



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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North Pacific Research Board Fall Advisory Panel Meeting Summary September 12-13, 2017 Anchorage, Alaska

The NPRB Advisory Panel (AP) met September 12-13, 2017 at the NPRB offices in Anchorage, AK. The meeting was attended by panel members: Edward Poulsen (chair), Nagruk Harcharek (co-chair), Reid Brewer, Ruth Christiansen, Melissa Good, Mitch Kilbourn, Brian Lynch, Laura Morse, Steve Reifenstuhel, Matt Robinson and Verner Wilson. Mike Pederson was absent. The meeting was staffed by Betsy Baker, Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Susan Dixon, Jo-Ann Mellish, and Brendan Smith.

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Executive Director Betsy Baker welcomed the Panel and provided a safety briefing. Several new AP members were present; AP and staff members introduced themselves.

A motion was entered to approve the agenda and it passed with no objection.

A motion was entered to approve the minutes of the spring AP meeting and it passed with no objection.

Staff provided the minutes of the fall Science Panel meeting for reference.

Travel claim regulations were introduced by staff.

The AP Chair and staff provided an overview of the role of the AP, an explanation of the NPRB annual cycle, and a summary of the responsibilities of AP members.

2. Budget Overview

Staff presented an overview of the NPRB budget, including projections through 2023 based on a 2.1% interest rate on the ten-year treasury notes in which the Environmental Improvement and Restoration Fund (EIRF) is invested. Staff explained that during their fall 2017 meeting the Board will discuss strategic planning and the balance of available funds among the various programs that NPRB supports in light of a decline in revenue.

Staff expressed interest in hearing from AP members about the funding climate for the research that is of interest to stakeholders. AP members reported the following:

- U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Alaska Region may see declines in the funding for the Environmental Studies Program.
- University of Alaska is seeing a decline in new student applications (up to a 20% decline for some programs) likely due to perceptions surrounding the budget crisis in the State of Alaska.
- Alaska Native organizations are finding that grant funds for supporting natural resources projects, co-management, and local and traditional knowledge studies are scarce.
- Bristol Bay fisheries research organizations are concerned about cuts to the State of Alaska budget resulting in conservative harvest limits due to uncertainty in fish estimates.

3. Communications and Outreach

Staff provided an update on the funding of companion outreach proposals for the Core Program in 2017, explaining that the Board decided to fund five proposals totaling almost \$60 K. An AP member questioned why the Board did not elect to provide the maximum \$80 K that was available. Staff explained that the Board determined that the other outreach proposals in competition did not merit support based on evaluation by the SP and AP. Staff described some ideas for improving the process for soliciting companion outreach proposals, and those ideas will be presented to the Board for consideration. The AP expressed appreciation for those ideas, especially because the proposed changes would decrease the burden on the AP and shift the review of companion outreach proposals to the fall meeting, when the AP workload is lower. Staff further explained that beginning in 2018 research proposals submitted to the Core Program will be required to include a more robust description of their plans for community and stakeholder engagement under a separate "Engagement Strategy" section.

The Board will be asked to consider increasing the cap on outreach proposals to \$20 K instead of \$15 K and increasing the total funds available to \$125 K instead of \$80 K. If agreed, this change would be accomplished by reducing the funds available for funding science via the Core Program. AP members expressed support for this change, especially given signs of growing science skepticism and increased uncertainty for science funding; it should be a priority to communicate to the public the importance of the research that NPRB funds. An AP member added that public accessibility to the information that results from NPRB research is very important. An AP member suggested that an alternative to raising the specific dollar amount committed to companion outreach proposals would be to define NPRB's investment in outreach as a proportion of the total allocated to funding the science for the Core Program.

An AP member noted that a July deadline for companion outreach proposals may be difficult for applicants in Alaska Native communities given other activities that occur at that time of year.

AP members discussed the importance of meaningful metrics for the success of outreach products. They emphasized that metrics should focus on what audiences learn from NPRB outreach and how that information might be applied, not simply how many people are reached. An AP member suggested that companion outreach proposals should be required to define expected outcomes in terms of what the audience will get out of the proposed activity.

A motion was entered to support raising the cap for companion outreach proposals to \$20 K and raise the total target funding goal for those proposals to \$125 K. The AP also expressed support for the proposed changes to the process for the solicitation and review of companion outreach proposals. The motion passed with no objection.

The AP expressed interest in ensuring that NPRB support for outreach is adequate and suggested that NPRB evaluate the success of outreach initiatives using pre-defined metrics and perhaps consider increasing the investment in outreach over time, assuming that outreach efforts have proven successful.

Staff described communication and outreach activities that have occurred since the spring meeting, including the redesign of the website for the Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS). The Communications and Outreach Director participated in the spring research cruise for the Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program and he described his experience and showcased the blog for the program.

