



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact: Lou Cafiero
240-205-0400
David Hall
301-713-3066

For Immediate Release
June 23, 2008

NOAA to Christen New Research Vessel R/V *Manta* at Galveston Ceremony; Vessel will serve NOAA's Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary

NOAA's Flower Garden Bank National Marine Sanctuary will host the christening and official dedication of the newest and largest state-of-the-art research vessel in the sanctuary fleet, the R/V *Manta*, a high-speed aluminum hull catamaran that will greatly enhance the NOAA's ability to study and protect the fragile marine ecosystem of the Flower Garden Banks and Gulf of Mexico waters from its Galveston, Texas, home base.

WHAT: Christening and dedication of the R/V *Manta*

WHEN: June 27, 2008
9:30 a.m. ceremony
11:00 a.m. vessel tour

WHERE: Pier 21, Galveston, Texas

WHO: James Connaughton, chairman, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Tim Keeney, deputy assistant secretary for oceans and atmosphere, NOAA
Sylvia Earle, National Geographic Explorer in Residence
Ted Lillestollen, deputy director for vessels, aircraft and safety, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
G.P. Schmahl, superintendent, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

Built in Bellingham, Wash., by All American Marine, the 83-foot, twin-hulled *Manta* is a highly maneuverable vessel equipped with a laboratory, air compressors to allow divers to refill scuba tanks at sea, and a recompression chamber to enhance diver safety. The vessel can hold up to 14 people, deploy robot subs and other ocean exploration tools, and cruise at speeds up to 35 knots.

Photo and video opportunities will be available. For more information about the Flower Garden Bank National Marine Sanctuary visit <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>.