

SUMMARY
North Pacific Research Board – Science Panel Meeting
August 23-25, 2016

The Science Panel met August 23-25, 2016 at the NPRB offices in Anchorage, AK. The meeting was attended by panel members: Carin Ashjian, Courtney Carothers, Colleen Duncan, Stew Grant, Melissa Haltuch, David Hill, Tuula Hollmen, Pat Livingston, Lloyd Lowry, Pat Tester, Tom Royer, Suzann Speckman and Diana Stram. Panel members Milo Adkison, Phil Mundy, and Polly Wheeler were absent. Chris Siddon (Chair) attended via teleconference. Tuula Hollmen served as chair for the Science Panel. The meeting was staffed by Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Susan Dixon, Denby Lloyd, Jo-Ann Mellish, and Brendan Smith.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Science Panel Co-Chair Tuula Hollmen started the meeting by asking the Science Panel and Staff to introduce themselves to the group. New members Colleen Duncan, David Hill and Diana Stram were introduced. Following introductions, there was a safety briefing. The agenda for the current meeting and the minutes for the prior meeting were approved. Susan Dixon reviewed travel claim protocols.

2. Budget Review

Denby Lloyd provided an overview of the current status of the budget and future projected earnings of the Environmental Improvement Restoration Fund (EIRF). NPRB income is stable to slightly declining. The budget for the 2017 grant application and a funding projection were provided as reference. The discussion of potential future scenarios that move away from annual RFP or IERP models is anticipated to return to the panels and Board in the spring.

3. GSRA

Jo-Ann Mellish presented an overview of the 2016 GSRA process and awardees. The Board selected 3 Master's and 3 Doctoral level students from an initial pool of 49 applicants. The number of submissions was similar to past years both overall and by degree level.

The new online submission system was positively received and will be updated with only minor changes for the 2017 funding cycle. Announcements for the 2017 opportunity are expected to be released in October, with the online system to be live in December. The deadline for the 2017 award applications will be 4pm, Friday, February 17, 2017. All reference letters will be submitted via a link sent directly to identified references rather than via email.

4. Core Program

Jo-Ann Mellish provided a summary of the proposals selected by the Board for funding in May 2016. A total of 22 projects were awarded a cumulative \$4.18 million dollars. This included 17 Tier 1 proposals, 1 Tier 2 proposal, and 4 proposals with the newly-introduced Tier E rank. Metrics on the overall success of highly-ranked proposals in comparison to previous funding cycles were presented. The distribution of funds by large marine ecosystem was also presented in the context of prior years. The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands region consistently ranks as the highest funded region for the core program. When viewed by research category, the Fishes and Invertebrates category is the recurring largest area of support. The science panel was disappointed that only \$185K out of a possible \$600K in the Human Dimensions category was selected for funding, given the high quality of proposals received for that category this year (6 Tier 1 proposals of which 5 also were called out by the Advisory Panel). This was

particularly disappointing given the hard work by the NPRB staff, panels, and board to nurture interest by social scientists in seeking funding from the NPRB and the resulting surge in high quality proposals.

There are currently 59 active projects, not including the new 2016 projects. This represents more than \$13 million in active funding. There are a large number of projects that will be closing in the upcoming weeks due to the pending end date of the EIRF Prime 5 award. Progress reports have been migrated to an online submission through the Ocean Workspace for all 2015 and later projects. Projects initiated before 2015 will continue to submit reports via email during this transition period. It is anticipated that final reports will also be submitted via the Ocean Workspace as of January 2017. The partnership with Axiom for data and metadata review has been very productive and additional staff have been recruited to assist with this task. There was concern expressed by several members of the panel on the lack of funded proposals in the Human Dimensions category in 2016.

5. 2017 Request for Proposals

A new template for the 2017 request for proposals (RFP) was introduced. The panels and Board had noted in recent meetings that the structure of the RFP was outdated and lengthy, containing language from many prior years that was in need of updating. The revised structure included a more descriptive front page and a bulleted list of topics under each research category. The bulleted list was split into two levels, one that is intended to capture longer-term interests and issues that will remain for several funding cycles (general topics of interest) and a second category of shorter-term issues that are more specific and can be revisited each cycle (issues of particular interest).

