

OFFICE OF
POLAR PROGRAMS

NSF Office of Polar Programs Update

Dr. Jean Cottam Allen, Director of the Office of Polar Programs

NASEM Polar Research Board - April 16, 2026



- **NSF Reorganization**

- Restructured Directorates, Established Office of Research Infrastructure (ORI)
- OPP moved from GEO into ORI in the Office of Director

- **OPP Staffing Changes**

- Dr. John Hannan, Head of Polar Sciences Section
- Ms. Renee Crain, Acting Head of Arctic Research Support & Logistics Section
- Ms. Stephanie Short, Head of Antarctic Infrastructure & Logistics Section
- Reassignments & Reductions in OPP staffing

- **Budgets**

- FY2026 Appropriations – pending approval of NSF Operating Plan
- FY2027 President's Request released April 3

Mission in the polar regions:

Advance the NSF Mission to “promote the progress of science, advance the national health, prosperity and welfare, and secure the national defense.

- **Antarctica:** *Maintain an “active and influential presence in Antarctica ... [to] include the conduct of scientific activities in major disciplines; year-round occupation of the South Pole and two coastal stations...”*
- **Arctic:** *Serve as the “lead agency responsible for implementing Arctic research policy...”*

→ **World-Class Science - Maximum Scientific Impacts**

→ **World-Leading Presence - Infrastructure for Long-Term Leadership**

USAP 2026 – Science Highlights

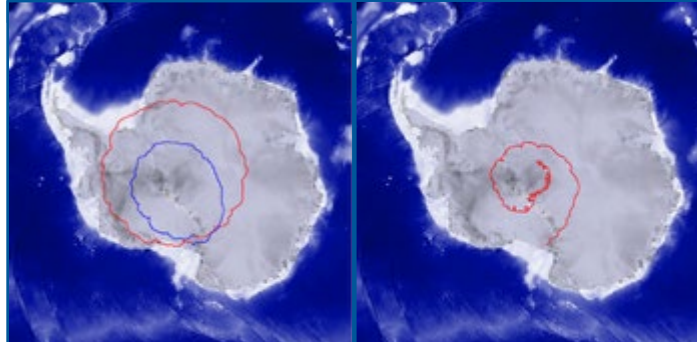
IceCube Upgrade: Installed new, densely instrumented strings, extending sensitivity to lower energies

SWAIS 2C: Drilled 228m bedrock under 523m ice and recovered 218m sediment core, longest ever retrieved

NASA LDB: PUEO and GAPS missions successfully launched and recovered, along with last year's GUSTO payload

SCARGO: 25 missions on LC-130s to measure atmospheric compositions and seasonal evolution of air-surface fluxes

Cruises: Supported marine science on UNOLS R/V Sikuliaq and R/V R. Revelle



USAP 2026 - Infrastructure Highlights

McMurdo Lodging: Completed exterior with full commissioning in October

Blue building lift: Delivered system to lift the Atmospheric Research Observatory in January 2027

Discovery Pier: Successfully delivered and installed new barge pier with commissioning in December

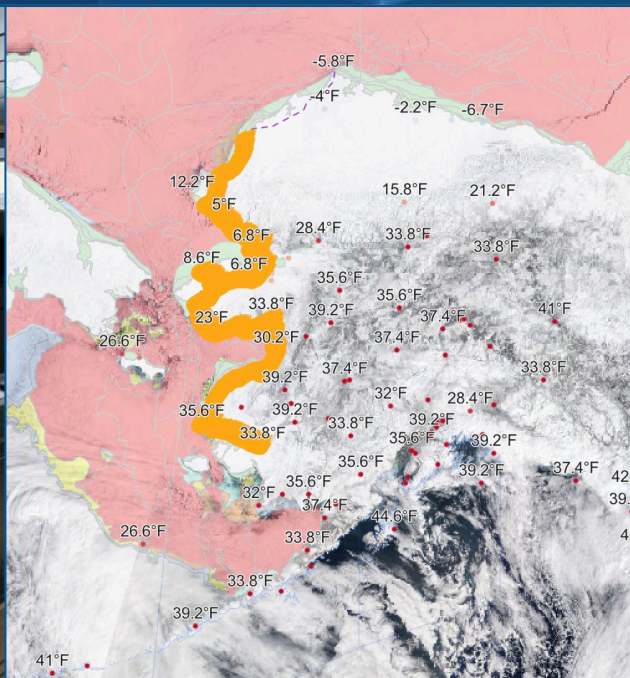
SPoT Improvement: Replaced living and support modules, improved efficiency

Fleet Refresh: Delivered 184 new assets to all three stations

South Pole Station Master Plan: Completed and published plan for SPS



Arctic 2026 – Science Planning



Straneo: 5th year of US/Greenland collaborative ship-based project on marine Greenland ecosystems

TIGRIS: Installing 15 broadband seismic stations on the SE Greenland Ice Sheet via fixed-wing and helicopters.

COAST-X: Snowmobile traverse from Bethel to Utqiagvik to better understand changing coastal conditions through community-driven science.

Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring

(CALM): Fieldwork in Kuskokwin Basin as part of long-term observations of the climate-active layer-permafrost system.

Utqiagvik Sea Ice Field School: 8th graders integrating scientific topics and Indigenous knowledge.



Arctic 2026 – Infrastructure Planning



USCGC Healy: Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) adds new multibeam and sub-bottom profiler systems

Vessels: Research cruises on R/V *Sikuliaq*, USCGC *Healy*, R/V *Norseman II*, CCGSs *Sir Wilfred Laurier*, *Louis S. St-Laurent*, *Amundsen*

Toolik Field Station: Installation of fiber-optic cable for intra-station communication; Conversion of old shower module into the new Environmental Data Center

Summit Station: Construction of Elevated Berthing Facility (EBF); Design of Summit Modernization and Recapitalization (SuMR) Project

World-Class Science - Maximum Scientific Impacts

- Focused and impactful science investments
- Comprehensive approaches
- Data reuse
- Alignment with agency priorities
- Expanded international coordination

World-Leading Presence - Infrastructure for Long-Term Leadership

- Antarctic Infrastructure Recapitalization (AIR) program
- Antarctic Research Vessel (ARV)
- Summit Modernization and Recapitalization (SuMR)
- LC130 recapitalization
- Strategic interagency coordination and prioritization

Questions?