

# West Antarctic FeHS and HS-total

**Website:** <https://www.bco-dmo.org/dataset/988663>

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## Project

» [Collaborative Research: Investigating Iron-binding Ligands in Southern Ocean Diatom Communities: The Role of Diatom-Bacteria Associations](#) (Diatom\_Bacteria\_Ligands)

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## Coverage

**Spatial Extent:** Lat:0 Lon:0

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## Parameters

*Parameters for this dataset have not yet been identified*

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## Project Information

**Collaborative Research: Investigating Iron-binding Ligands in Southern Ocean Diatom Communities: The Role of Diatom-Bacteria Associations (Diatom\_Bacteria\_Ligands)**

**Coverage:** Southern Ocean, Western Antarctic Peninsula 60-65 S, 63 W

This project focuses on an important group of photosynthetic algae in the Southern Ocean (SO), diatoms, and the roles associated bacterial communities play in modulating their growth. Diatom growth fuels the SO food web and balances atmospheric carbon dioxide by sequestering the carbon used for growth to the deep ocean on long time scales as cells sink below the surface. The diatom growth is limited by the available iron in the seawater, most of which is not freely available to the diatoms but instead is tightly bound to other compounds. The nature of these compounds and how phytoplankton acquire iron from them is critical to understanding productivity in this region and globally. The investigators will conduct experiments to characterize the relationship between diatoms, their associated bacteria, and iron in open ocean and inshore waters. Experiments will involve supplying nutrients at varying nutrient ratios to natural phytoplankton assemblages to

determine how diatoms and their associated bacteria respond to different conditions. This will provide valuable data that can be used by climate and food web modelers and it will help us better understand the relationship between iron, a key nutrient in the ocean, and the organisms at the base of the food web that use iron for photosynthetic growth and carbon uptake. The project will also further the NSF goals of training new generations of scientists and of making scientific discoveries available to the general public. The project supports early career senior investigators and the training of graduate and undergraduate students as well as outreach activities with middle school Girl Scouts in Rhode Island, inner city middle and high school age girls in Virginia, and middle school girls in Florida.

The project combines trace metal biogeochemistry, phytoplankton cultivation, and molecular biology to address questions regarding the production of iron-binding compounds and the role of diatom-bacterial interactions in this iron-limited region. Iron is an essential micronutrient for marine phytoplankton. Phytoplankton growth in the SO is limited by a lack of sufficient iron, with important consequences for carbon cycling and climate in this high latitude regime. Some of the major outstanding questions in iron biogeochemistry relate to the organic compounds that bind >99.9% of dissolved iron in surface oceans. The investigators' prior research in this region suggests that production of strong iron-binding compounds in the SO is linked to diatom blooms in waters with high nitrate to iron ratios. The sources of these compounds are unknown but the investigators hypothesize that they may be from bacteria, which are known to produce such compounds for their own use. The project will test three hypotheses concerning the production of these iron-binding compounds, limitations on the biological availability of iron even if present in high concentrations, and the roles of diatom-associated bacteria in these processes. Results from this project will provide fundamental information about the biogeochemical trigger, and biological sources and function, of natural strong iron-binding compound production in the SO, where iron plays a critical role in phytoplankton productivity, carbon cycling, and climate regulation.

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## Funding

Funding Source	Award
<a href="#">NSF Office of Polar Programs (formerly NSF PLR) (NSF OPP)</a>	<a href="#">OPP-1443483</a>
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