Matt Baker gave an overview of the suite of organizations, agencies and individuals that provided input for science plan recommendations. There were more than 40 suggestions received through the online submission system and via direct email. Some specific recommendations with formal letters were highlighted. Several organizations have exhibited interest in co-funding with the 2017 RFP, similar to the Oil Spill Recovery Institute arrangement for review and support. Language to this effect has been added to the draft RFP for the coming funding cycle. Feedback was requested from the SP on the opportunity to leverage additional funds. It was suggested that a mechanism to allow proposers to identify which organizations they would wish to have consider their proposal could be integrated into the submission system. It was requested that a link to each organization be provided for reference, as PIs may not be familiar with all organizations.

The Science Panel reviewed the bullets under each research category in detail. The bullet format was unanimously endorsed and the overall cleaner approach to the RFP was well received. Panel members worked as a group to design the general topics of interest to encompass broad subjects that are intended to be standard language for several funding cycles. Specific fine-detail revisions were then completed by volunteers for each category.

There were several logistic updates to the proposal structure and online submission system presented, including a revised organization of pages, removal of current and pending forms, and streamlining of budget pages. The intent to increase the period between RFP release and submission dates by 3 weeks was appreciated.

6. Science Plan Update

Matt Baker updated the Panel on the structure and timeline of the Science Plan revision. The groups involved in the process were presented for reference in agenda Attachment 6.1. The assignments intended for the SP in the summer were postponed on the basis of recommendations from the external

review committee, which has proposed a new structure for and categorization scheme for the packaging of research priorities. The Science Plan Working Group endorsed the shift in schedule. The Science Panel representative for the Working Group is Pat Livingston.

The Vision, Mission and Goals have been reviewed and will not be changed. There were significant changes in the research categories suggested by the External Review Committee to accommodate the type of research proposals NPRB has received in recent years. The Review Committee felt that the changes would allow flexibility for the range of both single and multidisciplinary academic and applied research and explicit management and ecosystem information needs expressed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and other agencies. There will be updates to the funding metrics, guidelines and processes and approaches to research funding. There are new sections outlining the varied programs (Core, IERP, LTM) as they were not in existence at the time of the first science plan. Part of the review process involves an External Review Committee. The Committee is composed of nine senior experts across a broad sweep of academic disciplines with a range of institutional affiliations. This group was developed with the guidance of the Working Group and Board. The External Review Committee met for two days in May, 2016, and will reconvene for a two-day review either immediately prior to or after the 2017 AMSS meeting. The Committee recommended that the updated plan be concise and general. There should also be broad articulated priorities for funding over a 5- to 10-year period, with specific transparency as to how priorities are identified. Additional detail on geographic boundaries were recommended as well as concern expressed over the current 'silo' approach to categories. Integration across research areas could be better achieved with new priorities. The development of an integrated research category presented in the 2016 RFP was not adopted by the Board. To this effect, the Committee recommended a revision of the research categories to support a broader range of research approaches and efforts and to better align research priorities with explicit management and ecosystem information needs. Their recommendation is to consider adopting the following broad research categories based on a modified format used by the NPFMC to identify research priorities, including: habitat, ecosystems, population assessment, fishery management, and protected species. The categories of human dimensions, data rescue, technology development, cooperative research with industry, and community involvement would be retained.

Denby Lloyd, Matt Baker and Jo-Ann Mellish attended the June NPFMC meeting and there was endorsement of a higher level of collaboration between the NPRB and NPFMC and use of similar systems for identifying priorities. In subsequent discussions, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) of NPFMC strongly endorsed the recommendation for the NPFMC to work in concert with NPRB to develop a coordinated scheme for categorizing research priorities, as well. There was also a strong endorsement from the SSC for the structure developed and recommended by the NPRB external review committee. It is noted that fisheries management is well represented on the NPRB external committee.

