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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 Meeting Summary May 1-4, 2017 NPRB Conference Room Anchorage, Alaska

The North Pacific Research Board met from May 1 through 4, 2017 in Anchorage, Alaska. In attendance were Dan Hull (chair), Tara Riemer (vice chair), David Benton, Forrest Bowers, Bill Britt, Dorothy Childers, John Gauvin, Becca Gisclair, Katrina Hoffman, Jan Jacobs, Doug Mecum, Gerry Merrigan, Mike Miller, Bradley Moran, Capt. Phil Thorne, and Dee Williams. Brad Smith joined the meeting at 4:00 p.m. on May 1. Heather Mann was absent. Seats for representatives from the Department of State and the Office of Naval Research are vacant.

The meeting was staffed by Betsy Baker, Matt Baker, Jo-Ann Mellish, Brendan Smith, and Susan Dixon. Danielle Dickson was on maternity leave. Two employees of NPRB's fiscal agent, the Alaska SeaLife Center, were also present for portions of the meeting: Kristi Elkins and Kristin Thoresen.

Panel member attendees for parts of the board meeting were Tuula Hollmen (Science Panel vice chair), Chris Siddon (Science Panel chair), and Nagruk Harcharek (Advisory Panel vice chair) by telephone for Agenda Item 1.

Other attendees for various portions of the board meeting were: Darrel Redford of the Office of Natural Resource Revenue; Molly McCammon, Alaska Ocean Observing System; Cheryl Rosa, US Arctic Research Commission alternate for David Benton; and Shirley Marquardt, Director, Boards and Commissions, Office of Governor Bill Walker, Alaska.

Monday, May 1, 2017

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Chairman Dan Hull called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm, and it was determined that a quorum was present. Staff provided a safety briefing.

MOTION: Elect Dan Hull chair and Tara Riemer vice-chair.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

New board members Bill Britt, Anchorage, AK, and Becca Gisclair, Bellingham, WA, were introduced. Nagruk Harcharek was introduced by phone from Utqiagvik/Barrow, participating remotely because he had been appointed vice chair of the Advisory Panel only six days before.

Betsy Baker, in her first meeting as NPRB Executive Director (ED), offered opening remarks, noting the opportunity the meeting presented for the Board to tie together its consideration of budget constraints, the science plan review, and strategic planning, and to make progress on all three. The diminishing funds available for research each year relate directly to the breadth of science NPRB tries to fund: e.g., are grants large enough to allow robust research in all categories all years; how should the Core program be balanced with integrated ecosystem research; and should existing research categories be reduced or alternated each year to provide continuity and adequate funding? These are just some of the questions the strategic planning working group is considering, and relate to the structure of research categories the science plan lays out. The agenda is structured to walk through budget and science plan background before the strategic planning discussions scheduled for May 4.

The existence of a quorum backup plan was mentioned, for the event the Department of Commerce approval of board appointments had not been timely.

TASK: Staff was directed to present options to the Executive Committee for reducing the chance that the appointments cycle could deny quorum.

MOTION: Approve agenda, with minor additions as discussed.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The additions to the agenda were: Molly McCammon (AOOS) lunch presentation, Wednesday, May 3; Item 13e. Strategic Planning, to discuss ideas for developing the 2018 RFP; and Item 14d. Other Matters, to discuss adjusting timing of gubernatorial and other appointments to reduce their impact on achieving quorum.

The Board next moved to approve the meeting summary for the fall 2016 board meeting:

MOTION: Approve summary from September 2016 Board meeting as written (draft of October 14, 2016).
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Staff provided a summary of NPRB's travel reimbursement regulations, noting Alaska Airlines now charges for seat upgrades, which are not reimbursable under NPRB's travel policy.

The Board had no questions on the spring 2017 science panel report, or the advisory panel (AP) report. The Executive Director and, by phone, the AP vice chair summarized the latter. The Board planned to consult with the AP vice chair by staff email throughout the meeting as needed, rather than having him remain on the phone the entire meeting.

2. Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRAs)

The Board requested the ED recommend the appropriate GSRA funding levels for 2017, given budget constraints. She recommended funding no more than the usual six GSRAs at a total of \$150,000. The only exception to this level was 2015 when significant additional funds allowed the Board to fund nine GSRAs. One board member suggested stating more clearly the objectives and

factors for awarding GSRA. Staff indicated that the science panel considers the students' level of study, CVs and other materials submitted in addition to the proposals.

