

Jeff Payne

Dr. Jeff Payne is the Director of the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, and also Acting Director of NOAA's IOOS office. Under his leadership, the nation's coastal management activities are coordinated to address the significant challenges affecting our coastal communities. He has an extensive professional history with NOAA, having previously served as the Deputy Director of NOAA's Coastal Services Center for 16 years, Acting National Ocean Service Deputy Assistant Administrator (2019), Deputy Chief of Staff for NOAA (2009-2010), and Deputy Director of NOAA's Office of Policy and Strategic Planning. He also served in the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office of the President as the budget examiner for NOAA and the Marine Mammal Commission. Dr. Payne received a doctorate in geophysical oceanography from Texas A&M University and a bachelor's degree in geology from West Virginia University.

Neil Jacobs

Dr. Neil Jacobs is the current Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He was confirmed for this role on October 7, 2025, and officially took office in November 2025. An atmospheric scientist by training, Dr. Jacobs previously served as the acting NOAA Administrator from 2019 to 2021. Between his terms at NOAA, he served as the chief science advisor for the Unified Forecast System (UFS) at the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), where he focused on advancing numerical weather prediction and community modeling.

Before his government service, Dr. Jacobs spent over a decade in the private sector. He was the chief atmospheric scientist at Panasonic Avionics Corporation, where he directed research for aviation weather observation and forecast models. He has also held leadership positions within the scientific community, including serving as the chair of the American Meteorological Society's (AMS) Forecast Improvement Group and served on the World Meteorological Organization's aircraft-based observing systems expert team. Dr. Jacobs holds bachelor degrees in mathematics and physics from the University of South Carolina, and earned both his master's and doctoral degrees in atmospheric science from North Carolina State University.

Rachael Dempsey

Ms. Rachael Dempsey is the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Navigation, Observations, and Positioning at NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS), a role she has held since April 2023. In this capacity, she is responsible for the strategic direction and management of programs related to national ocean observing systems, navigation, and positioning. She also oversees NOS's information technology and data management strategies. Since late 2025, she has also served as the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management.

With nearly 28 years as a Meteorology and Oceanography Officer in the United States Navy, Ms. Dempsey has broad meteorological and oceanographic prediction and operational application expertise. She has significant experience leading large, diverse organizations, and has had the privilege of Command of two operational Navy organizations in Yokosuka, Japan

and San Diego, California, and was the first female Information Warfare Commander for the USS Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group. Ms. Dempsey also possesses an extensive background in cyber operations and network defense. She earned her bachelor's degree in marine science from Jacksonville University in Florida and holds master's degrees in meteorology and oceanography from the Naval Postgraduate School and in national security strategy from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

Hans VanSumeren

Mr. Hans Van Sumeren is the Senior Director of the Ocean Enterprise Initiative at the Marine Technology Society (MTS), having joined the organization's professional staff in 2024. A Chartered Marine Technologist (CMarTech), he previously spent 16 years as the Director and Chair of the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute at Northwestern Michigan College (NMC). During his tenure at NMC, he was a pioneer in marine technology education, developing the nation's first Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Technology and establishing various credentials for ROV and sonar operations. His career also includes over 20 years at the University of Michigan, where he served as a research associate and Associate Director of the Marine Hydrodynamics Laboratory. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering from the University of Michigan and has been recognized with the MTS Outstanding Service Award for his leadership in the Great Lakes scientific community.

Zack Baize

Mr. Zack Baize is the Ocean Enterprise Program Manager for NOAA IOOS. In this role, he leads Ocean Enterprise activities and collaborates with private sector partners to advance sustainable maritime industry development and commercialize ocean data products and services. Before joining NOAA in 2022, Mr. Baize spent nearly 12 years at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), where he served as a program manager and Deputy Director in the Office of Technology Transitions, focusing on moving technologies from National Laboratories to the private sector. He holds an MSc in Energy and Environmental Economics from the University of Oxford and a BA in Political Science and Economics from the University of Kentucky.

Tiffany Vance

Dr. Tiffany Vance is the Ocean Technology Transition (OTT) Program Manager at NOAA IOOS, where she oversees the OTT cooperative agreements that supports transition of emerging marine observing technologies into operational use. She also serves as the Program Manager for the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) and Cloud Sandbox for ocean models programs, as well as a point of contact for multidimensional Geographic Information Systems (GIS), scientific visualization, and cloud computing within IOOS. Prior to joining the IOOS Program Office in 2016, Dr. Vance spent several years as a researcher at NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. She holds a Ph.D. in geosciences from Oregon State University and is an adjunct faculty member at San Francisco State University.

Curtis Marshall

Dr. Curtis Marshall is the Director of the Commercial Data Program for the National Weather Service (NWS) Office of Observations. The Commercial Data Program includes the National Mesonet Program, the Aircraft-Based Observations Program, the Meteorological Assimilation Data Ingest System (MADIS), and several other activities. With a career focused on observing systems and their applications to numerical weather prediction, he previously served as a staff scientist at the National Academy of Sciences, where he directed the study that led to the establishment of the National Mesonet Program in 2009. Dr. Marshall holds a B.S. and M.S. in Meteorology from the University of Oklahoma and a Ph.D. in Atmospheric Science from Colorado State University.

Ruth Perry

Dr. Ruth Perry serves as the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Ocean, Fisheries, and Polar Affairs in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the Department of State. In this position, she helps to advance U.S. economic and national security interests in the ocean, fisheries, and the poles. She is responsible for policies, programs, and global engagement that ensure blue economic prosperity and sustainable management of ocean resources, promote cooperative international ocean and polar policy, and advance maritime security and navigation rights. From 2014-2025, Dr. Perry worked at Shell overseeing permitting and development of global exploration and production projects and as a marine scientist. Dr. Perry holds a Ph.D. in physical oceanography from Texas A&M University. She holds a master's and undergraduate degrees from Texas A&M in biological oceanography and biology.