

North Pacific Research Board

*“Building a clear understanding of the North Pacific, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean ecosystems
that enables effective management and sustainable use of marine resources.”*

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March 28, 2002

Request for Proposals Research for 2002

INTRODUCTION

The North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) announces a marine research opportunity in the North Pacific Ocean, with emphasis on the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and western Gulf of Alaska, and adjacent waters. Proposals may include retrospective studies, field studies, observational systems, and modeling, beginning June 1, 2002, or soonest thereafter. Proposals which include collection and use of indigenous traditional ecological knowledge also will be considered. Criteria for judging proposals will be based on (1) enabling legislation for NPRB and the North Pacific Marine Research Institute (NPMRI), and (2) issues brought forth from the Bering Sea Research Plan of September 1998, or identified as pressing fishery management issues by the NPRB. Approximately \$1.5 million may be made available. Proposal deadline is 5 p.m., Alaska time, Friday, April 12, 2002. Final award decisions will be made on or about June 15, 2002.

Please Note: This limited request for proposals is based on existing legislated priorities, the Bering Sea Research Plan, and pressing fisheries management needs. NPRB will engage in a much more comprehensive science planning process during the rest of 2002 and into 2003 that will result in updated research priorities for a larger request for proposals this fall for research in 2003.

DESCRIPTION

A. NPRB Mission and Goals

The North Pacific Research Board is authorized to recommend research to the Secretary of Commerce to be funded through a competitive grant program using part of the interest earned from the Environmental Improvement and Restoration Fund (EIRF) created under 43 U.S.C. §1474d. The NPRB also administers the NPMRI at the Alaska SeaLife Center, pursuant to 33 U.S.C. §2738. NPRB’s overall mission is to develop a comprehensive, high caliber, science program that provides better understanding of the North Pacific, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean ecosystems and their fisheries. Its work will be conducted through science planning, prioritization of pressing fishery management and ecosystem information needs, coordination and cooperation among research programs, competitive selection of research projects, enhanced information availability, and public involvement.

To carry out this mission, the NPRB will emphasize coordination and cooperation in supporting high quality research projects that improve:

- our understanding of the dynamics of the North Pacific marine ecosystem and use of the resources;
- our ability to manage and protect the healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations that comprise the ecologically diverse marine ecosystems of the North Pacific, and provide long-term, sustained benefits to local communities and the nation; and
- our ability to forecast and respond to effects of changes, through integration of various research activities, including long-term monitoring.

B. Research Priorities

The North Pacific Ocean and waters off Alaska are among the most productive marine regions in the world and support abundant populations of fish, seabirds, and marine mammals. The fisheries provide over 40% of the U.S. fisheries harvest. Components of the marine ecosystem and their environment vary over time, and improving the understanding of their dynamics will enhance resource managers' ability to protect the healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations that comprise these ecologically diverse marine ecosystems. NPRB is seeking research proposals that fall within the legislated criteria for the NPRB and/or the NPMRI, and address one or more of the research priorities identified in the interagency Bering Sea Research Plan of 1998, or more recently identified by NPRB as pressing fishery management issues.

1. Legislative Criteria

NPRB's enabling legislation calls for EIRF funds to be used for the purpose of carrying out marine research activities on or relating to the fisheries or marine ecosystems in the north Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean (including any lesser related bodies of water), with priority on cooperative research efforts designed to address pressing fishery management or marine ecosystem information needs.

NPMRI's enabling legislation requires research to be related to the North Pacific marine ecosystem, with particular emphasis on marine mammal, seabird, fish, and shellfish populations in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska including populations located in or near Kenai Fjords National Park and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

2. Research Priorities

The NPRB has set research priorities for this request for proposals based on the Bering Sea Research Plan of 1998, and current, pressing fishery management issues. The research plan may be viewed at www.refm.noaa.gov/reem/sciencer.pdf. The plan's central research theme is process-oriented, retrospective and modeling studies and monitoring that would establish how changes in the physical and biological structure of the Bering Sea have altered the ecosystem and changed the productivity of marine fish populations, including salmon. It will be updated over the next two years, but many of its issues remain current. In addition, the NPRB met on March 1, 2002, to review this request for proposals. Board

members identified additional pressing fishery management issues. Combining them with the plan's issues yields the following eight broad categories of research, with no order of priority implied:

- a. Marine ecosystem form and function. Factors affecting marine productivity, including nutrient transport and availability, water column stability and the role of sea ice; influence of climate variability on physical, chemical, and biological processes; unusual occurrences of specific organisms such as the coccolithophorid blooms; development of ecosystems models that will aid resource managers;
- b. Endangered and stressed species. Factors affecting survival of stressed and endangered species, particularly marine mammals and seabirds; responses to ocean climate trends and prey availability.
- c. Fish habitat. Mapping of bottom habitats to document presence of corals or other sensitive substrates; studies of factors affecting habitat including physical forcing, variations in energy flux, and overwintering conditions; impacts of fisheries and other human influence on benthic habitat and its capacity to support communities of organisms.
- d. Fishing capacity reduction. Studies of ways to reduce fishing capacity, including rights-based systems.
- e. Bycatch. Studies that assess the impacts of, or lead to reductions in, bycatch of juvenile fishes or non-target species (including salmon), especially in the groundfish fisheries, and including gear designs to improve selectivity.
- f. Salmon stock dynamics. Studies of factors affecting salmon stock dynamics, mortality and migration throughout their range and life cycle, particularly for Western Alaska salmon stocks.
- g. Stock assessment and ecology. Studies to improve stock assessment techniques and understanding of larval fish ecology.
- h. Contaminants. Studies of sources, transport, and accumulation of contaminants in subsistence, recreational, and commercial species, and other ecosystem components; effects on ecosystem structure and function; and effects of climate change on contaminants.

C. Research Program Structure

Award Amounts and Duration. This program is limited to approximately \$1.5 million and award periods may range up to three years. Applicants must demonstrate they can achieve an outcome and product within the requested award period, including data analysis, submission of draft final reports, and, after peer review if so requested by NPRB, the final report of research results. The exact award period will depend upon the duration of funding requested by the applicant, the decision of the NPRB on funding amount, the results of post-selection negotiations between the applicant and NPRB officials, and review of the application by NPRB and DOC officials.

Eligibility Criteria. Eligible applicants include Federal, State, private or foreign organizations or individuals.

Coordination and Collaboration. To be successful, a proposal should demonstrate that applicants are aware of other research, past and present, on their topic, and that they have made every effort to coordinate, communicate, and collaborate with other researchers to the maximum extent practicable, and to leverage their proposals with support from other sources.

Community Involvement. Researchers should recognize that local community knowledge of, and interest in, natural resources extend beyond the physical boundaries of the communities themselves to harvest areas and beyond. Furthermore, researchers should advise communities and people who are involved or affected by the studies of the purpose, goals, and time-frame of the research and its potential positive and negative implications. Inclusion of traditional and ecological knowledge and wisdom is encouraged.

Outreach and Education. The principal investigator shall provide to and cooperate with the NPRB in developing materials for interpretation of the project to the public. A minimum of \$500 of the proposal budget must be allocated for education and interpretation conducted with NPRB.

D. Proposal Review Process

Initial Screening of Applications. Upon receipt, the NPRB staff will screen applications for conformance with requirements set forth in this notice. Applications which do not conform to the requirements may not be considered for further evaluation.

Consultation with Interested Parties. NPRB will consult with NOAA Offices and Divisions, and other Federal and State agencies, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and other interested parties, as appropriate, who may be affected by or have knowledge of a specific proposal or its subject matter.

Technical Evaluation. NPRB will solicit individual technical evaluations of each proposal, striving for at least three per proposal. Reviewers will score applications using the following evaluation criteria and weightings:

- a. Project Responsiveness to NPRB Research Priorities: Applications will be evaluated to determine if they clearly respond to the legislated criteria and research priorities established by NPRB. **(10%)**
- b. Soundness of Project Design/Conceptual Approach. Applications will be evaluated on the applicant's comprehension of the problem(s); the overall concept proposed for resolution; whether the applicant provided sufficient information to evaluate the project technically; and, if so, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results. **(40%)**
- c. Project Management and Experience and Qualifications of Personnel. The organization and management of the project, and the project's principal investigator and other personnel in terms of related experience and qualifications will be evaluated. Those projects that do not identify the principal investigator with his or her qualifications will receive a lower point score. **(25%)**