There was a mixed response from the Science Panel regarding the new proposed categories. Recognizing a diversity of opinions, the individual opinion of each Science Panel member was requested by the panel Chair. The split was roughly even with five members in favor of the new research categories or a slight modification of them, four members opposed to revision, and four members who endorsed the need for revision but expressed reservations about some of the themes. Endorsements of the proposed revision included: better alignment with explicit management and ecosystem information needs, better accommodation of the current range of multidisciplinary and ecosystem-related research NPRB already receives, and the aggregation and consolidation of smaller categories under broader themes to allow more opportunities for a wider range of research (e.g., seabirds). Concerns included: the broad categories, the applicability to NPRB research, overlap with agency mandates, and that the

current system has worked well and investigators are used to it. Broader categories may also concentrate funding on a few topics, for example on fisheries research, at the expense of other research areas. There was also a concern that moving forward with these, or any new categories, may provide an impediment to compiling tracking metrics with prior years.

Overall, there was some agreement that it would be beneficial to explore different category descriptions that would allow for broader research approaches. It was suggested that the current research categories might be able to undergo a moderate restructuring to achieve the same effect. A multi-disciplinary or multi-trophic level category could be rotated with a more specific focus section as an alternative. It was also suggested that human dimensions could be added as a bullet under each category leading to increase awareness of that discipline. The Panel recessed for the day to consider the categories overnight.

Each panelist provided insight and discussion points on the potential restructuring the following morning. In general, the sentiment was that the suggested categories as developed by the external review committee did not provide a superior format to the current category structure and also that the current structure did not necessarily support all types of research relevant to the NPRB. There was no definitive agreement on what a new category structure should look like, nor was there recommendation on specific changes to be endorsed. The concept of encouraging more inter-disciplinary research was positively received, however. Matt Baker noted that he would work with Pat Livingston, the Science Panel representative on the working group, to convey any updated information from the Board meeting to the Science Panel to ensure that the Science Plan update stays on schedule.

7. Communications and Outreach

Brendan Smith presented a proposal to update the Outreach component to the Core Program. The proposal had multiple recommendations designed to address both administrative issues with the current structure and to promote robust and innovative outreach solutions. The foundation of this proposal was to introduce a standard option for proposers that is composed of 5-6 a la carte options or an optional, but highly recommended, full outreach proposal. The components of submission, review and administration were detailed for the panel.

The proposal was well received by the Panel with the Panel offering numerous comments on the innovative nature, timeliness, and positive direction of the proposal. The general concept of both outreach options was endorsed by the panel.

Discussion about the outreach proposal provided some additional considerations to the approach, including a standard option budget range of \$2,500-\$5,000 rather than a fixed amount, selections within the standard option that allowed for more flexibility and community involvement, and further description about each standard option selection. The stakeholder selection within the standard option could also be expanded to include additional criteria. The full outreach proposal was also discussed, and the Panel offered suggestions to improve contingencies and requirements. The Panel did express concern about the administrative work required to process another award and the requirement for PIs working in coastal communities to submit a full proposal. Additionally, PIs should be encouraged to participate in community-based outreach without submitting a full outreach proposal. The Panel noted that they would wish to review all of the outreach proposals before any tier ranking of the science submissions were assigned.

A preview of the new website design was provided. The new website is scheduled to launch prior to the Board meeting. A driving force behind the recent update is to streamline content to improve user accessibility, develop a more advanced content management system, and capitalize upon the scrolling environment most familiar with mobile devices. Rather than multiple pages, the content is contained in bins on the same page for scrolling or a single horizontal navigation bar. New content on outreach and science communication resources was featured.

8. Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Danielle Dickson presented an overview of the proposals selected by the Board for the new Arctic IERP. There were five proposals selected for the combined program. The lead PIs were Seth Danielson, Carol Ladd, Ed Farley, Henry Huntington, and Kate Stafford. A modeling component was not funded at this time. The program will focus on oceanography and lower trophic levels in the northern Bering Sea and Chukchi Sea during springtime, and oceanography, lower trophic levels, fish and seabirds will be studied over the Chukchi Sea shelf during summer and fall. Spring surveys will occur in 2017 and 2018 to look at the issue of winter reset. Summer surveys will occur in 2017 and 2019. A Steering Committee (SC) consisting of the five lead PIs was established to facilitate collaboration and communications among the various projects.

