

Overhauling NOAA's Hydrographic Surveys Specifications and Deliverables

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For more than 20 years, the Hydrographic Surveys Specifications and Deliverables (HSSD) document managed and published by NOAA's Office of Coast Survey has been the authoritative source for hydrographic surveys collected for the purpose of safe marine navigation in the United States. It was based, in part, on the 4th Edition of IHO Special Publication N° 44 (S-44) and with paper and raster charts in mind as the final product of a hydrographic survey. During the last 20 years, the document has been updated in piecemeal fashion on an annual basis as hydrography has advanced but this has resulted in a document that is unwieldy, lacking cohesion, and impenetrable to all but the most experienced hydrographers.

With the advent of the National Bathymetric Source (NBS) as a key driver of the Office of Coast Survey's hydrographic pipeline; the increasing incorporation of non-traditional, external data sources into that pipeline; updated chart standards such as the S-100 series; the emergence of technologies that were not envisioned when the modern HSSD was structured; growing demand for higher-precision products with faster delivery to the public; increased reliance on automation to improve timeliness and consistency; and the recent publication of the 6th Edition of S-44, the Office of Coast Survey has determined it is time the HSSD is overhauled to lead NOAA hydrography into the future and ensure NOAA provides the innovative products that the public desires while maintaining the high-quality standards we have become known for.

This paper will describe the current state of the HSSD, the vision guiding the overhaul of the HSSD, the phases of the project, an outline of the restructuring of the document that will be necessary given the anticipated changes, as well as the anticipated timeline for the project.