

Jane Lubchenco visits SAEON as US Special Envoy for the Ocean



Prof Jane Lubchenco and staff from the USA Embassy in South Africa thoroughly enjoyed their short cruise out on Algoa Bay in the company of SAEON Elwandle Node

President Barack Obama's Special Envoy for the Ocean, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, and her entourage were taken out to sea by SAEON Elwandle Node for a quick 2 hour trip to the western sector of Algoa Bay, onboard SAIAB's uKwabelana. Dr. Lubchenco is a world-renowned scientist of distinctive achievements in the academia, conservation, science, government. She is the former Administrator of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), former US Under-Secretary for Oceans and the Atmosphere Affairs, and former president of ICSU and of AAAS. She is a marine ecologist and environmental scientist by training, with expertise in oceans, climate change, and interactions between the environment and human well-being. She is recognized for promoting the concept of 'a social contract for scientists' in which scientists pursue and share knowledge that is relevant to

society's most pressing problems, and do so with transparency, honesty and humility.

Her mission for the South African visit was to promote US-SA collaboration in areas of marine research, data collection and sharing. During her visits to SAEON's Elwandle and Egagasini Nodes she engaged our scientists on marine protected areas, ocean acidification and ocean observation and shared her insights about the situation in the US, including feedback on the new ocean acidification instrumentation which is being developed. The Offshore Invertebrate Identification Guide, in preparation by SAEON Egagasini Node, elicited much discussion around the urgent need and value of such a foundational national biodiversity product.

Whereas the Agulhas System Climate Array (ASCA), funded by NRF and DST, is already exemplary of USA-SA collaboration in marine science, the availability of in-country funds and resources determine our ability to undertake projects within the identified areas. SAEON's position is therefore that it would be prudent and cost-effective to avoid creating new projects but rather to provide resources to existing projects (with or without current USA collaboration) specifically to promote collaboration with the US. There is considerable potential for collaboration with USA scientists, especially from NOAA that run very similar programmes in the US as what SAEON, SAIAB and the CSIR run here in SA, as well as capacity development programs and potential student exchanges.

After her visit, Prof Lubchenco tweeted from her @JaneLubchenco account: "Thanks for long term monitoring of South Africa's ocean. It's important for understanding the future."