Staff reported a total of 48 applications submitted for the 2017 GSRA program, twenty at the Master's level and 28 at the PhD-level. The awards are for \$25,000 each. The board heard SP summaries of the top ten MS students and top nine PhD students. For student ability and research quality, the MS students reviewed had achieved a minimum ranking from the panel of two very goods, and the PhD students one excellent or higher. All 19 received a consensus "fund" recommendation from the science panel. The board noted that four of these MS candidates and five of these PhD candidates had received a flag from the advisory panel.

MOTION: Award applications 1537, 1552, 1553, 1556, 1566, and 1584.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The motion for the 2017 GSRA program results in granting two MS-level awards and four PhD-level awards, for a total of \$150,000.

3. Budget Review

The Executive Director provided information about NPRB's operating budget and projections for declining revenues in future years, assuming an annual yield rate of 2.1% on ten-year treasury notes and a 6.9% sequestration rate. Both assumptions are more conservative than projections offered to NPRB by the Office of Natural Resource Revenue and NOAA. The Board expressed support for this approach. Staff noted that the negative balance of just over \$150,000 projected for unobligated funds under Grant 8 was based on preliminary estimates from NMFS but posed the larger question of how to manage the lower funding levels over the next three years. The reduced funding levels projected for Grant 8 reflected the cumulative effect of lower interest rates in recent years. The modest increase in interest rates anticipated for the short term, however, will not have a significant effect on the continuing overall decline of funds NPRB can expect for future grants.

The Strategic Planning working group, convened in Fall 2016 to address projected declines in grant funding, provided the board with additional information on budget considerations under Agenda Item 13.

Based on information gathered from contacts in Washington, DC, and at NMFS-Alaska Region, the Executive Director told the Board that the NPRB grant awards are expected to be subject to sequestration for the next two years, which would be Grant 8, Years 1 and 2 [Note: this information is contrary to information provided to the Board at its fall 2016 meeting]. Those contacts also advised that NPRB not seek delegation support for challenging the sequestration at this time.

Darrel Redford, Supervisor, General Ledger Team at the Office of Natural Resource Revenue, joined the discussion by teleconference from Denver and presented a brief history of the Environmental Improvement Restoration Fund as the primary source of NPRB grant funding.

4. Communications and Outreach

Staff presented an overview of the new Companion Outreach Proposal (COP) program endorsed by the board at its fall 2016 meeting. Because the COP and the Core Program decisions relate to each other, staff provided information on the COP review process in advance of the Board's Core Program deliberations and before the COP vote scheduled for later in the meeting.

Applicants to the 2017 RFP had the option of submitting a COP alongside a science proposal to seek up to \$15,000 to create strong outreach products. A total of \$80,000 from the C&O budget has been allocated to fund this first round of COPs from a line item other than the Core Program budget. Proposers choosing not to submit a separate outreach proposal were required to select one of several standardized outreach options defined in the 2017 RFP and allocate \$2,500-5,000 towards outreach, which would come from the Core Program budget.

For this first-ever COP cycle, forty-four COP proposals were received, requesting a total of \$563,949 in funding. These figures well exceeded the dozen or so proposals staff expected to receive. COPs associated with a Tier 3 Core proposal were not considered by the advisory or science panels, nor will the Board review them unless members request. See Agenda Item 12 below for the Board's review of COPs.

Staff touched briefly on other items detailed in the C&O memo for this Agenda Item 4. The new web design launched last fall is well received and board members commented on its usefulness and appeal. The C&O director led the effort to redesign the biennial report for a cleaner, more easily readable document that saved more than \$13,800 in production costs compared to the last biennial report. Communications plans for the 2017 Arctic IERP cruises were touched upon, and NPRB projects that were highlighted in the media were showcased and links to articles provided. The Board acknowledged the successful efforts of the Communications and Outreach Director.

5. Internal Systems update

The internal systems update was moved from Monday to Wednesday to accommodate an overview of the Core Program and Companion Outreach proposal review processes.

6. 2017 Core Program

Staff provided an overview of the 2017 Core program proposals cycle and reviewed how the Board would discuss and vote on those proposals at the meeting.

A total of 138 proposals, requesting just over \$32 million, were received in response to the 2017 Core Program request for proposals (RFP) which had a funding target level of \$4.55 million.

The science panel ranked five proposals as Exceptional (\$1 million), 31 proposals as Tier 1 (\$8 million), 59 proposals as Tier 2 (\$14 million), and 35 proposals as Tier 3 (\$8 million). Twenty-nine proposals were highlighted for stakeholder relevance by the advisory panel. The Prince William Sound Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) expressed interest in supporting three of the proposals, should the board recommend them for funding.

