

Final Summary
North Pacific Research Board
NPRB Conference Room
Anchorage, AK
September 20-22, 2006

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

The Board convened at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, September 20, 2006. Present were Tylan Schrock (Chairman), Stephanie Madsen (Vice Chair), David Benton, Nancy Bird, Dorothy Childers, Douglas DeMaster, John Gauvin, Leslie Holland-Bartels, Howard Horton, Earl Krygier, Michele Eder, Paul MacGregor, John Iani, LT Alan McCabe, Gerry Merrigan, Pam Pope, and Dennis Wiesenburg. Alexandra Curtis, Robert Gisiner, and Robin Samuelsen were absent. Clarence Pautzke, Francis Wiese, Carl Schoch, Carolyn Rosner, and Nora Deans staffed the meeting.

The agenda was approved and a safety briefing given. The Board meeting summary for March 2006 was approved with the clarification that the Board stated that it anticipated funding \$200,000 to \$250,000 in cooperative research in the 2007 Request for Proposals.

The Board received status reports from Keith Criddle on the Alaska Sea Grant Alaska Regional Marine Research Plan and from Molly McCammon on the Alaska Ocean Observing System and the status of the IOOS appropriation for FY07. McCammon noted that there was some likelihood that the 10 regional ocean observing organizations would each receive an equal share of the available funding, contrary to expectations that funding allocations would be proportional to the number of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) in a given region. DeMaster noted to the Board that such an approach would disadvantage Regions that contained multiple LMEs like the Alaska Region and the Pacific Island Region. The Board directed the executive director to write a letter to NOAA identifying the Board's concern regarding any funding allocation scheme that simply allocated an equal share of available funds to each Region, independent of the number of LMEs in that Region.

2. Budget Review

The Executive Director provided an overview to the Board of three current grants which are composed of earnings from the Environmental Improvement and Restoration Fund and federal appropriations. Grant 1 is coming to an end; 13.7% has been spent on administration and 86.3% on science. Grant 2 is currently supporting administrative expenses in 2007 (and part of 2008), as well as several projects funded in 2005 and 2006, and anticipated for 2007. It is anticipated that roughly 8% of the grant will be used for administration and the remaining 92% to support science. Grant 3 will support administrative expenses in 2008 and 2009, as well as new science initiatives. The earnings from the EIRF have steadily increased. The Minerals Management Service recently transferred \$7,839,598 to the Board as a result of earnings of the EIRF in FY 2006. No action on budgets was necessary or taken by the Board at this meeting.

3. 2007 Request for Proposals

Science Plan and Other Bases for Research Priorities

The Board was briefed on development of research priorities in the non-BSIERP RFP based on various source documents. Seventeen different sources were used to develop the priorities for this year's RFP as listed in the action memo for this agenda item.

Overview of Other Agency Research

Overviews of Bering Sea research were provided for the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center, the Bering Ecosystem Study (BEST), National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA North Pacific Climate Regimes and Ecosystem Productivity (NPCREP) program. These resulted from discussions of the Bering Sea interagency working group meeting in July 2006, a working group that has provided an excellent opportunity for agencies to communicate and coordinate and reduce duplication of research.

Bering Sea Implementation Plan

The Bering Sea implementation plan was summarized by Francis Wiese. Its components were discussed in context of the other agenda items below.

Part 1: Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Plan (BSIERP)

The Board reviewed the draft BSIERP which is intended to run from 2007-2013, including an organizational year, three field seasons, and two years for analysis and reporting. Its geographic scope includes the Aleutian Islands and Bering Sea.

It was noted that the statement of work should include an expanded synthesis toward the end of the six-year program that summarizes then current knowledge of the Bering Sea ecosystem and expands into other species and mechanisms beyond those specifically studied under the BSIERP.

Ecosystem Modeling Committee Recommendations

Dr. Daniel Goodman, chairman of the Ecosystem Modeling Committee (EMC), reported to the Board. The EMC has developed twelve ecosystem model evaluation criteria for the BSIERP, and an explanatory appendix. The Board did not express any reservations about incorporating the EMC criteria into the BSIERP or having the EMC review modeling components of proposals.

Potential NPRB-NSF Partnership

The Board has an opportunity to partner with the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fielding its Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program and was presented with a discussion paper of issues raised by the Science Panel concerning such a partnership. William Wiseman, Program Manager for Arctic Natural Science at NSF, was present to answer questions and offer clarifications as necessary. In discussion, the Board identified the following issues for resolution by NPRB staff working with NSF:

1. Geographic scope: what do we do with the AI if this goes ahead?
2. Data ownership: NPRB owns the data. NSF has different philosophy. Data ownership would have to be resolved for all data collected under the partnership.
3. Applicable science: difference in philosophies between two organizations.
4. Ongoing agency work: how do we ensure and provide linkages between existing programs to avoid duplication. Is this a role for the Bering Sea Interagency Working Group?
5. Fiscal risk for both organizations with committing long-term funding.
6. Integrated announcement: proposal review and approval process.
7. Team approach: should we consider one team funded under both programs?
8. Progress review: what will be the mechanism to make course corrections and bring people into line if progress is not satisfactory?