4. Graduate Student Research Awards

Staff provided a brief summary of the Board's decisions on the 2017 Graduate Student Research Award (GSRA) applications, explaining that two Master's and four Ph.D. students were supported. For the benefit of new AP members, staff summarized the process that the AP will use to evaluate GSRA applications in 2018. More detailed information was provided in written form, including information on prior awardees and a list of their publications. A new AP member asked what deliverables are expected of GSRA awardees and the Program Manager explained the requirements (e.g. providing a copy of the masters or doctoral thesis, participating in AMSS, etc.)

5. Core Program*

Staff explained that during its spring 2017 meeting, the Board decided to fund 28 proposals totaling \$4.6 M (this included \$100,000 in support from the Oil Spill Recovery Institute). Of the proposals selected for funding, 17 were flagged by the AP as having particular community or stakeholder relevance. An AP member pointed out that in 2017, three Tier 2 proposals were funded, two of which were flagged by the AP, illustrating the weight of the AP comments. A new AP member pointed out that the Board did not fund one proposal that was ranked Tier E and was confused by the Board's decision.

Staff summarized the process for evaluating Core Program proposals and detailed the AP review criteria. Staff also introduced the NPRB conflict of interest policy.

The 2018 Request for Proposals (RFP) was introduced and AP input was solicited. Staff provided information about the input that NPRB received that was the basis for developing the 2018 RFP. The AP was asked to comment on the topics of particular interest under each category in the RFP and the draft that the Board will review incorporates the AP suggestions. Staff specifically requested AP input on the language in the RFP that will solicit an engagement strategy and the language that the AP recommended is the following:

Engagement Strategy (500 words):

Strong interaction and engagement among stakeholders and/or target audiences is expected of all proposals, regardless of the type of study. Emphasis should be placed on the incorporation of clearly described, project-appropriate methods of communication and participation and/or engagement. Applicants are encouraged to visit [Communications and Outreach Resources](#) for ideas on how to creatively engage audiences and incorporate a variety of knowledge sources. All funded projects will be expected to have one team member attend a communication workshop at AMSS.

Innovative approaches to the inclusion of local and/or traditional knowledge, communities and/or stakeholders in project planning is encouraged. Applicants should identify which groups were involved and at which stage in the project. Dissemination of results and their utility to stakeholders must be clearly defined. **Proposals for research engaging or impacting Alaskan communities are strongly encouraged to include a letter of support from the appropriate local or tribal governing bodies at the time of submission.**

The AP discussed three potential topics for the Focus Section of the 2018 RFP: Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands, Bogoslof Island Ecosystem, and Interdisciplinary Studies. The AP noted that Interdisciplinary Studies allows equal opportunity for funding for all regions of Alaska, whereas the other two topics are region-specific. The AP further noted that research on the Bogoslof Island ecosystem could be proposed

under Interdisciplinary Studies and although examining recent changes on Bogoslof Island is an interesting ecological topic, it does not address a pressing stakeholder concern. The Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands topic does address an important fishery management issue, especially in light of expected management changes to Pacific cod which could separate the stock between Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

A motion was entered to express AP support for the Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands topic as a Focus Section and the treatment of Interdisciplinary Studies as a separate funding category in the 2018 RFP. The motion passed with no objection.

6. Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff introduced the Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (Arctic IERP), highlighting funding support from partners at the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies Program, and Office of Naval Research Marine Mammals and Biology Program, as well as in-kind contributions from National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and National Science Foundation. The collaboration of the 22 projects listed in Appendix A of the Arctic IERP RFP was also highlighted. Staff summarized the various science projects that comprise the Arctic IERP and pointed AP members to the website for more detailed information.

Staff reported that the 2017 field season has been very successful thus far and no conflicts with local communities have been identified, thanks in large part to an effective communication strategy. A report that presented preliminary results from the spring cruise was provided, as well as a separate report prepared by the community observer from Little Diomedes who participated in that cruise. The summer/fall cruises are still underway at the time of this meeting.

Staff explained the intent to communicate with Appendix A project representatives following the 2017 field season to explore specific ideas for collaboration. An AP member expressed appreciation for the coordination role that NPRB has assumed in orchestrating collaboration with the Appendix A projects to best leverage investments in the Arctic.

An AP member asked if the Arctic IERP will collaborate with the recently-funded NSF Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) site that will study coastal lagoons in the Beaufort Sea. Staff intend to pursue this with the Lead PI, recognizing that the data collected by that program will be geographically separated from our research in the Chukchi Sea and will be focused much more on inshore areas, yet may present an opportunity for comparative studies.

7. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff introduced the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (GOAIERP), summarizing the scientific focus of the program for new AP members, and explaining that the program is currently in a synthesis phase. Staff described the progress of the synthesis and the outcomes of a workshop that occurred in February. In discussing the outcomes, staff explained several ways in which the results of GOAIERP are being applied to fishery management in the Gulf of Alaska, from influencing the decision to split the Ecosystem Considerations chapter of the SAFE report into separate sections for the Eastern and Western Gulf of Alaska, to providing data for improving stock assessments for several groundfish species, for example.

Staff explained plans for a special session and workshop at the 2018 Ocean Sciences Conference to highlight the results of GOAIERP and organize Principal Investigators (PIs) from several recent projects in the Gulf of Alaska to discuss recommendations for future research in the region and opportunities to leverage investments like the recently-funded NSF Seward Line LTER.

AP members expressed appreciation for the detailed overview and summary of lessons learned and pointed to the IERP as a "pinnacle of ecosystem-based fishery management". A senior AP member stated that the IERP model has provided a great body of knowledge and NPRB needs to continue this type of work.

8. Partnerships in the Core Program

Staff explained that NPRB has partnered with the Oil Spill Recovery Institute to fund research through the Core Program and NPRB is considering expanding that model to pursue partnerships with other entities. The Board will discuss the development of a formal structure for establishing additional partnerships. The Board has discussed a desire for potential partners to commit a minimum of \$100 K given the additional administrative burden associated with each new partnership. Advantages to partnership include leveraging additional funding to support research that meets NPRB's mission and bringing in the perspectives of other organizations with similar missions.

Staff suggested that AP comment on any of the following could provide useful input to the Board: the proposed approach and timeline, appropriate level of partner engagement in developing research priorities, appropriate level of partner input on funding decisions, approaches for identifying and evaluating appropriate partners, and/or means of offsetting administrative costs.

AP members discussed the suggestion that partners commit to partnership over three to five years, as opposed to making annual commitments. While many potential partners are operating in an uncertain fiscal climate that might make long-term commitments difficult, AP members felt that this expectation was not unreasonable if partners were to decide that partnership with NPRB was a priority, and partnership agreements would include a clause stating that partner contributions are contingent upon available funds. An AP member noted that the \$100,000 level might be affordable for some organizations but make it more difficult for smaller Alaska Native and non-profit entities to participate.

AP members noted that for industries, partnership with NPRB should be seen as a benefit because research that is needed by a given industry can be solicited and managed by an independent third party, removing the perception that it was funded by industry and therefore may be biased. This may even improve dialogue between industries and the scientific community. An AP member noted that there are existing models that NPRB could use as a reference, including the Joint Industry Program supported by the oil and gas industry.

In discussing whether NPRB should approach potential partners or simply advertise interest broadly and wait for potential partners to approach NPRB, an AP member stated that if the goal is to bring in additional funding, then allowing partners to define the goals for the research is key. An AP member suggested that perhaps NPRB should explore developing Focus Section topics with partners to target specific areas that partners are interested in supporting. Another AP member pointed to the cruise ship industry as a potential partner that might provide non-discretionary funds to support the type of research that NPRB funds, and further suggested that perhaps those funds could be used to match funds for specific topics suggested by other partners. An AP member expressed concern over partner influence

over the direction of NPRB research priorities. NPRB staff explained that Board expressed its intent to continue full Board control of developing the Core Program RFP using the existing NPRB process.

The AP recommended that conversations with potential partners to brainstorm ideas for structuring effective partnerships would be valuable before the Board decides on a course of action. The AP noted that the question of appropriate level of partner engagement in funding decisions is a difficult one.

AP members noted that partner contributions to administrative costs should be expected and that this could provide a benefit to NPRB given the administrative cap on the EIRF.

A motion was entered to recommend that the Board establish a working group for developing Core Program partnerships. The motion passed with no objection.

9. Science Plan Update

Staff provided a brief history of the process for updating the NPRB Science Plan and detailed the advice provided by the External Review Committee. Staff discussed the expected role of the AP in writing the updated plan and requested input on several sections, including the Introduction and sections on Human Communities and Industries; Research Approaches and Partnerships, and Outreach. The afternoon was dedicated to working in small groups to edit those sections and revised language was reviewed by the entire AP the following morning.

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

9. Science Plan Update, continued

The AP continued their discussion of the Science Plan Update on Wednesday morning after revising specific sections overnight. Revised language recommended by the AP will be reflected in the draft presented to the Board.

In discussion of the section of the Science Plan Update that deals with outreach, AP members shared broad suggestions for improvement, including the recommendation that staff consider more carefully the desired impact of outreach on the audience. The AP suggested that staff develop metrics that go beyond tracking the number of people reached and develop more sophisticated metrics to track the impact of outreach activities. One example offered by an AP member was that a poll could be conducted following a presentation to ask if the audience learned new information and if that information changed their views on the subject.

