

Memo**To:** North Pacific Research Board members, Science Panel members, Advisory Committee members**From:** CoV Report Task Force

Board	Science panel	Advisory panel
Ian Dutton	Vera Alexander	Gale Vick
Steve Maclean	Tom Royer	Jeff Stephan
Heather McCarthy	Doug Woodby	

Date: 7 April, 2011**Re:** Task Force Recommendations on CoV Report

 Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to submit herewith our consolidated advice to you on the 43 recommendations made by the Committee of Visitors in their December 2010 report. This advice takes into account the many inputs that each of you provided, as well as inputs we received from other NPRB stakeholders.

Our report follows the format and sequence of the CoV report. We provide a recommended response to each CoV recommendation and identify a mechanism for that response to be implemented where appropriate. You will note that there is some overlap between recommendations and there are some common themes to our recommendations. We would especially draw your attention to two key groups of recommendations:

1). those dealing with Conflict of Interest – we propose that the Board establish a new Task Force to develop a new Col procedure for the Board before the September meeting; and 2). those relating to our science strategy – we propose that the current Science Plan be revisited and upgraded or redone –we would recommend to you that a Task Force of Board, SP and AP members be established to begin that process once the new ED assumes her duties and that they provide an update and plan for completion of the work at the September Board meeting

We would ask that you endorse these recommendations (with any modifications as you see fit) and thus enable the Board to move quickly forward in positively addressing issues raised by the CoV.

We thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing improvement of Board policy and processes and stand by to answer any questions you may have when we meet on 27th April.

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General Directives Subgroup

Lead	Members
HMC	IMD, DAW, SAM

D1. Support a workshop to develop and adopt a cohesive policy on long-term monitoring and commit to a long-term strategy of consistent annual support for monitoring.

AGREE

The subgroup members agree that a workshop is needed to help develop Board policy on long-term monitoring, and recommend such a workshop be organized by the Board in 2011. The subgroup further recommends that the Board, Science Panel and Advisory Panel fully participate in such a workshop.

The subgroup members agree that the NPRB needs a strategy of consistent support for long-term monitoring, but recognize that the nature and level of that commitment should be subject to the findings of the workshop, and subsequent Board discussion.

One member of the subgroup suggested that the long-term monitoring policy discussion be part of a review of the overall NPRB Science Plan – it can be hard to separate some types of research from monitoring and equally difficult to undertake research without an adequate time series data record.

D2. Support long-term monitoring programs that include ecosystem indicators useful to stock assessments, as well as provide basic information that increases knowledge of Alaska marine systems.

AGREE

The members agree with pursuing this aspect of long-term monitoring, and believe the policy decisions coming from the general workshop discussed above should drive further development. The discussion centered around a potential second workshop on stock assessment indicators, put together with the help of a specialist working group.

D3. Give clear guidance to the Science Panel on expected recommendations so that the Science Panel reviews solely on the basis of scientific merit without fitting tier rankings to the budget. This replaces the current approach in which the Science Panel provides rankings of proposals that have funding allocation implications, rather than simple scientific recommendations.

AGREE

The subgroup members agree on recommending a key change: that the Science Panel should be directed NOT to attempt to tailor the total of Tier 1 (or scientifically meritorious) proposals to fit a funding limit, as they currently do. Instead, the Science Panel would provide the Board with a list of those proposals that have scientific merit, for their consideration. This would result in a system where the board makes the difficult decisions about proposals that are equally meritorious in terms of scientific quality, but may differ in terms of topical applicability.

The second recommendation is to have a discussion of the current tier system, and if a tier system is retained, to make the definitions of the various tiers more clear and specific. The Board needs to tell the Science Panel exactly what they want back from the Science Panel.

One member of the subgroup recommended a four-tier system as a straw man for discussion.

One member pointed out that many proposals will likely have scientific merit and be forwarded to the Board, and agrees that the proposals need to be broken down into further categories through a tier system so they can be more easily dealt with. There will be more of a burden on the Board to sort through the proposals if the Science Panel does not make the cuts in accordance with the funding available.