A kick-off meeting was held in Anchorage, June 21-23, 2016. This included both project investigators and representatives from more than twenty collaborating projects. The minutes from the meeting were provided as reference in agenda Attachment 8.1. During the kickoff meeting, the PIs crafted a statement to describe the overarching goals of the combined project, and identified potential data gaps in the existing structure. All PIs and Appendix A partners were invited to submit two-page proposals to the SC to address these gaps with the intention that NPRB might apply approximately \$400,000. Eleven summaries were received (requesting a total of \$1.26 million) and five were selected by the SC to be considered by the Board, totaling \$588,200. The Science Panel did not voice any concerns over the scope of the funded program or the recommendation of the Arctic IERP Steering Committee to address data gaps. The lack of a modeling component was raised, but it was noted by staff that the Board had opted to not include a modeling section in the original program composition. Modeling proposals were received in the gap proposals, but they were not selected by the Steering Committee.

A logistics planning meeting will be held November 14-15 to finalize plans for fieldwork and to develop standardized data collection protocols. PIs will discuss sampling priorities in the context of both individual projects and the overall program in the event that days are lost to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

A Communications Plan was prepared and presented by NPRB staff, along with upcoming planned travel to engage with local communities prior to the first field season. Courtney Carothers is the Science Panel member on the working group. This plan was brought to the PIs at the kick-off meeting. The full plan is provided in agenda Attachment 8.2. It includes guidelines for interactions with stakeholders and communities during three different phases of the research (planning, operations, and reporting). There was effective feedback and no objections from the PIs. Staff will continue to interact with the working group to help facilitate communications.

Clarification was requested on the availability of berths for local community members on the vessels, as well as the overall plan for feedback to the communities. Staff noted that there is at least one berth on every leg of the cruises. The intent was to review and potentially adopt the terms of standard care currently being prepared by the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee. The Panel recommended careful

consideration of the terms of this document when it is released. There were concerns about setting a precedent that the research community will be held to in the future, and it was recommended that staff investigate similar approaches with other relevant funding agencies working in the region.

The panel noted that the science of the program was robust, but that there may not be sufficient detail to make the program attractive to local community members without some additional strategy in public relations. There was also concern that the program may encounter a conflict avoidance strategy from local communities that would greatly inhibit the ability of the team to achieve their field objectives. There has been a disconnect in some communities to discern the difference between large-scale industry vessel disturbance and the smaller-scale research vessel interactions that are more likely to take place. The pull-out of the large oil companies has created a vacuum in some support services that were covered by private industry funding, such as communication centers. If communities anticipate that research groups wishing to work in the area will replace this funding, the relationship may be untenable.

9. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Danielle Dickson provided an update on the status of the final reports and close-out process for the GOAIERP. One report is still outstanding. The first special issue of Deep-Sea Research II dedicated to this program will be published in the fall. A second issue is also anticipated and it is possible that there will be third and fourth issues. The first three special issues have already been paid for. PDF copies of the articles will be available on our website through a special agreement. The Panel noted that a hard copy was not necessary, but that they should be compiled on a USB drive.

The GOAIERP synthesis is expected to stay on schedule, with monthly conference calls, a workshop in February 2017, and wrap up in early 2018.

10. Other Matters

Two candidates for Executive Director were selected from an initial pool of 14 applicants for a second, in-person interview. The Board has decided on a single finalist who will be invited to their September meeting in Sitka for an in-person meeting.

The spring meeting Science Panel will be held for five days during the week of March 27-31, 2017, in Seattle, Washington. The fall meeting is currently scheduled for three days during the week of August 21-25, 2017 in Anchorage. Preferred dates were August 22-24. There was a request to investigate options for a reception for panelists and Board members during the AMSS meeting. There was also a request to include an evening social event for the Science Panel during the fall meeting in addition to the spring meeting.