

ALFRED WEGENER MEDAL & HONORARY MEMBERSHIP 2026

Thomas F. Stocker

The 2026 Alfred Wegener Medal & Honorary Membership is awarded to Thomas F. Stocker for exceptional and groundbreaking research that has fundamentally advanced oceanography and climate science, while strengthening the scientific foundation for international climate action.

Thomas Stocker has been a central figure in advancing our understanding of the coupling between greenhouse gas concentrations and global temperatures over geological timescales. Through meticulous analysis of polar ice cores, combined with innovative Earth system modelling, he has revealed the intimate links between atmospheric carbon dioxide, methane, and climate variability over the past 800,000 years. These insights have been critical not only for understanding past and future climate but also for assessing implications for the hydrological cycle and large-scale ocean circulation.



Photo: Axel Timmermann

A hallmark of Thomas Stocker's career has been the development of the first climate models of intermediate complexity, which allowed unprecedented exploration of the interactions between the atmosphere, oceans, cryosphere, and biosphere. His modelling framework has provided essential tools to understand how changes in ocean circulation influence global climate patterns and regional hydrology. By linking polar research with ocean dynamics, he has illuminated feedbacks that determine the resilience and thresholds of the Earth's climate system.

Thomas Stocker's influence extends far beyond research papers and scientific reports. He has been an inspiring mentor to numerous Early Career Scientists, fostering a culture of interdisciplinary thinking that brings together climate science and oceanography. His outreach to the public and policymakers reflects a rare ability to bridge the gap between fundamental science and societal decision-making on issues such as climate risks.

In awarding the Alfred Wegener Medal to Thomas F. Stocker, the EGU recognizes a scientist whose career exemplifies the union of visionary research, technical innovation, and interdisciplinary service to the global community. His legacy will endure in the data that inform our understanding, the models that guide projections, and the generations of scientists he has inspired. Thomas Stocker's contributions have fundamentally advanced climate science while strengthening the scientific foundation for oceanography and international climate action. His work stands as a model of excellence across the geosciences, fully embodying the spirit and purpose of the Alfred Wegener Medal.