10. Operations Update*

Staff explained that NPRB is making every effort to reduce administrative expenses and detailed some examples, including a recent renegotiation of the lease for NPRB office space that achieved substantial savings.

NPRB has contracted a law firm to provide advice on the governance of NPRB, including its agreement with NOAA and the Alaska Sea Life Center (NPRB's fiscal agent), and relationship to the North Pacific Marine Research Institute. NPRB will also receive advice regarding its limitations for developing partnerships with other entities.

11. Strategic Planning

Staff provided background on the Board's recent and planned discussions regarding strategic planning, including how to structure the Core Program RFP, how to balance funding among the various programs that NPRB supports, and the consideration of the idea of a rolling submissions process for the Core Program.

With respect to the structure of the Core Program RFP, the AP supported shifting Cooperative Research with Industry to an approach that could be applied under any funding category instead of including it as a separate category with its own funding cap only if the Board also implemented a mechanism that would give added weight to cooperative research proposals when the Board makes funding decisions. The AP suggested that the RFP could communicate the Board's intent to fund a percentage of proposals that apply cooperative research with industry. A panel member suggested that Board could consider adding a bullet under topics of particular interest to call out cooperative research with industry specifically under the funding categories.

A motion was entered to state that the AP supported the SP's recommendation and further noted that the AP feels it is critical that a mechanism be identified to add weight to proposals during the review process for proposals that apply the cooperative research with industry approach and assuming that the existing review criteria are applied. The motion passed with no objection.

With respect to IERPs, staff explained the Science Panel suggestion that NPRB hold a public workshop at AMSS to gather a broad range of ideas for potential IERP topics from the scientific community. The Strategic Planning Working group agreed that the idea of a public session as a first step has merit, and perhaps a funded workshop would follow to develop one or two ideas more fully for the Board. Staff pointed out that if a funded workshop delivered a robust report, NPRB might eliminate the need for a pre-synthesis, thereby saving almost \$1 M and advancing the timeline for an IERP by a couple of years. Several AP members expressed support for the workshop approach. AP members suggested that the Board begin saving money for a future IERP so that it can be funded when the topic is decided, assuming that if a suitable topic is not identified before the money must be spent, then the funds can be added to the Core Program. The AP felt that NPRB should expect to continue funding IERPs, stating that it would be short-sighted to not continue to support these programs, and even if funds are limited, the Board needs to begin setting aside money for a future IERP.

A motion was entered to support moving in the direction of a new IERP and the AP thinks it is prudent to begin setting aside funding for such an effort. In addition, the AP supports the idea of a session at AMSS to begin generating IERP ideas. The motion passed with no objection.

Staff explained that the SP suggested a rolling submissions process for the Core Program and described how this has worked for National Science Foundation. AP members liked that this process would likely reduce their workload and spread it out more evenly over the year. It was noted that some proposers, including those associated with industry, would probably appreciate moving away from a December deadline because the fall is a difficult time to develop proposals. It was also noted, however, that some PIs, particularly the academics, might have a difficult time with the change, especially because the university system plans staffing of grants & contracts officers according to need based on proposal deadlines. The AP raised questions about how the Board would ensure that funds were available to support proposals in the second batch of a given year if many strong proposals were reviewed in the

first batch and noted that the Board should consider a process for dealing with this during their discussion.

In the interest of time, and given the written record of clear support from the Science Panel and Strategic Planning Working Group for continuing to fund Long Term Monitoring at existing levels, the AP did not discuss the Long-Term Monitoring Program.

12. Other Matters

Staff provided an update on planning for AMSS, noting that the website was redesigned this year to move to a more user-friendly platform that can be updated without contracting a developer. The NPRB Executive Director has begun reaching out to sponsors, and after explaining that several organizations reduced their contribution in 2017, some sponsors have responded by increasing their contributions in 2018. If the Board endorses organizing a session to solicit IERP ideas Panel members will be encouraged to attend.

The AP was reminded that their next meetings are scheduled for April 24-25 and September 11-12, 2018. Election of new officers will occur next spring, and at that time, the AP may consider moving elections to their fall meetings.

Staff briefly summarized requests for outside meeting support and pointed to more detailed information in the action memo.

New AP members were offered an opportunity to ask questions and senior AP members were encouraged to share their thoughts with new panelists. New panel members were encouraged to be ambassadors for NPRB among their respective constituents. Expectations for confidentiality surrounding proposals and the development of RFPs were discussed.

AP members thanked staff for preparing very valuable information in advance of the meeting and for their extra effort to provide background information to new AP members throughout the meeting.

Laura Morse will be stepping down from the AP and her service to the Panel was recognized.

A motion to adjourn was entered and passed with no objection.