



In 1807, President Thomas Jefferson adopted Ferdinand Hassler's strategy to organize a Survey of the Coast of the young Nation. The Survey started as an exercise but soon became an institution, the oldest scientific agency in the government. Two hundred years later, this organization is still vibrant and serving our Nation as the Office of Coast Survey of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Coast Survey pioneered the geodetic and physical sciences applied to government service, and its methods for precise instrumental observation coupled with rigorous mathematical analysis became the standard against which all other scientific agencies measured themselves.

The primary objective of the Coast Survey was, and remains, to create the finest nautical charts and other navigational aids to guide people and vessels through the Nation's waterways. Nautical charts of San Pedro Bay have been continuously in print for the almost 120 years. At the time of the 1888 edition (image on top) Coast Survey mapping was based on precise visual observation and lead-line soundings to measure the water's depths. Today, NOAA ships are positioned by satellites and use sophisticated sonar systems and computers to chart the bay and its environment. Much has changed, but not the commitment to engage the best science in service and stewardship to the Nation. Jefferson's vision still steers NOAA's course 200 years later.