In addition, on a broader issue, one member suggested the Board needs to define what the short, medium and long-term priorities are for each category of research, to be used to guide Board resource allocation. Again, it was suggested that a new five-year Science Plan, which has lots of input from all the stakeholders, should be able to define what the key needs are for Alaska in a limited set of priority disciplines.

D4. Place scientific merit as a prime criterion for funding and ensure that when alternative criteria are used in the Board's funding decisions, the selected programs be designed to standards sufficient to produce scientifically valid conclusions.

AGREE

The members agree that if the Science Panel forwards to the Board their recommendations based on scientific merit, in some form of rating system, and the Board agrees not to fund proposals without scientific merit, then all the proposals funded by the Board will have scientific merit. However, not all the proposals with scientific merit can or will be funded by the Board.

Consequently, it must be stated clearly in each RFP that other criteria may be used or considered by the Board in making funding decisions, and those criteria must be clearly provided in the RFP. For example, those criteria could include, but not be limited to, the extent to which a proposal meets the research needs prioritized in that RFP, and the degree to which a proposal has the potential for providing information to address a pressing fishery management need.

The Board would clearly indicate whether and how any additional criteria were utilized in its decision-making process.

Research

Lead	Members
DAW	JS, GV, VA, SAM, TR

R1. develop a formal, transparent process for identification of research needs and priorities, and ensure that this framework be used to guide priorities and thematic allocations for funding.

AGREE

We recommend a simple, clear process allowing for input by a broad community, where brief recommendations are solicited from various agencies, scientists and reviewers, with recognition that we have a science plan that broadly identifies research directions. The process should allow for unseen needs and the flexibility for the Board to identify new areas. Too much rigidity would be unfortunate. We note that the Office of Naval Research has a similar annual process but it is a much more massive effort.

R2. require a section in final project reports that contains recommendations for future research that might be used, as appropriate, to guide development of future RFPs.

AGREE

We suggest that a template be provided with instructions to identify recommendations related to the completed project, not only at the specific project level but also at the thematic level. The instructions should also prompt for any identified needs for interdisciplinary research. We perceive a template with instructions to be useful to prevent long discourses on all areas for future research.

R3. establish a staff or consultant position for local and traditional knowledge (LTK) to assist with the NPRB proposal submission interface, and possibly develop a different proposal process that is not necessarily hypothesis driven.

AGREE BUT MODIFY.

A new staff position is unnecessary at this time and we suggest some options. These include 1) create a short-term consultant contract to develop ideas for the RFP process and how best to meaningfully include LTK projects, 2) identify a SP member who takes responsibility for promoting LTK, and 3) facilitate the process by way of an annual meeting of the AP and SP (for at least 1/2 day) to allow for dialogue and bridging between the two groups on this topic. The AP, which has an assigned person to promote LTK, went through a long process of figuring out what was needed on LTK and there was a specialized LTK group on this. It would be good to provide improved guidelines and proposal templates/formats for LTK proposals.

We do not agree that the current process requires hypothesis-based research for LTK proposals. The SP has evaluated many of these proposals based on data gathering or monitoring objectives.

R4. review funding of the human-related theme to improve the number and quality of proposals submitted for this theme and add a social scientist to the Science Panel to help critique human-related proposals.

AGREE WITH A CAVEAT.

The human-related theme concept has some built-in ambiguity that should be clarified. This deserves discussion with the SP and perhaps could be addressed with a short-term contract to review the RFP process and suggest modifications to better solicit human-related proposals.

In regard to critiquing human-related proposals, while the SP has only one social scientist, there is disagreement as to whether the SP needs more. It would be helpful to have a review of the workload relative to proposals in members' areas of expertise, recognizing that social scientists may be called on to review proposals in biology, oceanography, or other non-social science fields that they may not feel qualified to provide.

R5. sponsor a workshop to determine long-term monitoring needs and subsequently fund long-term monitoring projects that provide fundamental data needs for the scientific community.