- d. Project Costs. The justification and allocation of the budget in terms of the work to be performed will be evaluated. Unreasonably high or low project costs will be taken into account. **(15%)**
- e. Coordination and Collaboration: Applicants must demonstrate they are aware of other past and ongoing research on their topic, and how they will coordinate and collaborate with other projects. Applicants must seek to avoid duplication of other research efforts. **(5%)**

In addition, there will be a secondary review by a panel of scientists and other knowledgeable individuals to provide recommendations to the NPRB. If applications include consultants and contracts, the NPRB will make a determination regarding the following:

- a. Is the involvement of the primary applicant necessary to the conduct of the project and the accomplishment of its objectives?
- b. Is the proposed allocation of the primary applicant's time reasonable and commensurate with the applicant's involvement in the project?
- c. Are the proposed costs for the primary applicant's involvement in the project reasonable and commensurate with the benefits to be derived from the applicant's participation?

E. Selection Procedures

After projects have been evaluated and ranked, the NPRB will develop final recommendations for project funding. NPRB recommendations will then be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce's designee for review and approval, who will determine the projects to be funded, ensuring that there is no duplication with other projects funded by NOAA or other Federal organizations, and that the projects selected for funding are those that best meet the objectives of this solicitation. Successful applicants will be notified following Secretarial approval. The tentative schedule is as follows, all in 2002 (except for the proposal deadline, dates are subject to change):

Release of RFP	March 8
Deadline for Proposals	April 12
Individual peer reviews	April 15 - May 7
Senior Panel Review	May 13-15
NPRB Selection	June 3-4
Submission to NMFS	June 7
Notification of PIs	Mid-June

The exact amounts of funds awarded to a project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant and NPRB. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received. Applicants should not request a project start date before **July 1, 2002**.

F. Proposal Submission Address

The signed original and 12 copies must be received by 5:00 pm, AST, April 12, 2002 at the following address:

North Pacific Research Board
441 West 5th Avenue, Suite 500
Anchorage, AK 99501-2340

Proposals received after that deadline will not be considered for funding. Please note that courier and express delivery to Anchorage, Alaska, require a minimum of two days for delivery.

PROPOSAL PACKAGE

A. General Instructions

All applicants should refer to <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/nprb/rfp.htm> for a copy of the proposal package. Further information may be available by contacting the NPRB office. Proposals should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner, but otherwise unbound, and have 2.5 cm margins at the top, bottom and sides. The type size must be clear and readily legible, in a standard Times New Roman font size of 10-12 point. The original signed copy and required twelve copies must be printed on one side of each sheet only. A copy of the proposal must also be submitted by email or on disk, using Word or WordPerfect for Windows (NPRB does not have MAC available). No proposals will be accepted by fax.

B. Sections of the Proposal

NPRB Proposal Summary Page (Revised on March 28)

The summary page is available at the web site above. It includes a title, project period, names of applicant and principal investigators, legislative criteria and research priorities addressed by proposed research, a summary of work (250 words or less), requested and matching funding by year, and the signature of an official authorized to legally bind the submitting organization. The completed form should not run over one page.

Statement of Work (Revised on March 28)

The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work in the following format and limited to ten pages, including tables, figures, and references cited:

1. Project Title

2. Proposal Summary: Briefly explain the project goal and value, and why NPRB funds should be committed to this project, in language understandable by individuals not familiar with the specific subject area, such as Congress and the public.
3. Project Responsiveness to NPRB Research Priorities. State what the project will accomplish and why it is important. Identify the specific legislated criteria and NPRB research priorities being addressed. If this is a continuation of a previously funded project, describe your progress to date and the objective of the next funding period.
4. Project Design and Conceptual Approach. Demonstrate an understanding of the problem being addressed, the present state of knowledge in the field, the project relation to previous work and work in progress by the Principal Investigator(s), and the measurable benefits which will result from the proposed research. As appropriate, describe the conceptual or statistical model underlying your experimental work. Describe the experimental design, including assumptions required, sample size, and other relevant information needed to determine the utility and technical feasibility of accomplishing your research. Describe the schedule you will follow and include measurable milestones that can be used to track and evaluate your project performance through the entire award period. Describe the product or result that may be used to measure your success (e.g., report, published paper, etc.).
5. Project Management and Experience and Qualifications of Personnel. Describe the organization and management of the project and the experience and qualifications of the principal investigator(s). A one-page curriculum vitae may be attached for each principal investigator.
6. Coordination and Collaboration. Describe how the proposed research relates to other past and ongoing research on the proposed topic, and how the principal investigators will coordinate and collaborate with other projects and avoid duplication of other research efforts.
7. Possible Peer Reviewers. If possible, provide a short list of possible peer reviewers with whom you have no close working or personal relationship.
8. Project Costs. Describe and justify the budget and any matching requirements. Attach the standard Budget Summary Form available at the web site above. It includes the following mandatory budget categories: salaries, fringe benefits; travel, equipment, supplies, contracts/consultants, and other expenditures, and indirect (facilities & administration) and matching/in kind cost sharing with other programs. Note that your budget must include travel costs to attend one NPRB research review meeting in Anchorage, and a minimum \$500 for education and interpretation, such as helping to produce a brief video documentary of your research. You also must include costs of preparing all required reports and publication of results in an appropriate scientific journal. Additional budget detail should be provided as appropriate for each of the major budget categories. This budget narrative should be attached to the Budget Summary Form and does not count toward the ten-page limit on the statement of work.

Matching requirements. Applications must reflect the total budget necessary to accomplish the project, including contributions and/or donations. Cost-sharing is not required for this program. If an applicant chooses to cost-share and if that application is selected for funding, the applicant will be bound by the percentage of the cost share reflected in the grant award.

Indirect Costs. The budget form may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. The total dollar amount of the indirect costs proposed in an application under this program must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award, or 100 percent of the total proposed direct cost dollar amount in the application, whichever is less. If applicable, a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government must be included in the application.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. This Request for Proposals is only a solicitation of offers and should not be construed as an expectation of award, or as any reasonable basis for detrimental reliance. It does not obligate NPRB to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all acceptable projects, and the NPRB may choose to reject all proposals. No oral statement by any person can supercede or modify the terms of this RFP, or of the subsequent written Notice of Award if any, or of the written agreement to follow award.
2. Responding proposals are firm offers and shall remain open for the NPRB to accept anytime before July 1, 2002 in accordance with a standard NPRB agreement for the performance of the work proposed. A proposal is accepted only when NPRB sends the applicant a written Notice of Award. A proposal accepted for funding does not obligate NPRB to provide additional future funding.
3. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all Federal, state, and local governmental permits and approvals for projects or activities to be funded under this announcement. This includes, as applicable, certification under state Coastal Zone Management Plans, section 404 or section 10 permits issued by the Corps of Engineers; experimental fishing or other permits under fishery management plans; scientific permits under the Endangered Species Act and/or the Marine Mammal Protection Act; and assistance to the Federal government in developing environmental impact statements to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. All experiments must be conducted in compliance with law, and only pursuant to mandatory permitting duly granted by the appropriate federal and state agencies. Requirements for special permits, for example, those required for taking marine mammals, should be clearly described and whether the permit is in possession or not. Permits must be granted before funding will be awarded, but not necessarily before the proposal is accepted.

4. Funded participants are wholly responsible for the conduct of research, submission of required reports, and preparation of the results for publication. Participants will be required to submit a semiannual report not exceeding six pages and a final report to be posted on the NPRB web site and in other databases. Final reports may be submitted for peer review at the discretion of the NPRB. Failure to submit timely reports or to respond to peer review comments on final reports may result in withheld payments. Research results shall be submitted for publication by an appropriate scientific journal within one year of completion of study. The NPRB Executive Director may in his sole discretion grant written exceptions if requested timely. All manuscripts shall acknowledge that funds were provided by the NPRB through the U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service.
5. Applicants must incorporate in their budget, attendance at an annual meeting to report their research results. All data must be reported to the appropriate system (NODC or USGS information infrastructure).
6. The program welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists and engineers and strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in any of the research programs described herein. In accordance with federal statutes and regulations, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin or disability shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under this program.