

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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Meeting Summary

North Pacific Research Board
EVOS Trustees Conference Room
Anchorage, Alaska
June 2-3, 2002

1. Call to Order

The Board convened at 2:20 p.m., Sunday, June 2, 2002. Present were Dave Benton (chairman), Jim Balsiger, John Gauvin, Howard Horton, Trevor McCabe, Phil Mundy, Walter Parker, John Roos, Frank Rue, Robin Samuelson (briefly by teleconference at first of meeting), Tylan Schrock, Bill Seitz, Jev Shelton, and John White. Garry Brass arrived at about 5 p.m. Sunday, and Pamela Pope arrived Monday morning. David Benton departed at about 11:45 a.m., Monday, and Tylan Schrock chaired the meeting. The meeting was staffed by Clarence Pautzke and Paula Banks. The Board approved the March 21-22, 2002 meeting summary.

2. Proposed Research for 2002

The Board received forty-one proposals in response to the 2002 request for proposals (RFP), released March 8, 2002. The Board intended to fund about \$1.5 million in research, however, the forty-one proposals combined requested nearly \$6.3 million. Proposal titles, authors, and funding requests had been made available to the public on a special website. The Board decided to keep the full text of the proposals confidential until approved for funding. Each proposal received technical evaluations and numerical scores by various agency and academic scientists, and a second review by a six-member independent review team (IRT).

Dr. Shannon Atkinson (Alaska SeaLife Center) presented the recommendations of the IRT. The IRT designated each proposal as Fund Rank A, Fund Rank B, or Do Not Fund. Rank A, the "must fund" list, had thirteen projects amounting to \$1.387 million. Rank B had four additional projects. Rank A and B projects combined amount to \$1.385 million. Because some proposals requested more than one year funding, the team intended that Rank A projects should be given priority if the Board obligated funds for multiyear projects all from the \$1.5 million available for 2002. If the Board decided to support the first year of projects from 2002 funds and the second year from 2003 funds, then more projects could be initiated in 2002, and both Rank A and B projects should be funded. The team also presented their recommendations on several other issues as noted below.

After reviewing proposals and scores, receiving IRT recommendations, and hearing public comments, the Board approved fifteen projects totaling \$1.643 million (Table 1). The Board decided to fund all years of projects from 2002 funds, rather than commit future funds. The Board's recommendations will be sent to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval. The Board approved requested funding levels for all but one of the fifteen projects. For project #5, submitted by Harper and Bornhold for pilot nearshore habitat mapping, the Board voiced concerns with the limited budget for ship time and review of video data collections. The Board increased the funding from \$97,000 requested to \$120,000, and will require the

applicant to provide a revised budget and work statement that will ensure that the project is successful. The Board also advised the principal investigators to consult with Tory O'Connell at ADFG on the effort and processing time that realistically will be needed to ensure success of this important habitat project. The Board requested the Executive Director to send thank you letters to all reviewers and the IRT. The Board also considered several policy issues raised by the IRT or Board members:

Confidentiality of Proposals and Review Information. The IRT recommended that proposals be considered confidential until funded. Once funded, they would become property of the Board and made available to the public. Regarding feedback to applicants, the IRT recommended the Board inform each applicant by letter of its funding decision, and upon request by the applicant, send the scores and technical review comments and the summary paragraph prepared by the IRT. The Board concurred, but noted that its comments on unsuccessful proposals should remain neutral and not reinforce or unintentionally embrace certain IRT comments such as encouragement to resubmit a proposal. The Board wants to remain as neutral as possible on the issue of encouraging resubmission of proposals.

Improving the RFP Process for 2003. The IRT recommended that each proposal contain a clear statement of hypothesis to be tested or objectives to be addressed, a detailed experimental design, a list of data sources or requirements, and curriculum vitae for all principal investigators listed in the proposal. The Board should consider listing specific hypotheses it wants addressed in the RFP, and allocating specific funding (\$1-2 million) to each research priority. Hypotheses could then be developed for each research group, possibly using workshops similar to the approach used by the National Science Foundation. The Board will consider these recommendations in drafting its RFP for 2003.

Independent Review Process. The IRT recommended that more university professionals be included in the review process and that the Executive Director continue to develop a list of peer reviewers based on their technical expertise in research fields relevant to the Board.

Timely Availability of Research Results. The IRT noted that it is reasonable to assume that publication of results in a peer-reviewed journal will require 2-4 years from completion of field research. The IRT also recommended a goal of having PI's post their data on a public website within 3-4 years. The Board believes that research results need to be made available earlier through project interim and final reports to inform the Board in its ongoing research planning. Peer review of those reports could be performed by the Board's science panel.