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

2017 Core Program (continued)

Staff and science panel members provided a brief description and panel summaries of each of the Core Program proposals that had been ranked by the science panel as either Exceptional or Tier 1. Tier 2 titles were noted and summaries read in full upon request. Proposals ranked as Tier 3 were not described or discussed. The Board discussed proposals of interest as each was presented. In discussing oceanography modeling proposals, board members recalled that the synthesis phase of the Arctic IERP will offer a modeling component. After all proposals were discussed, Staff responded that the discussions had provided excellent feedback for use in communicating decisions to proposal authors.

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

2017 Core Program (continued)

The board discussed, via main motion and amendments, all Core program proposals that were ranked Exceptional, Tier 1 and Tier 2.

MOTION 1: Recommend to the Department of Commerce all Exceptional and Tier 1 proposals received in response to the 2017 Core RFP.
Action: Motion passed with no objections after the following motions to amend:

MOTION 2: Remove proposal 137.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 3: Remove proposals 134 and 136.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 4: Remove proposals 117.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 5: Remove proposal 113 and not fund any focus proposals.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 6: Add proposal 100 and remove proposal 91.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 7: Remove proposals 59, 64, 73, 76, 82.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION 8: Remove proposals 5 and 6.
Amendment to Motion 8: Remove only proposal 6.
Amendment action: Motion withdrawn.
Action: Motion 8 passed with no objections.

- MOTION 9:** Add proposal 9.
Action: Motion withdrawn.
- MOTION 10:** Remove proposal 23.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 11:** Remove proposal 17.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 12:** Remove proposal 21.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 13:** Remove proposal 34.
Action: Motion passed with three objections.
- MOTION 14:** Remove proposal 25.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 15:** Remove proposal 38.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 16:** Remove proposal 37 and add proposal 20.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.
- MOTION 17:** Add proposal 125 and remove proposal 24.
Amendment to Motion 17: Remove 31 instead of 24.
Amendment action: Amendment failed 7-7 with one recusal.
Action: Motion 17 passed with no objections
- MOTION 18:** Add proposal 87, remove 45
Action: Motion failed 10-5 with one recusal
- MOTION 19:** Restore proposal 24
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Combined, 28 projects were funded for a total of \$4,637,574, including a total of \$100,000 via OSRI co-funding of two proposals, 42 and 132. The net effect was a recommendation to the Department of Commerce to approve funding of \$4,537,574 to be distributed among 28 specific projects in NPRB's 2017 Core Program. The selected proposals include four ranked Exceptional by the science panel and only three that were ranked Tier 2.

5. Internal Systems Update

Staff provided a brief overview of significant updates to NPRB operating systems and protocols since 2013. These include a new suite of online proposal submission systems, an online peer reviewer survey, and a system to allow staff to more efficiently assign and manage proposals, enable online peer review, and facilitate Science Panel access to proposals, reviews of colleagues, and final tier ranking and summaries. Staff and board acknowledged that these systems are a marked improvement from past systems and significantly streamline the review process for all involved.

Before the Board turned to Panel Nominations, **Molly McCammon, Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS)**, provided a summary of AOOS' work relevant to NPRB, including Long-Term Monitoring, the Harmful Algal Bloom network and the Ocean Acidification network.

6. Panel Nominations

The ED and chair of the Nominations Committee summarized the committee's meetings and recommendations.

Advisory Panel: Eight nominations were received for seven vacancies. This unusually large number of open seats is due to the Board's decision last May to extend by one year the terms of six AP members, all of whose terms thus expired in May 2017, and to the departure of Anne Vanderhoeven. She resigned upon moving from Alaska, before being able to attend an AP meeting. Nagruk Harcharek was the only AP member whose term ended May 2017 eligible for a second term. Laura Morse, appointed in May 2016, has since moved from Alaska.

MOTION: Appoint for three-year terms Mike Pederson (Arctic); Reid Brewer, Mitch Kilborn, and Brian Lynch (Gulf of Alaska); and Melissa Good, Matt Robinson, and Verner Stor Wilson (Bering Sea).

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Reappoint Nagruk Harcharek (Arctic) for a second 3-year term.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Extend Laura Morse (Arctic/oil and gas interest) through the Fall 2017 meeting, and direct the Executive Committee to appoint a replacement for the remainder of her term, through May 2019.

Action: Motion passed without objection.

TASK: The Executive Committee is to appoint a replacement for Laura Morse through May 2019.

