

**Final Meeting Summary**  
**North Pacific Research Board**  
**Science Panel Meeting**  
**Seattle, WA**  
**April 15-17, 2008**

The Science Panel met on April 15-17, 2008 at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, Washington. The meeting was chaired by Rich Marasco and the following other members were in attendance: Vera Alexander, Shannon Atkinson, Jim Berner, Michael Dagg, Pat Livingston, John Piatt, Andre Punt, Michael Simpkins, Tom Royer, Pat Tester, David Witherell and Doug Woodby. The meeting was staffed by Clarence Pautzke, Francis Wiese, and Carrie Eischens.

**1. Call to Order and Approve Agenda**

**a. Welcome new member and election of Officers**

Pat Livingston was welcomed as a new member of Science Panel, taking the place of Anne Hollowed. Rich Marasco and Doug Woodby were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Science Panel.

**b. Approve Agenda**

Mike Dagg suggested adding a discussion item to the agenda on the process of the Science Panel reviews and whether they should occur before or after the technical reviews. The item was added under ‘Other Matters’ and the agenda was approved as amended.

**c. August 2007 meeting summary**

The Panel discussed whether they wanted to formally approve the summary of the previous meeting each time they meet or whether it should be done via email shortly after the meeting. As the summary is written immediately after each meeting in preparation for the Board meeting, it was decided that the Panel would receive the summary within two weeks, and provide comments back to staff within two weeks after that, at which point it would be finalized.

**2. Proposals Review for 2008**

The Science Panel was given a quick overview on past projects regarding their status (complete or on-going) and how they parse out into eco-system priorities. It was suggested by staff that this be taken into account if faced with a choice between equally meritorious proposals.

The panel reviewed 80 proposals that responded to the 2008 RFP (9 of 89 received were rejected earlier as non-responsive and not processed further). Each panel member did a primary or secondary review of 10-11 proposals, which included considering anonymous technical reviews and developing a summary recommendation on whether the proposal should be funded. The two members presented their findings to the full Panel which then proceeded to develop funding recommendations for consideration of the Board. Science Panel conflict of interest procedures were reviewed and followed during the meeting.

Again this year, the Panel concluded that there were many high quality, competitive proposals, and wanted to fund more than was allowed by the funding targets listed in the RFP. As with last year, the Panel created a second tier of quality proposals that deserve consideration if the Board chooses to fund at higher levels than the \$4 million indicated in the RFP. Overall, the panel recommended 22 proposals for

funding totaling \$4,085,973, and another 21 tier 2 proposals totaling roughly \$3.93 million. The panel's considerations of the various sections of the RFP are presented below. This summary will be accompanied by a spreadsheet showing the proposals identified for tiers 1 and 2, and a document which summarizes the panel comments on each of the 80 proposals.

Oceanography and Lower Trophic Level Productivity (RFP Section 1a): This was a competitive section with requests for more than three times the amount of funds allotted to this category. The panel recommended funding the three proposal submitted under this category for \$462,992, exceeding the section target of \$350,000. One proposal was placed in Tier 2.

Fish Habitat (Section 1b): The panel did not recommend either of the two proposals submitted under this category for funding, but placed both in Tier 2.

Fish and Invertebrates (section 1c): Requests for more than \$6.2M were received under this category. The panel recommended funding ten proposals for \$1,999,865, almost twice the section target amount of \$1,100,000. This was a very competitive section and the panel recommended another eleven proposals totaling over \$2.14 million in Tier 2. Because several of the other sections did not received high quality proposals, the Panel decided not to try and adjust this particular section down, as the funding target overall was still met.

Marine Mammals (section 1d): The panel recommended funding one proposal for the full amount of \$176,349, remaining substantially under the section target of \$500,000. No proposals were placed in Tier 2.

Seabirds (section 1e): This was a highly competitive section with requests for almost five times the amount of funds allotted to this category. The panel recommended two seabird proposals totaling \$586,437, thus exceeding the \$350,000 section target. One proposal was placed in Tier 2.

Humans (section 1f): Unfortunately none of the 6 proposals received under this category were considered of high enough quality to recommend for funding. No proposals were placed in Tier 2.

Contaminants (section 1g): Three good quality proposals were submitted under this category. The panel recommended funding two proposals totaling \$188,770, exceeding the section target of \$100,000. The third proposal was placed in Tier 2.

Local and Traditional Knowledge (section 2): Requests in this category were for almost four times the funds allotted. The panel recommended funding one proposal for \$99,535, directly on target for this section. One proposal was placed in Tier 2.

OSRI-NPRB Collaboration (section 3): The panel adopted the recommendation of a subcommittee of the two science panels for the OSRI and NPRB to only support proposal #74 submitted under the socio-economics sub-category. The proposal was placed in Tier 2, and no other proposals were supported. Even if this proposal were supported for funding by the Board, the total amount of \$74,989 would still be substantially under the collaborative section target of \$200,000. As a result, the OSRI Science Panel was interested to also look at approximately 10 proposals submitted under the regular sections of the RFP to see whether there was interest to co-fund a meritorious proposal there.

Cooperative Research with Industry (section 4): More than three times the amount available in this category was requested. The panel recommended funding one proposal for \$209,900, staying substantially under the section target of \$400,000. Two proposals were placed in Tier 2.

Community Involvement (section 5): The panel did not recommend funding the one proposal submitted to this category.

