

Biographical Sketch of Dr. Jane Lubchenco — Updated January 2026

Jane Lubchenco, Wayne and Gladys Valley Professor of Marine Biology and University Distinguished Professor at Oregon State University, is a marine ecologist with expertise in the ocean, climate change, and interactions between the environment and human well-being. She served as the U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and an inaugural member of President Barack Obama's Science Team from 2009-2013. From 2014-2016, she was the first U.S. State Department Science Envoy for the Ocean, serving as a science diplomat to China, Indonesia, South Africa, Mauritius and the Seychelles. From 2021-2025 she led the Climate and Environment Team at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, leading science-based policies on nature, climate change, Indigenous Knowledge, the ocean, polar regions, and environmental health.

Dr. Lubchenco is one of the “most highly cited” ecologists in the world with multiple publications as “Science Citation Classics.” She believes in using science and engaging society to craft solutions to society's biggest challenges. She has a distinguished history of collaborations with industry, communities, civil society, academia, and faith-based organizations to address climate change, mainstream nature, return fisheries to sustainability and profitability, create effective Marine Protected Areas, restore coastal habitats and promote resilient communities. She believes we can harness science and creativity and work with nature to achieve a healthy and resilient ocean, productive landscapes, vibrant communities, and thriving people.

In recognition of her scientific contributions, she is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, The American Philosophical Society, the Chilean Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society, The World Academy of Science, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and other distinguished academies. She has received numerous awards including 24 honorary doctorates, a MacArthur (‘genius’) Fellowship, and the highest honors given by the National Academy of Sciences (the Public Welfare Medal), the National Science Foundation (the Vannevar Bush Award), the Department of Commerce (Gold Medal Award), and the highest honor given to a civilian by the U. S. Coast Guard (Distinguished Public Service Award).

Dr. Lubchenco co-founded two organizations that train scientists to be better communicators and engage more effectively with the public, policy makers, media and industry. COMPASS amplifies the impact of science and knowledge to improve the well-being of all people and places by developing skilled, strategic communicators,

collaborators, and trusted sources of information. The Leopold Leadership Program (later the Earth Leadership Program) trained mid-career academic environmental scientists to be more effective communicators and leaders. She also co-founded Climate Central, a not-for-profit organization that communicates climate change science, effects, and solutions to the public and decision-makers.

She co-founded three other organizations focused on scientific research and synthesis or use of scientific knowledge for policy and action. PISCO, the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans, is an integrated research/monitoring/outreach program focused on the nearshore ecosystems of the U.S. West Coast. The National Ocean Protection Coalition is a non-profit organization that convenes people and organizations to create and enhance equitable and effective U.S. Marine Protected Areas. The MPA Project harnesses science to advance smart use of effective Marine Protected Areas (through The MPA Guide and its products) and to assist the global community in staying on track in delivering on high-profile MPA commitments made at the Our Ocean Conferences.

She has served as the President of numerous professional scientific societies including the Ecological Society of America (ESA), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the International Council for Science (ICSU). She has served on multiple national commissions including the Pew Oceans Commission, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, and the Aspen Institute Arctic Commission. She has led or contributed to multiple regional, national, and international scientific assessments on climate change, biodiversity, Marine Protected Areas, the ocean, and the intersection of science and society. Most recently, she co-chaired the Expert Group for the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, a pioneering partnership across 19 serving heads of state or government to harness science and action to protect the ocean effectively, produce from it sustainably, and prosper equitably.

Dr. Lubchenco received a B.A. in biology from Colorado College, a M.S. in zoology from the University of Washington, and a Ph.D. in ecology from Harvard University. Her academic career as a professor began at Harvard University (1975-1977) and continued at Oregon State University (1977-2009) until her appointment as NOAA Administrator. Following her resignation from NOAA, she was the 2013 Haas Distinguished Visitor in Public Service at Stanford University. From 2013 until the present, she has been back at Oregon State University, except the four years (2021-2025) she was on loan to the White House to lead the Climate and Environment Team.