

Bess B. Ward

Department Chair

William J. Sinclair Professor of Geosciences/Biological Oceanography

Ph.D., University of Washington, 1982



Research Interests

Ward's major interests are biological oceanography and marine microbiology. She seeks to figure out how rapidly microbially mediated processes occur in the environment, to discover what regulates those processes, and to assess ecosystem and global level impacts of the processes. This research requires a diversity of approaches, and thus her technical capabilities range from stable isotope mass spectrometry to molecular biological methods, all focused on the study of bacteria in the ocean and other aquatic environments. Her special area of interest is the marine and global nitrogen cycle (especially nitrification and denitrification), and functional diversity of microbial communities, including marine phytoplankton. Her research requires both field- and laboratory-based investigations; some of her current projects involve fieldwork in Chesapeake Bay and in the permanently ice-covered lakes of dry valleys in Antarctica.

Areas of Expertise

Biological oceanography, marine microbiology

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