AGREE

This workshop needs to have active participation from other federal, state, and NGO agencies and industry, with a potential goal of developing a consortium approach to funding. These groups might include NOAA, NSF, DOI, ONR, NASA, DHS, AOOS, ADF&G, EVOSTC, ASLC, PWSSC, UAA, UAF, UAS, PEW, and Murdock Foundation. The cost of long term, continuing, ocean monitoring may be large but because it benefits a wide spectrum of users, when its costs are distributed among them, it becomes more fundable. The AP should be equally involved in the workshop. Long-term data sets may be some of the most important and long lasting contributions that NPRB makes.

Annual Proposal Process

Lead	Members
SAM	HMC, DAW, TR

P1. allow a minimum of three months for proposal preparation and submission (same as

SUMMARY: The group cautiously agrees with this recommendation, provided that the extension for proposal preparation does not cause logistical difficulties. It is noted that there may be revisions to the RFP process to solicit input from different stakeholders, including researchers, before the development of the RFP. Any modification of the timeframe should not interfere with that process. Additionally, any change to the length of time for proposal preparation will have consequences on the rest of the process either in shortening the time for proposal review or delaying funding decisions by the Board. NPRB proposals are not as complex and difficult as NSF proposals, and should not require as much time. An alternative to a full three month process would be to extend the proposal submission time to 10 weeks rather than 8. The group recommends that the entire proposal process be evaluated to determine whether extending the time allowed for proposal submission will have negative impacts on the rest of the process.

P2. advertise RFPs in a wide range of publications and publication methods in order to

SUMMARY: The group agrees that distributing the RFP to as wide an audience as possible is important, but suggests that electronic distribution may be the most effective and cost effective method for distribution.

P3. document the proposal review process more completely; specifically the Science Panel must develop clear guidelines on how technical reviews and Science Panel internal reviews of proposals are integrated and incorporated into panel recommendations.

SUMMARY: The group agrees that good documentation of the review process is necessary. This could simply be documenting what the Science Panel already does, but specific effort should be made to document how conflicts between external reviews and Science Panel reviews are handled. The Science Panel already is very careful to document when there are differences between external and Science Panel reviews. Care should be taken to ensure that flexibility is written into the process. The point was made that often conflict occurs when external and Science Panel reviews are positive, but the Board decides not to fund the project. It is recommended that the entire process, including SP and external review, and Board review is documented.

This proposed change is similar to G2.

P4. engage more proposal reviewers from outside the Alaska science community.

SUMMARY: The group recommends the Science Director and staff continue to cast as broad a net as possible when soliciting external review, and that process should be documented.

Impacts

Lead	Members
VA	IMD, DAW, HMC

I1. document outreach and engagement at the project PI level by requiring that final project reports include a breakdown of outreach categories (e.g. conferences, workshops, newspaper articles, etc.)

AGREE

This is straight forward, and can easily be added as part of the report format. We also suggest that current information on publicity and publications also be communicated with the NPRB program in real time. This would help the overall outreach effort.

I2. implement the NOAA Sea Grant practice of retaining within the NPRB offices the funds from the “Publications” line on grants, then paying any resulting publication costs directly. This will permit authors to publish results using NPRB funds after a project has been completed.

AGREE WITH CAVEATS.

Recognize that there are publication costs, such as xeroxing, mailing etc. that must be covered by the PI through his/her institution. However, page charges, charges for color illustrations, etc. could well be covered centrally. Therefore, it might be best to 1) retain some funds from within grants, while giving the PI maximum flexibility in this and (2) set up a central publications fund which can be partly funded by these grants and partly funded by NPRB outreach funds to support ‘special editions’ and publication costs after grants have ended (e.g. where a PI is asked to do a synthesis of a topic that may be partly funded by NPRB and partly by other sources.) In this way, work that might otherwise not get published could be made available.

I3. compose an annual report of research findings specifically relevant to fisheries management and forward this report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

AGREE (esp. given the NPRB specific mandate to support the fisheries industry).