Aleutian Islands (section 6): The panel recommended funding two proposals totaling \$362,125, just over the section target of \$350,000. One proposal was placed in Tier 2.

### **3. Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program**

#### **a. Status Report**

The Panel was given a status report on the Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program. They were informed of the changes and additions made to the BSIERP and BEST project, especially LTK and patch-dynamics, as well as of the program and data management structures developed to ensure program integration. In general, the Panel was impressed with the program, progress and efforts made, but expressed concern about the additional \$2M allotted to the patch dynamics study. It was found that a lot of effort goes into the review of regular proposals and the Panel spends a considerable amount of time assessing recommended proposals and target funding amounts. It was felt that a decision involving large sums of this kind should be made conservatively.

#### **b. SP involvement in BSIERP progress and review**

Many of the Panel members have not been part of the BSIERP process to date because of conflicts of interest. Now that all funding decisions have been made, the full Panel talked at length about their future involvement in the progress evaluation of the program. It was felt by all that an annual review of some sort is necessary and that the Science Panel, combined with the Ecosystem Modeling Committee could serve as such a group, interacting primarily with the BSIERP Science Advisory Board (SAB), which is charged with program integration and synthesis. There was agreement that the major objective of such an annual evaluation would be to assess the progress made towards integration, the biggest challenge faced by large multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional programs. Specific terms of reference for the review committee would need to be developed and Mike Dagg, Mike Simpkins, and John Piatt volunteered to act as sub-committee to work on these terms. It was determined that staff would send a strawman to the sub-committee in early May, and that they would forward this to the entire Science Panel by mid May for review. This would allow enough time to have a document ready to discuss with the SAB in early June. In terms of timing an evaluation/review meeting, it was felt that a meeting between the SAB and the evaluation committee would be most appropriate in conjunction with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in late January. This would give time for the PI meeting to occur in the fall, for the SAB to formulate a summary and strategy for the next field season based on that meeting, but would still be before the beginning of the following field season, which generally starts in March.

### **4. Long-term Monitoring**

The issue of NPRB's role in long-term monitoring was discussed with the aim to develop a better strategy for the Board than the current practice of direct funding some projects and funding others through the RFP process on a year-to-year basis. General consensus remained that long-term monitoring should be a legacy of the Board, and as such there should be a longer-term, coordinated, and objective strategy to choose and evaluate monitoring projects.

There was much discussion on how to achieve this, but in the end, the Panel recommended:

- Provide no further direct funding to any projects.

- Develop final proposal evaluation criteria between now and August. The most important aspect should be the fact that monitoring projects must satisfy more than the needs of their own project (i.e. have broader applicability). The burden of proof for these criteria would be with the proposers, but the projects do not have to be hypothesis driven.
- Develop a long-term monitoring section for the 2009 RFP for \$700,000/year for 5 years with the intention to fund 3-5 projects.

## **5. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program**

Staff provided some of the background history regarding the development of the GOA-IERP and gave an extensive presentation on the suggested new modular approach briefly introduced in the August 2007 meeting. Overall, the Panel liked the ideas and approach, and commented that this approach is ambitious but will work if the scale can be properly determined. It was suggested that the hypotheses should drive the modules, and that a fifth possible modular approach (4 were presented) could be to start with a meta-analysis of retrospective data in each area, the next module being modeling, and then the process studies directed by the previous two efforts. The Panel also brought up the issue of ship support and that it was a concern to assume this would be funded through matching funds given the current federal budgets. Some members suggested that perhaps the GOA-IERP should be held off one more year to work on a MOA with the federal agencies to secure ship time.

In the end, the Panel suggested staff develop an RFP based on this modular approach in which an example would be given indicating the type of outcome which would result from each of the alternative modular approaches presented. The expectations of the proposers would depend on which of the modular approaches is chosen. Finally, it was pointed out that the current approach still needs to better clarify the mechanisms that will ensure that no single entity can dominate the proposal process, and that efforts for partnerships directly with the EVOS Trustees should continue and that a partnership with CAMEO, as suggested, would be worthwhile exploring.

## **6. Graduate Student Fellowships**

A sub-committee of the Science Panel and staff reviewed and selected the top 10 graduate student fellowship proposals, and recommended their top 5 for funding – Atwood (MSc), O'Brian (MSc), Hunsicker (PhD), Janout (PhD), and Young (PhD). The top ten proposals were all of extremely high quality and it was very difficult for the Science Panel to narrow down the field to the five ultimately recommended for funding.

## **7. Other Matters**

### **a. Workshops**

Staff gave the Panel an update on the various past and planned workshops as detailed in the Action Memo. Regarding the Arctic Workshop, the Panel noted that some efforts of this kind had been done in the past, but that it would be worthwhile to pursue in Alaska with this more narrowed focus, and that it would very likely provide the information staff was looking for.

### **b. Meeting schedule**

The panel identified August 26-27, 2008 for their next meeting to be held in Anchorage.

**c. Science Panel review process**

The Science Panel spent some time discussing their own review process in light of the variation in quality of the technical reviews. The main question was whether Panel members should conduct an additional technical review prior to looking at the peer reviews, or whether they should just focus on synthesizing all the reviews and provide a broad summary to lead the discussions at the meeting. In the end, it was concluded that the system will have to remain flexible. In instances where there were not enough or only cursory reviews, Science Panel members with the appropriate expertise could also function as additional technical reviewers (in which case those would be provided to the applicants), but in instances where technical reviews were sufficient, the role of the assigned Panel members would be one of synthesizing.