The ocean sciences community was very well served by the R/V Moana Wave during its 25-year lifetime. The 65-m Moana Wave, or simply “Wave” as she is affectionately called by those who sailed aboard her, was built in 1973 at Halter Marine Corporation in New Orleans for the U.S. Navy. At that time she carried the military designation Auxiliary General Oceanographic Research (AGOR) – the twenty-second such vessel commissioned for the Navy fleet. Her design was for multi-disciplinary use with general capabilities that allowed her to conduct a broad range of scientific missions. The Hawaii Institute of Geophysics at the University of Hawaii was selected as the operator of this new state-of-the-art research vessel.

When the Wave (at that point a modest 30-m vessel) arrived in Honolulu she replaced the 24-m R/V Triton, a yacht constructed on a North Sea trawler hull which had been purchased and outfitted for scientific research by the University of Hawaii in 1964 (Fig. 1). With her 14,000-mile range and 60-day endurance, the Wave was a superb replacement for this much smaller, less capable ship. Upon her arrival in Honolulu in February 1974, the Wave joined the R/V Anne Koeki, a 48-m vessel that the University had obtained in November 1970 as a lease-purchase agreement from Hall Marine (Fig. 2); the purchase was completed in 1973, just prior to the arrival of the Wave. At this time, the University of Hawaii’s research “fleet” was home-ported at the Marine Expeditionary Unit at Pier 14 in Honolulu Harbor. The present Navy Harbor facility which eventually provided expanded dock-side capability was developed a few years later and is still in use today (Fig. 3).

Moana Wave began service in South America and spent six years operating out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Little Creek, Virginia where she supported a diverse, global ocean research mission, including 75 research cruises. Her 25-year history of this capable ship. A major difference, however, was that this would be her last voyage in support of oceanographic research. During the routine fire and boat drills, suddenly the reality – and the finality – of it all struck home. Soon the Honolulu Ocean Time-series (HOT) program scientists would lose the UNOLS flagship that has served them so well over the past decade.

The final voyage: R/V Moana Wave retires from UNOLS fleet

The inaugural cruise, HOT-1, departed on 29 Oct 1988 with Dave Karl and Roger Lukas serving as co-chief scientists. Since that time, the R/V Moana Wave has been used for a majority of the HOT program monthly cruises (75 of 105 cruises from Oct 1988 to May 1999), as well as for all twelve of the bottom-moored sediment trap and bio-geochemical monitoring cruises.

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Early in the morning on 30 May 1999, as the Honolulu city lights reappeared in the distance on the home-bound leg of her final sea voyage there was mixed emotion among both the scientists and the crew. As she docked at the University’s Marine Center, the lei-draped Kilo Moana (Fig. 5), or simply “Wave” as she is affectionately called (Fig. 3, after), was greeted by the cheers of those who sailed aboard her. As she docked at the University’s Marine Center, the lei-draped Kilo Moana (Fig. 5), or simply “Wave” as she is affectionately called (Fig. 3, after), was greeted by the cheers of those who sailed aboard her.

Ahoy, Moana Wave!

1974-1977 Operations off South America, west coast of U.S. and Alaska
1977-1983 Chartered to Naval Electronics System Command operating out of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in support of the U.S. Navy’s Moana Wave Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS)
1984 R/V Moana Wave overhauled, refit at Halter Marine shipyard in Chincoteague, Maryland
1981 - 1983 Moana Wave supported a diverse, global ocean research mission, including 75 HOT cruises, until her retirement from the UNOLS fleet on 31 May 1999.
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