This could be done by staff member or a contractor with relatively modest effort (no more than say 160 hours of work for a publication that is not glossy, but a working paper presented at the NPFMC each year by the ED). However, we also recommend thinking more broadly about the impact of NPRB in order to better capture how our research shapes industry practices and on ground activities. To accomplish this we need a more overt commitment to impact assessment as a specific component of an updated Science Plan for NPRB. An Annual Report of activities would also help us share impacts in a more timely fashion with a broad range of audiences.

I4. include in proposal guidelines a “Results From Relevant Prior NPRB Research” section to be completed by proposers who have been previously funded by NPRB. This will provide reviewers with quick access to the proposer’s record of success, and will provide staff with a quick update of publication and outreach data.

AGREE

This is common practice among funding agencies, and we recommend implementation. It should be a very brief section, and not part of the page limit.

Governance

Lead	Members
IMD	HMC, GV, TR

G1. Develop a Policy and Operations Manual that codifies all current administrative policies and operating procedures and keep the manual up to date and modified whenever policies and operating procedures are changed.

AGREE

The group feels that this is a standard practice of all professional organizations. The question arose as to what extent these procedures can be defined solely (and separately) by the Board given the basis for legal establishment of the NPRB and so we will recommend that further input be sought from NOAA and the ASLC on matters where there is an overlap of responsibilities (e.g. staffing administration).

G2. Document the decision-making process and policy in the Operations Manual as well as the basis for the annual RFP funding allocations by thematic area.

AGREE

We have a clear operational approach to decision making and have a transparent process in place for defining the annual RfP priorities. However, as indicated elsewhere in the CoV review, there are aspects of the Board decision making process that are either not formally defined or which are not well understood by Board stakeholders. We recommend that these be addressed by the incoming Executive Director as part of her overall administrative remit and that she pay particular attention to improving communication of Board processes to stakeholders.

G3. Develop a proposal review procedure that clarifies the information the Board wants from the Science Panel, and ensures that the NPRB staff instructions reflect Board intent.

AGREE

We believe that this is urgently needed. This point is addressed in further in another WG response (D3).

G4. Implement a mechanism to develop stronger connections that will improve communication between the Science Panel (SP) and Advisory Panel (AP) and provide greater transparency to decisions of interest to both Panels. The Advisory Panel and Science Panel should meet jointly each year, perhaps at the annual Marine Science Symposium.

AGREE

We support the intent of this recommendation and propose that there be an annual overlap meeting between the Board, SP and AP of at least half a day so that we can address common issues and establish improved communication. The WG was not able to agree on the best time for that meeting, but possible options would include:

- a. a joint session in conjunction with AMSS; or
- b. a joint session as part of the September meeting at which the annual RfP is finalized.

G5. Foster improved communication between the Advisory and Science panels by allowing the Chair of the Advisory Panel to participate in Science Panel meetings, including proposal reviews, similar to the current procedure of allowing the Chair of the Science Panel to attend the Advisory Panel meetings.

See G4

G6. Appoint members of the Advisory and Science panels for specified terms not to exceed four years, with terms staggered so that the panels always contain both new and experienced members.

AGREE.

G7. Undertake an open review of the functions, responsibilities and relationships of the Advisory Panel, the Science Panel, and the board through a facilitated, joint discussion of issues.

AGREE.

However, we find this recommendation too general to be useful in framing next steps. We propose that at the next convenient meeting of each of these bodies (AP, SP and Board) that members be asked to define (a) what is working about current relationships and (b) areas for improvement. Those lists should then be brought to the next annual combined meeting of all three bodies and used as a basis for discussion.

G8. Monitor staff operations closely during the adjustment period that is sure to happen after the departure of the present Executive Director to ensure that NPRB program needs are being met. Recognize that it may be necessary to hire additional personnel during the transition.

AGREE WITH CAVEAT.

However, the WG expressed caution about adding staff that may become unsustainable in the longer term (support temporary hiring as needed).

