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Senator Gregg Visits Future Site of UNH Marine Lab to Announce \$5 Million in Funding for NOAA Research Vessel

*SWATH vessel will help update nautical
charts and assist UNH ocean mapping
research*

By [Sharon Keeler](#)
UNH News Bureau

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NEW CASTLE, N.H. -- United States Senator Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) used today's visit to the Coast Guard Station in New Castle to announce \$5 million in initial federal funding for a new \$14 million National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research vessel that will be permanently based at the University of New Hampshire's new pier.

Gregg was joined by Coast Guard Station Commander Mark Cutter, UNH President Joan Leitzel, Deputy Under Secretary of NOAA Scott Gudes, Coast Guard Deputy Group Commander Mark McKenna, Co-Director of the NOAA-UNH Joint Hydrographic Center Andy Armstrong, and Director of UNH's Coastal Marine Laboratory Hunt Howell in making the announcement.

"The University of New Hampshire has once again proven itself to be a national leader in the fields of marine biology and hydrographic technology," said Gregg. "UNH and NOAA have formed a valuable partnership that will allow scientists to perform cutting-edge research at this facility. Working jointly with the Coast Guard will ensure that enhanced homeland security patrols continue. I look forward to continuing to work in the Senate to assist the Coast Guard better enhance its efforts to keep New Hampshire's coastline secure and the university's efforts to continue its innovative and valuable research."

Gregg's visit follows last year's announcement that he had secured \$14 million and a transfer of land from the Coast Guard for UNH to develop a new Coastal Marine Laboratory and pier near the Coast Guard Station. The laboratory will sit on 5.5 acres of land and provide support for the open ocean aquaculture project as well as the Joint Hydrographic Center.

"I want to thank Senator Judd Gregg for his continuous support of marine-related programs and research at the university, from his efforts in securing money for the new pier and marine laboratory, to support for our open ocean aquaculture project and the NOAA-UNH Joint Hydrographic Center," said Leitzel. "I also want to thank the Coast Guard for its hospitality and for being such a valuable partner. This new vessel is a valuable asset for our faculty and our students, and will help them advance state-of-the-art ocean mapping technologies. We are happy that UNH's new pier will be its home berth."

The vessel, called a Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull (SWATH), will significantly enhance three important NOAA missions: hydrographic technology research and development at the Joint Hydrographic Center, acquisition of high priority hydrographic survey data for safe navigation, and technical support for NOAA's coastal stewardship responsibilities.

"Due to Senator Gregg's leadership, NOAA will have a new platform to address its hydrographic survey backlog in the New England area, and an ideal test platform for research and development conducted at the NOAA-UNH Joint Hydrographic Center," said Gudes.

The SWATH's innovative design, constructed similar to a catamaran with main portions of the cross-section of the hull submerged to minimize ship motion, will greatly improve the quality and focus of the Joint Hydrographic Center effort.

"The vessel's primary mission will be operational hydrography for nautical charting," said Armstrong. "The charted depths in large areas of northeastern coastal waters are based on depths acquired more than 50 years ago with lead lines or widely spaced echo soundings. The SWATH will be ideally suited for the installation and testing of new sonars and other ocean

mapping sensors, and will have lab and computer space suitable for testing new electronic charting and ocean mapping concepts. Basing the ship in New Castle will greatly enhance the opportunities for interaction between the operational hydrographic program and the research and development program at the Joint Hydrographic Center."

Senator Gregg was able to direct \$3.33 million in funding to the Joint Hydrographic Center in Fiscal Year 2002, bringing the total assistance secured by him to \$10.4 million for the center over the last four years.

The center, established at UNH in June 1999, now boasts more than a dozen scientists and is internationally recognized for its innovative work in the field of ocean floor mapping. It develops and evaluates a range of state-of-the-art hydrographic and ocean mapping technologies and promotes and fosters the education of a new generation of hydrographers and mapping scientists.

This new funding announced today by Gregg will be used to start engineering and design work on the SWATH vessel. The timetable for building is dependent on the appropriation of further funding, but the earliest time it is expected to be operational is late 2004 or early 2005.

Appledore Engineering of Portsmouth is preparing the design for the new UNH pier. Construction is expected to begin this fall and will require a little more than a year to complete. The process to select an architect to design the new Coastal Marine Laboratory is being completed, and actual design will commence by the end of March.

For more information, contact Larry Mayer, UNH Co-Director of the NOAA-UNH Joint Hydrographic Center, at 603-862-2615, or Andy Armstrong, NOAA Co-Director at 603-862-4559. EDITORS/NEWS DIRECTORS:

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