

Arctic Seafloor Mapping Project Web Site - [arcticseafloormapping.gov](http://arcticseafloormapping.gov)

## Healy on the Bering Sea

August 3, 2010

By Helen Gibbons, Web Coordinator, ECS Project

We're off! The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* has come to life and is moving gently with the swells as we sail north through the Bering Sea. Right now we are on a transit from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to our rendezvous with the Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Louis S. St-Laurent*, aka *Louis* (pronounced "Louie"), in the Arctic Ocean north of Canada's Mackenzie River delta. In good visibility and mild (2- to 4-foot) seas, the ship is making about 16 knots (18 mph). At times, turbine engines wind down as fog slows our speed to less than 10 knots (11 mph). So far, it's a smooth ride.

During previous joint Arctic mapping missions (2008 and 2009), members of the science crew were helicoptered onto *Healy* from the town of Barrow on Alaska's Arctic coast. For this year's mission, we met the ship in Dutch Harbor, the site of a military base built during World War II and now a large fishing port in the eastern Aleutian Islands. "Dutch," as it is generally known, was chosen as a convenient place to embark scientific personnel, refuel, and reprovision after two long previous missions.

Dutch is situated on Amaknak Island, which is virtually surrounded by the much larger Unalaska Island. The city of Unalaska, of which Dutch is a part, grew from an Aleutian settlement on the larger island. Many of us arrived a day or two early and enjoyed exploring local attractions, such as the Museum of the Aleutians, a Russian Orthodox church built in Unalaska in 1825, and the remnants of bunkers and other military installations on Amaknak. The steep



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* is sailing north through the Bering Sea, headed for the Bering Strait, as I write (Tuesday morning, August 3). We'll be much farther north by the time you read this! Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Graphic by Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project; modified from map by Natural Resources Canada, 2008, North Circumpolar Region, in [Atlas of Canada](#).



*Healy* docked in Dutch Harbor. The fog in the background is typical, and occasionally so thick that flights from Anchorage have to turn around and go back without landing. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



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mountains mantled in soft green vegetation—plus the absence of bears, snakes, ticks, and poison oak—made hiking especially appealing.



Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Ascension, built in 1825 in Unalaska. If you look closely, you can see a bald eagle perched on the righthand steeple. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



Dwarf dogwood, Amaknak Island. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



A few of us took a hike up Mount Ballyhoo on Amaknak Island. Here near the top is Peter Triezenberg, U.S. Geological Survey geologist who will be processing gravity data and chirp seismic-reflection data during the mission. Some of the port facilities of Dutch Harbor are visible to the left of Peter. The mountains in the background are on Unalaska Island, a much larger island that virtually surrounds Amaknak. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project

We unmoored and departed shortly after 3 p.m. yesterday, and as I write, we have come more than 250 nautical miles north-northeast and are approximately at latitude 58°N and longitude 168°W. We'll spend about 5 days in transit, passing through the Bering Strait, across the Arctic Circle, and through the Arctic Ocean to our rendezvous with *Louis*. The transit will give us a little extra time to become familiar with the ship (I'm still getting lost in the maze of passageways!), learn more about our scientific duties, and get better acquainted with our shipmates. Now that we're aboard, we've shared lots of meals in the mess, had orientation and safety meetings with the Coast Guard crew, and held our first scientific meeting. The Coasties are extremely capable, friendly, and supportive, and the scientific crew is almost scary in its collective knowledge and experience of all the topics we intend to study. Everyone's fired up, and it's great to be underway!

Check out a few more photos, below.



Andy Stevenson, U.S. Geological Survey geologist who will help lead seafloor-sampling operations, enjoys the view from aft of the bridge as we depart Dutch Harbor. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



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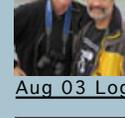
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Coast Guard crew on the foc's'le "strike the lines belowdecks" (put the mooring lines into a storage area below the deck) as *Healy* heads for the passage that will take her into the Bering Sea. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



Conning officer Nick Custer (in doorway, monitoring the ship's position as it moves away from the dock in Dutch Harbor) calls commands to helmsman Dierdre Gray (far right), who repeats and executes each command. Only two or three watchstanders are required when the ship is underway, but the bridge is busy with additional personnel during arrivals and departures. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



Many of us gathered aft of the bridge for good views of the departure from Dutch Harbor. Here are mission chief scientist Brian Edwards (left; U.S. Geological Survey) and ice expert Pablo Clemente-Colón (Senior Science Advisor, Naval/National Ice Center). Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Helen Gibbons, USGS/ECS Project



Yours truly, standing on the flying bridge as we sail north from Dutch Harbor on August 2, 2010. Click image for larger view. **Credit:** Caroline Singler, NOAA Teacher at Sea/ECS Project.



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