Science Panel (SP): The ED reported receipt of an unusually large number of nominations (15) for the three vacancies. The panel's responses to the Nominations Committee request to identify expertise gaps, if any, on the panel were: 1) the SP did not identify any such gaps; 2) its changing membership necessarily means that at any given time some disciplines will not be represented; and 3) it is more important to have panel members who can think broadly and system-wide, bridging disciplines from their respective areas of expertise, than it is to fill a particular subject matter gap.

After consulting with the science panel this spring as to the desirability of expanding its size to address increased work load and proposal review conflicts, and after considering the added cost of a new member (\$1,000 to \$3,000 per meeting depending on their residence), the committee recommended adding one seat, to increase the SP to eighteen members. As with all SP seats, the new seat is to be filled with expertise needed at any given time and not designated for a specific discipline.

Considering all of this information, the board then voted as follows on the science panel seats:

MOTION: Appoint Stew Grant for one additional year to provide genetics expertise, and direct the committee to seek genetics experts in the next call for nominations.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Appoint Tom Weingartner.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Appoint Leandra Sousa.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Appoint Brad Harris.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Expand the Science Panel by one undesignated seat and appoint Matt Reimer to serve in that seat.

Action: Motion passed unanimously

TASK: Nominations Committee is to include genetics expertise in the next call for SP nominations.

7. Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff summarized significant levels of activity for the Arctic IERP, whose first two cruises launch in spring 2017. At its fall 2016 meeting the Board acted on a science panel recommendation to fund five projects that filled gaps in the Arctic IERP: Phytoplankton-related measurements on spring cruises; ASGARD – Productivity Fractionation; F/ASGARD – Fish; Seasonal distribution and energetics of Arctic fishes in the Chukchi; and Microzooplankton biomass and grazing rates. Representatives of these projects attended a Logistics Planning Meeting in November 2016 and are integrating their work with the Arctic IERP. All 24 PIs participated in the spring 2017 planning meeting, which members of the IERP Chukchi Coastal Communities project team also attended, bringing together natural and social scientists with these community representatives for discussion of research plans, hypotheses, and conceptual models.

NPRB staff and the Arctic IERP Lead PIs who plan cruises in 2017 have presented at Alaska marine mammal commissions and other venues to introduce the program and plans for field operations, including NPRB-hosted hub/community meetings in Kotzebue, Nome, and Barrow/Utqiagvik. The aim is to communicate the goals, purpose, direction and field program for the Arctic IERP and to solicit community and tribal representatives for input and potential opportunities to use traditional and local knowledge, develop a better framework for communicating research results to communities, and to improve engagement. Community members will participate on both 2017 cruises, and NPRB's Communications and Outreach director will participate for part of ASGARD cruise on the R/V *Sikuliaq*.

8. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff provided an update on closing out the main projects associated with the Gulf of Alaska IERP, and shared select results presented in the final reports. The first special issue in *Deep-Sea Research II*

dedicated to the Gulf of Alaska IERP has been published and was released online in fall 2016. A second volume is published electronically and is now in print production. The ongoing synthesis phase includes monthly conference calls that continue to facilitate information sharing among project participants and the extremely productive second synthesis workshop in February 2017).

9. Partnerships in the Core Program

The Science Director briefed the Board on partnerships in the Core program. NPRB and the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) have had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since 2005 allowing OSRI to co-fund Core program proposals up to a total of \$100,000 per RFP cycle. Because the NPRB-OSRI MOU no longer reflects the streamlined procedure developed over the years for OSRI's confidential review of proposals, NPRB is in the process of revising the MOU. This revised MOU will serve as a template for other Core partnerships the Board approves. In fall 2016 the Board agreed to share Core proposals with two other potential Core partners – the Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center (PCCRC) and the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) – suggesting a \$100K minimum commitment from each partner, if MOUs could be finalized in time. At the Board's direction staff included a notice in the 2017 RFP that proposals might be shared with those entities. Because the OSRI MOU revisions are ongoing, that template is not yet available for use with other potential partners. OSRI was the only partner with whom NPRB shared 2017 Core proposals.

Staff noted that Core Program partnerships are distinct from those established for specific Integrated Ecosystem Research Programs.

Board members discussed how to approach Core proposal partnerships generally. Several pointed out that NPRB's founding legislation gives OSRI a seat on the Board and that new potential partners identified to date do not have that status. Others suggested that criteria for becoming a Core partner should be identified before any additional partnerships are launched beyond OSRI. The proposed timeline for partners to review proposals was discussed, noting that funding cycles may pose coordination issues. Partnerships should not disrupt NPRB's established processes and should not influence the RFP drafting other than through usual channels for community input. One board member saw no urgency to establish new partnerships, questioned whether staff should spend time pursuing them, and urged a targeted approach to only those potential partners that share mutual interests with NPRB.