Senior Science Panel. The IRT discussed the need for a semi-permanent group of highly qualified scientists to serve as the IRT. With the anticipated large increase in funding available to the NPRB research program in future years, the levels of responsibility and work of individual panel members will increase substantially relative to 2002. The IRT recommended that the Board consider paying an honorarium to senior panel members (non-Federal or non-State) in an effort to retain a minimum number of reviewers over the next 3-5 years. The Board discussed this topic under agenda Tab #5 on committee structure.

Equipment Purchases. The Board discussed whether to set policy on funding equipment purchases. Some proposals were for the purchase of equipment such as a bomb calorimeter, but no actual research. The Board decided to fund several equipment purchases in anticipation of potentially valuable, future research that may be performed using that equipment.

Supplementing Agency Programs. The Board considered whether to fund research which it believes is more of an agency responsibility. While the Board needs to coordinate and cooperate with agencies conducting research in the North Pacific, and attempt to address gaps in research, it does not want to be

placed in the position of making up shortfalls in agency funded research. The Board will review proposals in that light, and make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Long-term Monitoring. The Board needs to address the degree to which it will support long term monitoring over shorter term research. The Board has stated in its science planning thus far, and in its draft statement of work for the National Research Council initiative that it will support long term monitoring. The Board intends to build partnerships with other agencies to maintain long-term physical, chemical, and lower trophic level observations.

UNOLS Safety Standards. The issue was raised about NOAA Sea Safe Standards and their application to vessels used for research funded by NPRB. Adhering to those requirements may help limit the Board liability in case of accidents aboard those research vessels. The Board will continue to research this issue and attempt to address it.

3. National Research Council Initiative

On March 21-22, 2002, the Board reviewed a draft statement of work for a National Research Council (NRC) initiative to help develop a science plan. The Board expressed concern with lack of detail in the draft statement of work and budget proposed by NRC and decided to establish a committee of its members to develop the SOW and terms of reference, and to request additional budget detail from NRC. At this meeting, the Board reviewed the new draft statement of work developed by a committee of the following members: Bill Seitz (chair), Garry Brass, Walter Parker, and John Roos. The Board made revisions and then adopted a revised statement of work. The Board reviewed the budget estimates resubmitted by NRC and approved funding of \$473,804 for this project.

4. Draft Research Priorities for 2003

The Board reviewed a draft list of research priorities for the 2003 developed by a committee of members John Gauvin (Chair), Phil Mundy, Robin Samuelsen, and Jev Shelton. The 2003 request for proposals could support roughly \$10-12 million in research. The committee used the eight categories of research priorities listed in the 2002 RFP and incorporated several additional recommendations from committee members and other entities. The Board adopted a draft list of research priorities for public review over the summer, and will make final decisions at its October 29-31, 2002 meeting before releasing the 2003 RFP. Before finalizing the priorities, the Board will hold a public hearing in conjunction with the AFN conference on October 21 using a 3-member hearing panel, and then take public comment on the first day of its October 29-31, 2002 meeting in Anchorage.

5. Committee Structure

The Board reviewed a discussion paper on committee structure developed by the Executive Director, comparing committee structures of several different organizations. The Board's committee (Trevor McCabe (chair), Pamela Pope, and John White) assigned to develop recommendations on committee structure was unable to convene because of other commitments and very busy schedules. The Board had the following observations.

Any science or stakeholder committee should be considered interim until the Board has concluded its science planning initiative with the National Research Council. The Board adopted in principle, Figure 6.1 on p. 10 of item 5(c) in the meeting notebooks, which depicted the GEM process for providing scientific and technical advice and peer review. GEM gathers scientific advice beginning with tier 2 topical sub-committees. That advice is vetted through a tier 1 scientific and technical advisory committee which develops further recommendations.

On the issue of payment for reviews, it was noted that the National Science Foundation has mail reviews and topical panels, and they do not pay for these reviews and panels. NOS Coastal Ocean Program funds \$20-30 million in research per year, with 3-5 year grants of \$500,000 to \$1 million and no reviewers get paid. In fact there may be a government prohibition on paying reviewers. Other Board members argued that reviewers should be paid because of the time they commit to Board activities, and away from their private sector jobs.

The Board requested its committee on committee structure, chaired by Trevor McCabe, to consider the make up and functions of a science panel and subcommittees (and disciplines represented), and the size and payment of tier 1 and tier 2 committee members, and bring back an analysis and recommendations for the October 29-31, 2002 Board meeting. The Board passed a motion directing the Executive Director to solicit members for an interim science panel following the principles set forth in the EVOS Process for Science. The call for nominations would be submitted first to the committee on committee structure for initial review. Then it would be emailed to the rest of the Board members for one-two weeks of review and comment. The Executive Director would work with the committee to flesh out the stakeholder panel and come back in October with recommendations. The intent is to allow the Board to be poised to select a science panel in October. Committee will look at different models concerning stakeholders, develop pros and cons, and come back in October with a preferred alternative. Issues could include using subcommittees as in GEM, ad hoc committees for each area of research, regional committees, or just one committee. The committee also should address how to handle potential conflicts of interest when scientists on its committees and panels also have interest in doing NPRB-funded research.