9. Timelines: how do timelines as outlined in BEST match with BSIERP and how do the additional modules fit into the long-term plan?
10. Carrying Costs: what are the carrying costs of running or maintaining the model after BSIERP is done? Who will pick up those costs?
11. Multiple BSIERPs: will future BSIERPs not have capability to deliver without an ongoing NSF partnership?
12. Ecosystem split: how exactly will the split be carried out in ecosystem research at macro-zooplankton and where does that leave the benthos?
13. Loss of sea-ice focus: is the fact that NSF's focus is on sea ice and ours is broader an issue?

After considering the BSIERP, as discussed below, the Board unanimously passed a main motion to endorse establishing the partnership with NSF and to instruct the executive director to work with NSF in resolving the above issues and others as identified. A letter of agreement addressing the issues would be developed for Board review at a meeting or teleconference on October 18, 2006. The schedule for releasing the BSIERP RFP would be revised as necessary to mesh with the schedule of NSF. It was noted that this is a unique opportunity, but these issues need to be addressed by staff. The goal would be to get as close as possible to having one team, working seamlessly and guided by tight protocols, under the twin banners of NPRB and NSF. The Science Panel's concerns should be addressed by the staffs. The schedule for release of the BSIERP could be delayed and separate from the schedule for release of the non-BSIERP RFP which is due out on October 6, 2006.

Approve Release of Part 1: BSIERP to the 2007 RFP

An overview of the BSIERP was presented to the Board by Francis Wiese. Incorporated in the BSIERP were the suggestions of the Board's Science Panel and Advisory Panel from their meetings on August 29-31 and September 11-12, respectively. After a preliminary, but thorough discussion of the BSIERP, the Board commenced making motions, moving through the document page-by-page:

A main motion was made to approve the BSIERP at \$14 million with Science Panel and Advisory Panel recommendations incorporated in the document. The \$14 million would cover the life of the six-year program, not just the 2007 RFP cycle. It also was noted that recommending \$14 million was not intended to be a broad policy change to the 60/30/10 funding split among the BSAI/GOA/Arctic large marine ecosystems that is currently used as a guideline by the Board.

Page 2: A friendly amendment was accepted to add LTK experts to the list of expertise envisioned for the multi-disciplinary teams.

Page 4: A friendly amendment was accepted to change the wording in the Science Panel recommendation from "remain a high priority for" to "are integral to" as it relates to forage fish and understanding energy flow to commercially important species and to protected species.

Page 5: A friendly amendment was accepted to change the annual maximum funding from \$4.3 million to \$4.5 million during the field years and indicate it was a planning number and may be changed in the invitation for full proposals based on a yet to be completed cash flow analysis for the Board.

Pages 6-7: A clarification was accepted to add a description of deliverables including models, reports, and synthesis documents.

Page 11: An amendment passed unanimously to reiterate the expertise language regarding team make-up from p.2 into paragraph F on p. 11, to add the phrase “and other organizations as appropriate” at the end of the first sentence, and to delete the Advisory Panel recommendation concerning requiring an MOU among institutions. An amendment passed to raise the education and outreach funding amount from the \$60,000 recommended by the Science Panel, to \$100,000, and it was noted that it will be deducted from the \$14 million overall cap on the BSIERP RFP. The applicants may provide detail on what they would do with the education and outreach funds if possible.

Page 14: In section 9 regarding graduate students and post docs, an amendment passed unanimously to delete all after “project team” and revise the remaining language to say “At least one graduate student and post doc is required to be part of the project team.” Under section 10 on LTK, a friendly amendment was accepted to delete the last sentence of the Advisory Panel recommendation to require that 5-10% of the total BSIERP funds be used for LTK related research and activities.

Page 17: A clarification passed to strengthen the annual review process in paragraph 5.

The main motion, as amended, passed unanimously. (As noted above under NSF-NPRB partnership, the actual release of the BSIERP would occur only after the Board reviews the letter of agreement and its provisions for addressing partnership concerns on October 18, 2006.)

Part 2: Non-BSIERP RFP

The Board was given an overview of Part 2, the non-BSIERP component of the 2007 RFP, and then proceeded to work through the tables and text accompanying the RFP.

A main motion was made to adopt the Advisory Panel recommendation for research priorities and funding amounts as shown in Table 1 in agenda item 3(f), with the following changes: (1) increase section 2(e) seabirds to \$500,000 and add (iii) on stressed and endangered species survival; and (2) increase section 5 on cooperative research to \$250,000.

Section 2(c): An amendment passed unanimously to clarify for subsection (ii) that bycatch-related topics also include studies of gear-induced injury and mortality, particularly those that are unobservable because of gear encounters at depth.

An amendment was passed unanimously to add subsection (v) on squid and shark assessment and use 2006 RFP language for the explanatory paragraph.