Conflict of Interest

Lead	Members
IMD	JS, VA

C1. institute a stringent Conflict of Interest policy for the Board of Directors, and the Advisory and Science panels. The current conflict of interest policy is considerably less stringent than that of other government agencies. Policies that reflect national standards should be adopted, recognizing that a conflict exists if the presence of a person could affect the openness of the discussion and create an unfair competitive advantage for an individual or organization.

AGREE

As was noted at the CoV presentation, this is their highest priority recommendation and so merits careful evaluation. The Board has a clear CoI policy currently, but, as the CoV points out that may be subject to interpretation and so needs strengthening. However, there are many dimensions to this issue that the CoV did not differentiate. We therefore propose three specific actions:

1. Board, AP and SP members – we support strengthening of the Board CoI policy and procedures to address both actual and perceived conflict of interest and ensure that we maintain the highest standards of Board operations. This may require a multi-part approach from onboarding of members (perhaps train new members and have them sign a CoI policy statement) to reporting recusals more fully in meeting minutes. There is a lot of Board guidance in this area from high level Federal guidance (e.g. see <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/RegulatoryInformation/Guidances/UCM125646.pdf>) to more tailored guidance that better fits the circumstances of research committees (e.g., see IRS rules for non profits - <http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i1023/ar03.html>). **We recommend that the Board establishes a Board-staff task force to develop a new and comprehensive NPRB CoI policy for adoption by the Board at its full meeting in September, 2011.**

2. Staff and Contractors – all staff employment agreements and any contractor agreements should reference a standard for addressing potential conflicts of interest –we recommend that the new ED work with the Board to develop a comprehensive policy based on the National Science Foundation policy and that be part of the employment agreement of all staff and the subawards or any contractors.

3. ASLC and NOAA fiscal support roles – as fiscal agent for the Board, ASLC staff (and the ASLC Board representative) has a special duty of care. Similarly, the NOAA representative has a relationship within NOAA (to the Secretary of Commerce) and via the tripartite agreement between the ASLC-NOAA and NPRB that should be revisited to establish clear delineation of roles and responsibilities. The relationship between those three entities is subject to a separate legal review currently – we recommend that the results of that review inform any new CoI procedures for these entities and that those procedures be laid out in operational guidelines pertaining to the fiscal agent, NOAA staff and Board.

C2. ensure that persons who have a personal or organizational conflict recuse themselves from the discussion and not be present during discussion of the conflicted proposal with the following two caveats, which will provide greater breadth of discussion and fewer recusals during discussion of conflicted proposals:

AGREE, BUT WITH CAVEATS.

Recusal from discussions when a conflict of interest exists is obviously sound practice and one that we feel exists within the Board today. As noted above, we feel that the current policy should be strengthened and made clearer to all Board (and panel) members.

C2.1. Because of the scientific interests and corresponding high submission rate of scientists from Alaska NMFS, the legislatively mandated Secretary of Commerce position on the Board should not be the NMFS Regional Administrator for Alaska, the Director of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, or anyone who reports directly or indirectly to those individuals; and

C2.2. Because of the scientific interests and corresponding high submission rate of scientists from certain universities in the northwestern region of the United States, the Board member(s) who represent academic interests should not be affiliated with universities that currently have high NPRB funding rates. We recommend that faculty from universities receiving more than 10% of NPRB's science funding not be permitted to sit on the Board.

DISAGREE

We believe that potential for conflict of interest ought not limit appointment of Board members as this may disqualify the most appropriately qualified individuals and representatives. Consideration of prospective Board candidates and evaluation of any potential trade-offs rests with the Secretary of Commerce in the case of individuals nominated for service (such as academic representatives). For those individuals nominated by virtue of their ex officio status, we believe that it is incumbent on the relevant agency/organizational decision maker to select the person most qualified to represent that organization. A robust and transparent CoI policy (as outlined above) will help the representative ensure they effectively contribute to the Board and avoid perception of any conflicts.

C3. disallow a person who has submitted a proposal for the current year's call as a reviewer of other proposals to the same call because that person has a conflict of interest.

