

Marine ecologist offers suggestions for achieving a strong, lasting 'blue economy'

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Incentive-based solutions offer significant hope for addressing the myriad environmental challenges facing the world's oceans - that's the central message a leading marine ecologist delivered today in Boston during a presentation at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Jane Lubchenco, a distinguished professor in the Oregon State University College of Science, shared lessons from around the world about ways "to use the ocean without using it up" as nations look to the ocean for new economic opportunities, food security or poverty alleviation.

Elizabeth Cerny-Chipman, a former postdoctoral scholar under Lubchenco who's now a Knauss Fellow at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, co-authored the presentation, titled "Getting Incentives Right for Sustained Blue Growth: Science and Opportunities."

In her presentation, Lubchenco pointed out that achieving the long-term potential of blue growth will require aligning short- and long-term economic incentives to achieve a diverse mix of benefits. Blue growth refers to long-term strategies for supporting sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole.

"If we harness human ingenuity and recognize that a healthy ocean is essential for long-term prosperity, we can tackle the enormous threats

facing the ocean," Lubchenco says, "and we can make a transition from vicious cycles to virtuous cycles."

Lubchenco and her collaborators note that the world's oceans are the main source of protein production for 3 billion people; are directly or indirectly responsible for the employment of more than 200 million people; and contribute \$270 billion to the planet's [gross domestic product](#).

"The right incentives can drive behavior that aligns with both desired environmental outcomes and desirable social outcomes," Lubchenco says.

The first step in building increased support for truly sustainable blue growth, she says, is highlighting its potential. That means working with decision-makers to promote win-win solutions with clear short-term environmental and economic benefits. Governments, industry and communities all have important roles to play, Lubchenco notes.

"Another key step is transforming the social norms that drive the behavior of the different actors, particularly in industry," Lubchenco says. "Finally, it will be critical to take a cross-sector approach.

"Some nations, like the Seychelles, Belize and South Africa, are doing integrated, smart planning to deconflict use by different sectors while also growing their economies in ways that value the health of the ocean, which is essential to jobs and [food security](#). They are figuring out how to be smarter about ocean uses, not just to use the ocean more intensively."

Prior to her presentation, Lubchenco gave a related press briefing on how to create the right incentives for sustainable uses of the [ocean](#).

In November 2016, Lubchenco, Cerny-Chipman, OSU graduate student

Jessica Reimer and Simon Levin, the distinguished university professor in ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University, co-authored a paper on a related topic for the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Provided by Oregon State University

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