

Keel-laying ceremony to be held April 11 for R/V Sikuliaq

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Marinette, Wisconsin—The University of Alaska Fairbanks and Marinette Marine Corporation will host a keel-laying ceremony for the R/V Sikuliaq at 3:30 p.m. Monday, April 11, at Marinette Marine Corporation in Marinette, Wis.

The 261-foot oceanographic research ship, formerly known as the Alaska Region Research Vessel, will be owned by the National Science Foundation and operated by UAF.

The ceremony will include an invocation for the ship and remarks by Chancellor Brian Rogers for UAF and president and CEO Richard McCreary for Marinette Marine Corporation. Other speakers will include a representative from the National Science Foundation and legislators from the region.

A keel-laying ceremony is a traditional milestone in the construction of a ship. When the keel is laid, the initials of the ship's sponsors are welded into the keel. The Sikuliaq's sponsors are Vera Alexander and Bob Elsner. Alexander is the former dean of the UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences and Elsner has been a professor of marine science at UAF since 1973. Alexander and Elsner have been involved with the planning for the Sikuliaq for more than three decades.

The launch of the ship is scheduled for mid-2012 and the ship will be ready for full science operations in 2014. The Sikuliaq will be headquartered at the UAF Seward Marine Center in Seward, Alaska. The name of the vessel, Sikuliaq, is pronounced [see-KOO-lee-auk] and is an Inupiaq word meaning "young sea ice."

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