior. Also, the ships can conduct bottom and mid-water trawls while running physical and biological-oceanographic sampling during a single deployment.

The *Henry B. Bigelow* was named for the founding director of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution through a naming contest among school students, won by a team from Winnacunnet High School in Hampton, N.H. It will replace the NOAA Ship *Albatross IV*, which has conducted fisheries research cruises in the northeast since 1962.

The *Henry B. Bigelow's* commanding officer is Commander Stephen Beckwith, a NOAA Corps officer. The NOAA Corps is one of the nation's seven uniformed services. Officers, who are scientists or engineers, command the agency's research and survey ships and aircraft, and serve in billets on shore, bringing their operational expertise to NOAA programs. The ship's civilian crew includes highly skilled wage mariners.