DISAGREE.

A person should not review proposals that are in direct competition with their submissions. However, a prospective reviewer could review proposals in a different part/section of the solicitation. That person should obviously disclose to the SP (and staff confirm) that they have a proposal submitted and the SP Chair should determine if there is any potential for conflict and ensure that the reviewer is not conflicted before sharing any proposal for review.

Accessibility

Lead	Members
DAW	ID, GV

A1. assume responsibility for tracking the submission of data, metadata, and publications, and continue this after the completion of projects. PIs of completed projects should be queried annually for three to four years after project completion for updated information on publications, data, and metadata resulting from the project funding.

AGREE.

A2. award the new contract for joint NPRB/AOOS etc. data management and serving, and migrate submitted data from funded and completed projects into the system.

AGREE

Comment: The AOOS contract was awarded, but more attention may be needed in regards to data integration. Clarification on the joint nature of NPRB/AOOS data management is requested.

A3. ensure that data sets resulting from NPRB funding be archived on appropriate servers controlled by the NPRB offices in Anchorage, and that basic web interfaces be used to provide direct online access to these data.

AGREE

Comment. We urge scientists to verify that direct access to these data is available.

A4. continue the one-day education/outreach workshops associated with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, which have been useful and well attended, through solicitation of proposals to run these workshops. Leaders of these workshops should develop metrics for gauging and reporting their success.

AGREE.

Comments:

- Currently, NPRB and COSEE AK are co-sponsors of the education/outreach workshop, with COSEE picking up most of the cost. There is now an actively engaged group planning each year's education/outreach event and it is not clear that soliciting proposals is needed.
- NPRB could be an even more effective player in the AMSS by making an even more significant investment of staff and funding into workshop planning and organization (for the AMSS as a whole) – we seem to under resource this and would benefit from making this the seminal NPRB conference investment each year (e.g. enabling all Board, SAC and SP members to attend and maybe even having an annual joint meeting of these as we did this year)
- The education/outreach workshops are evaluated and a report on the recent workshop is in preparation. One member suggested that it would be great to have more insightful evaluations.

A5. continue the strong and greatly appreciated outreach, engagement, and education activities, and continue to support these activities both within individual projects and in an omnibus (cross-project) format.

AGREE.

Comment: The Board may wish to consider instituting more structure in the program and more metrics to evaluate impacts. In support of the outreach efforts, we note that it is important that project information comes into NPRB in a timely manner and to have that information disseminated promptly.

The Integrated Ecosystem Research Programs (IERPs)

Lead	Members
JS	HMC, GV, SAM, TR

E1. suspend the current GOAIERP process and re-compete the program as a fully integrated IERP, modeled on the conceptual framework of the BSIERP.

DISAGREE.

The NPRB investment in the GOAIERP initiative should continue. The COV recommendations are relevant and useful, and are taken under judicious advisement by the NPRB. Canceling the GOAIERP at this stage is unacceptable because of the damage that would occur to the ongoing development and value of the information, knowledge and understanding that is the objective of this NPRB investment. The GOAIERP addresses important research objectives and environmental interactions that must be understood, and that are intended to provide value to the public and scientific community. Initiatives that address the COV recommendations have already been, or are in the process of being addressed (in part, see the August 30, 2010, letter from the Science Panel to the COV at Appendix III of the December, 2010, COV Report). The NPRB Board, Science Panel, and Advisory Panel feel that the GOAIERP is necessary and useful, even when considering that the resources that are available to the GOAIERP are not commensurate with those that are invested in the BSIERP, and, therefore, result in a GOAIERP that does not yet possess the same breadth or opportunity of integration as the BSIERP. NPRB will continue to institute mechanisms that address these COV recommendations.

E2. have only one ongoing integrated ecosystem research program at a time to avoid competition for limited resources (e.g., ship time, scientific expertise).

MODIFY.