An amendment passed unanimously to increase funding for section 2(c) to \$1.2 million.

Section 2(d): A clarification was made to subsection (i) on sea otters to revise the order of likely causes for the sea otter decline so that killer whales came second after other likely causes.

A friendly amendment passed to add fur seals as subsection (iv) generally phrased as: “factors affecting survival of fur seals.” The Board stated its intent that new fur seal projects not duplicate current projects.

Section 2(g): A friendly amendment was passed to add subsections (i) Shipping risk assessment and (ii) Other, to the contaminants section. Amendments failed that would have reduced the contaminants funding to zero (vote of 4-13), and deleted the panel and increased the funding for contaminants research to \$300,000 (vote of 10 yes – 7 no, failing because of the negative vote in the executive committee). An amendment passed (13-4) to reduce directed funding for the contaminants panel to \$10,000.

Section 5: A clarification was made to this cooperative research section to add “directly” on line 6 of the explanatory paragraph before “engage the relevant industry”, to add a new clause (b) on the applicability of projects to address management needs for the applicable industry, and to delete of the fourth and fifth sentences of the section (i.e.: funding being contingent on favorable reviews, etc., and inclusion of the research priority does not guarantee that such projects will be funded) because they were redundant to other provisions of the RFP. The Board also intends to encourage cooperative research in other parts of the RFP.

A clarification was made to subsection 5(b)(4) to encourage an LTK component in any proposals to study salmon distribution and abundance in the Arctic.

Section 7: An amendment passed unanimously to delete the \$300,000 for graduate research fellowships. (The Board moved consideration of the graduate research fellowship program outside the current RFP because it did not fit well into the overall RFP. The program is discussed separately below and will have its own agenda item when discussed at future Board meetings.)

An amendment was made to apply proposal funding caps of \$250,000 to section 2(a-c), \$300,000 to section 2(d-e), and \$100,000 for section 2(f-g). A friendly amendment was accepted to place a proposal cap of \$100,000 on 2(e)(ii) beached birds. An amendment failed on an 8 yes -7 no vote (because of a failure in the non-executive committee voting group) to eliminate the \$300,000 proposal cap on section 2(d) (marine mammals). An amendment failed 7-8 to eliminate the \$250,000 proposal cap on 2(a) (lower trophic level productivity). The overall amendment, as amended, passed 11-4.

The main motion on Part 2 – Non-BSIERP RFP, revised as described above, passed unanimously.

Directed Funding of Monitoring Projects

The Board discussed directed funding for the M2-M8 moorings (\$200,000) and the GAK-1 mooring (\$100,000). While the Board did not disapprove of the funding amounts identified for each system, they did state their intent to discuss at their spring meeting whether these activities should be considered within the BSIERP for the M2-M8 line, and within the eventual GOAIERP for the GAK line.

Graduate Research Fellowship Program

A motion was passed unanimously to explore different models for a fellowship program and develop a discussion paper for the spring meeting of the Board. The fellowship program could be initiated under its own, separate RFP once all issues are resolved. (The Board addressed the GRF separately because it did not fit well within the context of the BSIERP RFP.)

4. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

The Board was presented with an overview and status report on developing the GOAIERP. There was considerable discussion of the inclusion of marine protected areas as a potential topic for a future IERP. Some members believed that it was moving too much into the policy arena and should best be left to policy makers and resource managers. The Board clarified that the MPA topic should be rephrased to be a spatial and temporal understanding of species, not an MPA.

5. Education and Outreach

The Board received a presentation on new initiatives for the education and outreach program. The Board did not raise any concerns with program directions or the schedule.

6. Community Involvement

The Board received the written report in the meeting notebooks, but did not discuss or take any action for lack of time in the meeting.

7. Other Matters

The Board briefly discussed processing of out-of-cycle proposals and adopted the staff's recommended approach with the caveat that the results of any final decision on a proposal should be relayed to all Board members.

The Board approved new 2-year terms for four members of the Science Panel: Richard Marasco, Shannon Atkinson, Dick Beamish, and Doug Woodby.

The Board requested a report on attendance patterns of Science and Advisory Panel members.

The Board passed a motion unanimously to approve \$20,000 for the conference on the Future of Fisheries Research, \$25,000 for each of two years for the National Ocean Science Bowl (\$50,000 total out of external meetings funds), and \$5,000 for International Whaling Commission meeting support.

The Board approved (with one objection) \$50,000 for the On Thin Ice project to be directed by Thomas Litwin during IPY, contingent on the project obtaining the remaining funds necessary to make it successful.

The Board scheduled a meeting (teleconferencing will be allowed) for the afternoon of October 18, 2006, to consider a letter of agreement with NSF. They will decide then about the proposed schedule for the April and June meetings of the Board.

The Board set December 4, 2006, as an all-day meeting to review pre-proposals to the BSIERP.

The Board adjourned at 12:08 pm on Friday, September 22, 2006.