The Executive Director noted extra administrative costs imposed by each new partnership. Every entity has a different funding cycle, mechanisms for transferring funds, and other details to be worked out on an individual basis, requiring significant staff time for NPRB and its fiscal agent, the Alaska SeaLife Center. She suggested that partnership MOUs might require contributions to NPRB's administrative costs for new partnerships. The science panel vice chair noted the panel's suggestion that partners should commit to a certain minimum number of years as well as a certain dollar amount. Staff noted that partners such as BSFRF would have to choose in any given year whether to submit a proposal for funding or to be a funding partner, but could not do both.

TASK: Staff will provide a Core partnership update and MOU template for the fall board meeting.

12. Companion Outreach Proposals

The agenda order was modified to allow the Communications & Outreach Director to provide an overview of the review and voting process for Companion Outreach Proposals (COPs) scheduled for Thursday, May 4. More detail on COPs appears at Agenda Items 4.a. above and 12 below.

Thursday, May 4, 2017

11. Science Plan Update

Staff provided background on the science plan revision process begun in spring 2016. This has involved an External Review Committee (ERC), Science Plan Working Group, Science Panel input, and staff support. Meetings of these groups are detailed in the memo for Agenda Item 11. A main goal is to streamline the Science Plan to serve as a general source of guidance for research funding decisions.

Following the Board's spring 2016 response to acknowledge but not endorse the ERC's interim 2016 report, which had drawn close parallels between the NPFMC's research priorities and those of NPRB, and further discussion at the ERC's January 2017 meeting, the ERC produced a draft Final Report in February 2017, as detailed in the meeting materials for Agenda Item 11. The report recommends a focus on key overarching science questions, such as the effect of changing ocean conditions on commercial, subsistence, and sports harvests, on ecosystem structure in the Gulf, Bering Sea and Arctic ecosystems, and on coastal communities. It also recommends integrated management and ecosystem research projects (IMERPs). The ERC is an independent body and its report will be an appendix to the revised Science Plan.

Due to discussions in the ERC and Strategic Planning WG since the Fall 2016 board meeting, staff sought further input from the Board before releasing the revised science plan, now targeted for spring 2018.

Board consensus at the Fall 2016 meeting was to direct the External Review Committee, Science Plan Working Group, and staff to develop a structure slightly modifying the existing Core RFP categories to allow some of them (Cooperative Research, Community Involvement, Data Rescue, and Technology Development) to be applied more broadly as approaches in all remaining categories: Oceanography & Productivity/lower trophic levels; Fishes & Invertebrates; Marine Birds & Mammals; Human Dimensions. That consensus included direction to add a new Core category of Ecosystem and Multispecies Interactions, and incorporate Other Prominent Issues into Oceanography and Productivity. Staff presented this approach to reflect Board direction provided last fall.

Staff recapped Strategic Planning working group discussions since fall 2016 that are relevant to the Science Plan review. Those discussions include: how to balance between NPRB's traditional programs

(Core, IERPs, LTM, GSRA); how to identify integrated research topics that could be scaled down (focus section) or up (IERP); how to manage potential future scaled-up focus sections to ensure a more integrated approach to synthesize research efforts across projects; proposing potential integrated topics, e.g. physical or biological processes (e.g., currents and advection, climate change, physical process and phenology of spring bloom productivity, energy transfer, food web and network models); specific topic areas (data-poor stocks, species movement and distribution, cross-system species dynamics, multispecies and environmental models), or smaller geographic extent (e.g., Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay, western Aleutians, Shelikof Strait and Shumagin Islands); and potential future investment in interdisciplinary studies; and the possibility of developing a mechanism and process to provide rapid response funds as needed.

The Board commented on the general language approach for the science plan revision and the revised categories endorsed at the fall 2016 meeting, as follows.

Some board members felt that categories the Board has developed over time introduced to address specific needs – community proposals and technology development proposals with a truly new proof of concept – might not fare well in the new structure. The science panel representative felt that this wouldn't be a problem if the proposal is written clearly to promote projects that are unknown but have good potential. Other board member comments on the modified structure included: that cooperative research might receive even less funding as an approach rather than a category; that data rescue could be an approach rather than a category; that the revised categories and approaches helped address oversubscribed categories such as technology development and would encourage PIs to think more broadly to include these approaches as integral to their science, thus allowing more funding for those approaches than they receive as stand-alone categories; that given declining NPRB grant funding the broader revised categories may helpfully move NPRB from trying to fund everything every year at inadequate amounts and encourage PIs to apply because existing categories with lower funding amounts may not limit the scale of their proposal and ability to do robust science.