6. Board Operating Procedures

On March 21-22 the Board tasked the Executive Director with drafting operating procedures for review in June. A very preliminary, incomplete draft was made available at this meeting for Board review and further direction. The Board discussed whether it could hold executive sessions to review confidential proposals and technical reviews. It was noted that NSF makes all proposals public, funded or not, after the decision is made on funding. The actual review is done in closed session and reviews are kept confidential. Questions arose during the Board's consideration: Can the Board keep proposals confidential? What limitations are there on the Board from holding executive sessions, considering that the enabling legislation mandates open meetings based on Magnuson-Stevens Act procedures. Is confidentiality of proposals a privilege or a right? Can the Board choose which proposals to keep confidential? For example, applicants could be offered the opportunity to indicate whether their proposal should be kept confidential, but in the end, it would be the Board's decision. What rules govern the Board's behavior on this? Are these procedures solely up to the Board or is the Board constrained by Department of Commerce non-disclosure rules? The Board will attempt to get a legal opinion on this issue. The intent is to have operating rules more fleshed out for October, and a final decision made at the March 2003 meeting.

In subsequent action, the Board considered whether to invite the University of Alaska to sit as a non-voting member at the Board table during meetings. The Board defeated a motion to invite the University of Alaska representative to sit at the Board table during meetings. The Board also heard a presentation from Dr. Gary Matlock on the role of the National Ocean Service (NOS) and reviewed a letter dated April 4, 2002 from the Assistant Administrator of NOS to the Assistant Administrator of NMFS concerning NOS's role and responsibilities, and research priorities for the NPRB. Dr. Matlock was requested to send the NPRB a copy of the provision in legislative documents stipulating that half of the EIRF interest for the Board would flow down through NOS and the other half through NMFS. It also was suggested that any Memorandum of Agreement among entities such as NPRB, EVOS, NOAA and other organizations might also address the Board's relationship to NOS. Finally, under this agenda item, the Board reviewed

the draft State Senate Joint Resolution No. 44 on research planning. The Board took no action because it was not known whether it had passed.

The Board also directed the Executive Director to develop a staffing plan and budget for review in October. It should include a job description for a chief scientist with administrative skills and experience.

The Board also needs to develop policy on taking public testimony during meetings. Should it be taken on all agenda items at the first of the meeting, or item by item during the meeting, but before the Board debates the issue and takes action?

7. Future Meetings

The Board scheduled its next meeting for October 29-31, 2002, in Anchorage. The Board intends to start at about 1 p.m. the first day and meet jointly with the EVOS Trustee Council and Northern Fund representatives. The Board will meet alone in plenary session the following day, October 30, and may continue until noon Thursday, October 31, if necessary. The Board will hold a public hearing the first day on research priorities and other matters, in lieu of a special public hearing earlier planned for late August. The Board will hold a public hearing on October 21 at the AFN Conference using a committee of John White, Frank Rue, and Walter Parker. The Board will establish its meeting schedule for 2003 at the October meeting.

The Board adjourned at 3:36 p.m., Monday, June 3, 2002.

Table 1. Fifteen Projects Recommended for Funding by NPRB on June 2, 2002

(All in \$1,000's)

(Total Funding: \$1.643 million)

Prop #	Principal Investigator	Short Title	Total Request	NPRB Approved Funding		Cumulative Years 1&2
				Yr.1	Yr.2	
#5	Harper and Bornhold	Pilot nearshore habitat mapping using...	97	120	0	120
#10	Rose	Application of new sonar technology...	122	117	5	242
#11	Hildebrand	Bering Sea right whales: acoustic...	51	51	0	293
#12	Stabeno, et al	Continuation of long-term observations	121	121	0	414
#13	Helle	NP/AFSC salmon tagging	191	191	0	605
#16	Rea & Kennish	Modelling diet composition...	143	76	67	748
#18	Piatt & Irons	North Pacific pelagic seabird database	130	36	94	878
#26	Wilmot & Seeb	The use of genetic stock identification...	217	217	0	1,095
#31	Sydeman & Hyrenbach	Integration of marine bird and mammal..	60	60	0	1,155
#32	Overland, et al	Protocol for detection of change in...	124	60	64	1,279
#34	Musgrave & Kruse	Environmental cues for herring spawn..	131	82	49	1,410
#35	Gharrett	Distribution of two species of rough...	77	77	0	1,487
#36	Castellini	Alaskan fish as food for predators...	25	25	0	1,512
#39	Henrichs	Sinking particles and pelagic food web..	22	22	0	1,534
#40	Weingartner	Nearshore circulation in Bering Sea...	109	109	0	1,643