While the NPRB has not formally restricted their investment to only one integrated ecosystem research initiative at a time, the benefits that are envisioned in this COV recommendation are addressed as a practical result of the manner in which the NPRB has phased and organized its investments in integrated research. That is, the BSIERP is phasing down, the GOAIERP is ongoing, and an Arctic IERP may soon be entering the planning stages. With few exceptions, these research programs should not occupy 100% of a researcher's time. The implementation of IERPs can be accomplished by developing schedules that avoid competing needs for ship time; the introduction of the R/V Sikuliaq is a beneficial development in this regard, though its daily costs will be considerably higher than most of the research vessels used by NPRB programs.

E3. plan integrated research programs as an ongoing activity with a basis in current NPRB research so that future programs can be defined far enough in advance to allow incorporation into the long-range plans of potential partner organizations. This is particularly important for programs that are dependent on ship availability, especially ships with icebreaking capability.

AGREE.

Outcomes from NPRB investments will benefit from moving more in the direction of this COV recommendation. This recommendation has special relevance to a potential Arctic IERP. Ship time support will become a much bigger problem in upcoming years as more expensive vessels come on line, and fewer agencies have the funds to support them. Attention to efficient planning will better address the competition for limited logistical resources and the integration of partner organizations, and may be best implemented through attention to developing a well defined five year science plan.

E4. partner with other agencies and work under a memorandum of understanding for development of future IERP programs

AGREE.

IERPs should be carefully planned to clearly define the scope, criterion and benchmarks of a specific research program. Partnerships with other agencies may increase efficiencies. While the outcomes and successes of the BSIERP-BEST program are difficult to duplicate, it is reasonable to seek to achieve the standards that guided the success of this program. Partnerships may be difficult to achieve at first, but the objective is worthwhile. If NPRB establishes Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as recommended by the COV, it may be constructive to set some guiding principles for such partnerships in the SOP.

E5. focus on the science needed to address overarching research questions in development of RFPs rather than on providing funding for specific groups, laboratories, or individuals. This would facilitate some latitude in interpretation of the relevance and responsiveness of particular proposals to the request of proposals.

AGREE.

NPRB has not developed RFPs or research plans that seek to fund specific entities. While NPRB conducts its activities that focus on science, and in accordance with the intent and spirit for programmatic planning that is expressed in this COV recommendation, it may be reasonable to more clearly communicate, emphasize and clarify NPRB fidelity to this principal, possibly through the RFPs and any SOP that the NPRB may determine to develop.

E6. recognize inherent differences in regions in the development of RFPs for integrated research programs. For example, the Gulf of Alaska is not a single system but rather at least four different ecosystems that interact.

AGREE.

The RFP for the GOAIERP was designed to be developed from the top down; i.e., the science questions focused on the upper trophic levels, and the other levels were added later to provide necessary information. This is different than most large programs that try to integrate from the bottom up. The GOAIERP is largely managed according to the premise that is represented in this COV recommendation. The GOA RFP has solicited researchers to describe where they intend to work, and how they would integrate disparate geographies and ecosystems in their research. It may be reasonable for the

NPRB to more clearly explain their process for addressing the integration of issues, including the NPRB expectations that proposers take the responsibility to address specific integration issues in their submitted proposals.

E7. recognize that IERP funding levels allow broad but not complete investigation. As a result, the IERP objectives should have tractable products commensurate with funding level and relevant to the specific questions posed by the program.

AGREE.

E8. consider development of a management structure, similar to the outside committee convened to oversee the ecosystem modeling program of BSIERP, for future IERPs.

AGREE.

The Ecosystem Modeling Committee was meant to impact all of NRPB, not just the BSIERP. Comparing the GOAIERP to the BSIERP may not be entirely applicable; therefore, the addition of an outside committee to the GOAIERP should not be automatic. While outside expertise adds capacity, it may be challenging to ensure the requisite commitment from a critical mass of the marine science community. A clear definition of the oversight responsibility and authority of such an outside committee should be clearly defined.

E9. solicit a higher percentage of reviewers from outside the Alaska science community for IERP proposals.

DISAGREE.

See P4.