The six-member Science Plan Working Group, plus two staff members, held conference calls every three months between May 2015 and October 2016. In the fall of 2016, four of the six left the WG because they'd retired from the Board (2) or Science Panel (2), and a fifth stepped down. The WG has not met since replacements were appointed at the Fall 2016 board meeting. As part of its review of all board working groups and committees, the Executive Committee will communicate with the Board separately to update the Science Plan WG membership and to determine how to best utilize the Science Plan and Strategic Planning working groups to inform board decision making.

It was agreed that the Science Plan discussion needed more time than was available at the board meeting. Other discussion included the need to streamline the science plan (a goal from the start of the revision); the potential utility of reviewing the spring 2017 ERC recommendations to identify four to five general research questions; concerns with tying NPRB funded science too closely to management decisions; the need to retain integrated research in the Core program if IERPs will be put on hold short term because of reduced NPRB grant levels; the distinction between strategic planning and the science

plan revision; NPRB's overarching and long-term plans for science; and the options for integrated research whether through IERPs or other programmatic structures. Reference was made to the recently revised OSRI science plan, which staff has reviewed, including speaking extensively with the team that developed it. OSRI's approach "bookends" what science it will fund, with more specific information on research categories or interests being specified in its annual work plan.

The Strategic Planning WG chair noted that categories for the 2018 RFP need to be decided short term and that science plan decisions are longer term. The science panel chair noted that, while annual decisions boil down the RFP categories in any given year, the Science Plan should encompass broad topics of importance identified by the Board so that Staff can create the strawman for discussion.

TASK: The Board tasked staff to further develop the existing draft Science Plan to provide a streamlined, flexible document that provides broad research themes, documents past NPRB approaches to research programs and outlines parameters for potential new directions for research investments for review at the fall 2017 meeting. RFP categories were discussed further under Agenda Item 14.

12. Companion Outreach Proposals

The Companion Outreach Proposal initiative launched this year is introduced at Agenda Item 4, above. Nine of the Core proposals funded by the Board had Companion Outreach Proposals (COPs) associated with them. As recommended by staff for this first year of the COP program, only those nine COPs were voted on by board members, and only proposals with a flag from a Panel, five in this case, were reviewed fully at the board meeting unless a member requested review of additional COPs. No additional reviews were requested. The Communications and Outreach Director read out the science and advisory panel comments on the five COPs and, upon specific request from board members, provided and pros and cons for each COP. He also observed that funds for the COPs are separate from the totals allocated to the Core RFPs.

MOTION: Fund Companion Outreach Proposals 14 & 107.

AMENDMENT: Add 26, 31 & 55.

Action on Amendment: Amendment passes without objection.

AMENDMENT: Remove 31. Amendment withdrawn.

FINAL MOTION: Fund Companion Outreach Proposals 14, 107, 26, 31 & 55, with any remaining unallocated funds from the \$80,000 COP budget to be used at discretion of the executive director to supplement any of the nine COP outreach proposals presented to the board.

Action on Final Motion: Motion passes without objection.

The motion for the 2017 Companion Outreach Proposal program results in granting five COP awards, for a total of \$59,789.

Board members supported the COP program as a strong addition to how NPRB funds outreach. Staff and Board members acknowledged that decision protocols may change in future years.

TASK: Staff will solicit feedback on the COP process for next year by email.

13. Strategic Planning

The Executive Director and the Chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (WG) reviewed the group's work to date. Staff recapped projected declines through 2030 for NPRB income from the EIRF, and the projected deficit in unobligated funds for FY 2018 (see Agenda Item 3). NPRB continues to operate right under the 15% administrative cap. Steps taken and additional plans to reduce administrative costs will be presented at the fall 2017 board meeting. *Projected funding levels currently preclude funding the Core program and a future IERP every year and may even preclude fully funding the Core annually in the next few years.* As tasked by the Board in fall 2016, the WG had examined multiple ways to balance funding for the Core and a future IERP, including funding only the Core program, and alternating years for Core and IERP funding.

