

NOAA Leadership

Dr. Jane Lubchenco

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator



On March 20, 2009, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, a marine ecologist and environmental scientist, was sworn in as the ninth and first woman Administrator of NOAA. Her scientific expertise includes oceans, climate change, and interactions between the environment and human well-being. Raised in Denver, she received a B.A. degree in biology from Colorado College, a M.S. in zoology from the University of Washington and a Ph.D. in ecology from Harvard University. While teaching at Harvard (1975-1977) and Oregon State University (1977-2009), she was actively engaged in discovery, synthesis, communication, and application of scientific knowledge.

Dr. Lubchenco has studied marine ecosystems around the world and championed the importance of science and its relevance to policy making and human well-being. A former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the International Council for Science and the Ecological Society of America, she served 10 years on the National Science Board (Board of Directors for the National Science Foundation). From 1999-2009 she led PISCO, a large 4-university, interdisciplinary team of scientists investigating the large marine ecosystem along the coasts of Washington, Oregon and California. She has a special interest in Arctic ecosystems, with recent work in Svalbard, Greenland and the Alaskan arctic.

Dr. Lubchenco has provided scientific input to multiple U.S. Administrations and Congress on climate, fisheries, marine ecosystems, and biodiversity. Dr. Lubchenco served on the first National Academy of Sciences study on 'Policy Implications of Global Warming', providing advice to the George H.W. Bush administration and Congress. In 1997 she briefed President Clinton and Vice President Gore and Members of Congress on climate change.

Her scientific contributions are widely recognized. Eight of her publications are "Science Citation Classics"; she is one of the 'most highly cited' ecologists in the world. Dr. Lubchenco is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and four international academies of science: the Royal Society, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World, Europe, and Chile. She has received numerous awards including a MacArthur ('genius') Fellowship, twelve honorary degrees, the 2002 Heinz Award in the Environment, the 2005 AAAS Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology and the 2008 Zayed International Prize for the Environment.

Dr. Lubchenco co-founded three organizations that communicate scientific knowledge to the public, policy makers, the media and industry: (1) The Leopold Leadership Program (teaches environmental scientists to be effective communicators), (2) COMPASS (the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea, communicates marine sciences); and (3) Climate Central (a non-advocacy source of understandable scientific information about climate science and solutions). She co-chaired the Synthesis for Business and Industry of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, an international scientific evaluation of the consequences of environmental changes to human well-being. She also served on the Pew Oceans Commission, the Joint Oceans Commission Initiative, the Aspen Institute Arctic Commission and the Council of Advisors for Google Ocean.