Since reporting to the Board in fall 2016, the WG has considered budget discussions in Washington DC and information from entities in Alaska that fund or rely on marine science. While anecdotal, this information demonstrates consistently the increased uncertainty in the marine science funding landscape. These significant changes since fall 2016, including projected low FY 2018 funds for NPRB, led the WG to alter its focus in April 2017. Rather than finalizing scenarios for balancing Core and IERP funding, it is now exploring how best to use NPRB's limited funds in the short term to provide adequate levels of Core program support for research to PIs who may be facing reduced base funding levels. *This is an opportunity for the Board to be responsive, given its flexibility to adopt a short-term plan that does not necessarily bind NPRB to a long-term approach.*

The ED and WG chair emphasized the need for decisions now, recapping **the questions before the Board at this meeting:**

- **Whether to fund the next Core RFP (2018 RFP).**
 - Board's answer: Yes
- **If a Core 2018 Core RFP is funded, what its amount and structure will be.**
 - Board's answer to Amount: \$4 to 4.5 million, to be finalized or changed at fall meeting.
 - Board's answer to Structure: Task Staff with providing draft RFP categories and language for fall 2017 Board Meeting, as detailed below.
- **How to plan beyond the short term for Core and integrated research programs.**
 - Board's answer: Continue Arctic IERP funding but suspend temporarily any immediate planning for future IERPs until the marine research funding landscape and NPRB's own financial situation are more certain.

The ED and WG chair presented options (prepared by Staff at the WG's April 11, 2017 request) for modifying existing RFP categories to address three challenges:

- *Declining NPRB funding for Core programs, an issue with or without funding future IERPs. Maintaining an annual Core program at current level is not sustainable given the growing pressures on NPRB's funding stream and the scientific community's funding base.*
- *Logistical issues associated with funding all categories in all years, including significant hurdles enlisting outside peer reviewers and increased demands on panel and board members and staff (see Agenda Item 6. Core Program, [Figure 6.1](#)).*
- *Continuing some form of integrated ecosystem research in the short term, whether a scaled down IERP or scaled up focus section, to help NPRB maintain a rounded research portfolio responsive to its legislative mandate to address pressing fishery management and ecosystem information needs.*

Building on its Science Plan Revision discussion of Core RFP categories that morning (Agenda Item 11), the Board considered three sets of Core categories presented in the Strategic Planning Memo for Agenda Item 13, Table 1:

- Current (2017 RFP) with 11 categories funded annually;
- an Updated RFP with fewer consolidated categories, as supported by the Board at its fall 2016 board meeting; and
- a Modified RFP cycle with fewer consolidated categories that would introduce regular variations to the annual funding cycle. Some categories could be funded every year even as others rotated on some basis.

The Updated and Modified cycles consolidate the current 11 categories into seven broader categories by incorporating Other Prominent Issues into Oceanography and Productivity, and converting three categories – Cooperative Research w/ Industry, Community Involvement, and Technology Development – to “approaches” with the goal of expanding funding opportunities for the three.

Table A below reflects the conclusions of the Board's discussions, including the following points from individual board members:

- If pursuing only Core funding in the near term, use the focal section or other means to ensure that integrated ecosystem work continues to be funded.
- The modified categories in Table 1 are not a radical departure. Clear instructions could ensure that “approaches” are not lost in the re-ordering. Trying it for a year makes sense. A separate issue with the Updated/Modified categories is ensuring integrated work is included in the Core in the short term.
- A board member felt that smaller cutting edge tech development proposals might get lost in the consolidation. Several board members felt that Cooperative Research, and Technology Development would fare better in other categories and should be changed to approaches. Another did not want to change any of the three categories into approaches; yet another was not used to seeing categories at all in other organization's RFPs.
- A science panel member felt that if clear objectives, criteria, and instructions are provided to PIs, the panel will be able to assess the new “approaches” well.

- Ecosystem & multi-species interactions would be the newest category, so fund it for at least two years in a modified cycle to learn how it works. The Board needs to rethink what it is willing to pay for projects (e.g., more money to fewer projects). If seabirds and mammals are combined, include metrics to track birds vs. mammals. Staff noted these metrics exist.
- There are many ways to alternate categories when varying cycles over the years. Some could be included every year and others could rotate out. Others agreed that some categories may need to be included every year.
- Don't combine categories if it results in simply assigning larger \$ amounts to broader categories. Consider reducing the *scope* of projects Board tries to fund each year as well as the number of categories.
- The modified/updated cycles are trying to address whether sufficient amounts exist within a given category to fund adequate science. Collapsing categories could cause confusion instead of streamlining.
- For 2018 try either an ecosystem & multispecies category OR a focus section, or defer a focus section.
- The Board could set aside funds for a rapid response if necessary, e.g. time sensitive observations.
- The science panel representative noted that science generally does not happen that fast and questions do not get answered in a year or two years, even when something major happens.
- When asked why alternating years with the current 11 categories was not proposed, the ED explained that the WG's specific tasking to staff did not include that version and that the Board had supported some form of consolidated categories at the fall 2016 meeting.

The Board then voted as follows:

MOTION: Use the current (status quo) approach of funding all categories annually for the 2018 Core Program RFP, with the following categories: oceanography & productivity; fishes & invertebrates; marine birds & mammals; human dimensions; technology development; data rescue; and cooperative research with industry.

A Motion to Amend to include ecosystems & multispecies interactions category as a focus section was itself amended to provide a placeholder "Focus" category in the draft RFP and online submission system and decide the topic at the Fall meeting. The amended amendment passed without objection.

ACTION: The Main Motion passed without objection.

The Board agreed that “Community Involvement” and “Other prominent issues” would be incorporated into the description of the RFP.

TABLE A (two right hand columns reflect the Board’s vote)

CURRENT – 11 categories. Status quo – fund all categories every year	2017	REVISED – 7 categories, 1 approach. Status quo – fund all categories every year	2018
Oceanography and Productivity	\$500,000	Oceanography and Productivity	
Fishes and Invertebrates	\$1,100,000	Fishes and Invertebrates	
Seabirds	\$100,000	Marine Birds and Mammals	
Marine Mammals	\$800,000	(see above)	
Human Dimensions	\$500,000	Human Dimensions	
Other Prominent Issues	\$100,000	(incorporate in Oceanography etc.)	
Community Involvement	\$150,000	(apply as an approach)	
Cooperative Research with Industry	\$300,000	Cooperative Research with Industry	
Technology Development	\$300,000	Technology Development	
Data Rescue	\$100,000	Data Rescue	
Focus Section	\$600,000	Focus Section*	
TOTAL	\$4,550,000	TOTAL	TBD
		*Possible Focus section topics: Bogoslof volcano; Revisit the 2017 topic; Ecosystem & Multispecies Interactions; Other.	

TASKS

- Staff was tasked with providing text for a focus section on ecosystems and multi-species interactions.
- The Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) was tasked with providing further scenarios for Core RFP categories, taking under consideration the Science Plan External Review Committee’s recommendations. The SPWG will coordinate with the Science Plan Review Working Group.
- The SPWG was tasked with providing scenarios at the Fall 2017 meeting for short term alternatives to continuing integrated ecosystem approaches in NPRB funded science.

For the fall meeting John Gauvin will provide language to propose a revised focus section on Pacific Cod in the Aleutians. The Bogoslof volcano was suggested as another possible focal topic, as was Ecosystem & Multi-species interactions.

The Board agreed with the WG’s short term approach of suspending temporarily work on a new IERP to focus on restructuring the Core, and returning to the Core/IERP balance as part of its longer term strategic planning work.

Several board members supported changing from three to two external reviewers for the Core RFP, to help alleviate peer reviewer fatigue and associated challenges.

14. Other Matters

As this was his last meeting, Capt. Phil Thorne, USCG, was recognized for his excellent service to NPRB.

- a. *Outside meeting requests.* The Executive Director summarized the \$42,500 in funding authorized for outside meetings, none of which exceeded the \$10,000 threshold requiring Board approval. A situation not covered by the SOPPs has arisen for the second year in a row: The Prince William Sound Science Center requested \$1,000 toward publication costs for Delta Sound Connections 2017, an annual newsletter publicizing PWSSC science activities to Alaska residents, tourists, and others. The SOPPs currently grant the ED authority only for outside meeting requests up to \$10,000 but not for such publications.

MOTION: Authorize \$1,000 to support the Delta Sound Connections 2017 newsletter.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Grant ED authority to award other small non-meeting expenditures using this "outside meetings" category of funds.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

- b. *Staff Development.* Brief updates on staff professional activities were provided.
- c. *Board Committees and Working Groups Memberships.* Due to board departures, the following seats need to be filled:
- Nominations Committee: One science panel and one advisory panel seat.
 - Science Plan Working Group: One science panel and one board member seat.
 - Strategic Planning Working Group: One advisory panel seat.
 - Arctic Program Communications/Outreach Working Group: One advisory panel and one board member seat.
- TASK: The Executive Committee will solicit interest from board members and determine replacements.**
- d. *Meeting Dates.* The Fall 2017 meeting is September 18-22, 2017 in Cordova. The 2018 meetings are April 30 – May 4 and September 17-21. The Board will need to determine a location for the Fall 2018 meeting. The ED noted that Anchorage meetings are significantly less expensive and may be appropriate for fall meetings going forward given budget constraints.

A motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm, Thursday May 4, 2017.