

Final Summary  
North Pacific Research Board  
Science Panel Meeting  
Seattle, Washington  
March 2-4, 2004

The Science Panel met at the NOAA/NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle on March 2-4, 2004 to review proposals received by NPRB in response to the 2004 Request for Proposals, and to review the draft outline and other materials associated with the science plan. The meeting was chaired by Rich Marasco and the following other panel members were in attendance: Vera Alexander, Shannon Atkinson, Dick Beamish, Jim Berner, Dan Goodman, Anne Hollowed, Gordon Kruse, Tom Royer, Pat Tester, and Doug Woodby. The meeting was staffed by Clarence Pautzke and Misty Ott.

Draft Science Plan

The Panel received a report from the drafting team on development of an outline and associated materials for the Board's science plan. The Science Panel reiterated their point made in January that the conceptual foundation needs to be carefully crafted, and that there needs to be recognition in the hypothesis section that the main problem is that we cannot successfully forecast changes in stocks. We need to build bridges between the inherent variability in the environment and ecosystem and the management of individual fish stocks. The main question is how to predict year-to-year changes in productivity of key species. The Panel also believes that the science plan does not have to go back in time to the hypotheses identified in the Bering Sea research plan of 1998. There has been considerable progress since then in improving our understanding of the ecosystem and how it functions. That new knowledge needs to be reflected in the conceptual foundation and overarching questions. There needs to be broad hypotheses with supporting text, and we need to determine the impacts of natural versus human-induced variability.

The Panel also noted that the writing team should be very cautious in dividing the plan among disciplines. The long-term goal is to have an interdisciplinary program and to have scientists communicating with each other and fielding a coherent, comprehensive science program. In terms of the types of research that should be supported to respond to key questions, process studies should be given the most detail, and retrospective analyses, monitoring and modeling less detail.

The Panel noted that communities need to be involved in data collection and hypothesis setting and how to set up local monitoring schemes. Students also could be involved in monitoring programs, gathering local knowledge, and interviewing elders. The Northern Contaminants Project was cited as an excellent example of getting communities involved in science.

The Science Panel will meet next the week of July 19, 2004, to review the rough draft of the science plan.

Review of Proposals

The Panel reviewed the 87 proposals received in response to the 2004 Request for Proposals. Each panel member was assigned primary and secondary review responsibilities for about 6-7 proposals. Their responsibilities included considering the anonymous technical reviews provided for each proposal and developing a summary recommendation on whether the proposal should be funded or not. The two panel reviewers presented their findings to the full Panel and the Panel proceeded to develop recommendations on the proposals that should be funded in a first tier that fit within the \$3 million cap set by the Board. The Panel also developed second and third tiers of proposals that might be funded if the Board decided to exceed the \$3 million cap. All-in-all, the Panel concluded that there were many high quality proposals

this year and that the field was very competitive, given the \$3 million cap. In all the Panel recommended funding for 24 proposals in the first tier, though some proposals were funded for less than requested, and some were combined to encourage a team approach. Three additional proposals were placed in the second tier, which also had second year funding for three tier 1 proposals. The following is an explanation of the recommended changes made to enable support for as many good research initiatives as possible within the Board's \$3 million target cap.

### Goal 1 Forage Fish Assessment

The Panel chose three proposals, 1, 35 and 56 for total combined funding of \$500,000 to address the forage fish assessment goal. Proposal 1 covers the nearshore area for capelin, eulachon, herring, Pacific sandfish and sand lance. Proposal 35 will use acoustics to focus on the same species but also very deep water ones such as myctophids, squids, and bathylagids. Proposal 56 would provide synthesis of information on forage fish within a GIS format and formulate conceptual survey designs that incorporate fisheries oceanography modeling and sampling techniques. Some of the principal investigators are common to both #1 and 56. The Science Panel recommends that the Board set aside \$500,000 for the forage fish study and coordinate and fund a meeting of the principal investigators to put together a comprehensive, team approach and revised statement of work that would then be reviewed by a subcommittee of the Science Panel comprised of Richard Beamish, Anne Hollowed, and Vera Alexander. Federal salaries also should be removed from the proposals as they are not allowed by law.

### Goal 2.5 Alaska Marine Information System

The Panel recommends combined funding of \$150,000 for proposals 43 and 52, which complement each other. As stated on line 196 of proposal 43, the proposer of #43 is aware that #52 has been submitted. Proposal #52 will implement the EASy (Environmental Analysis System) system directly for NPRB which will create a valuable visualization and analysis environment, which can work directly with OBIS-format data in NPRB. However, that proposal makes no arrangement for ensuring that data become available in the required formats. Proposal 43 concentrates on establishing the electronic access to datasets that is prerequisite for more advanced online systems. The two proposers should be requested to jointly develop a new statement of work that reduces duplication and leads to a comprehensive Alaska Marine Information System.

### Goal 3 Arctic Ocean Information Synthesis

The Science Panel recommends reducing the budget for #47 from the \$190,681 to \$120,000, which still exceeds the \$75,000 target in the RFP. The Panel believes the PIs are very competent and would do a good job. This proposal should be negotiated downward while still requiring the workshop which the Panel believes is essential to successful completion of the synthesis.

### Goal 4: SE Alaska Information Synthesis

The Science Panel believes this project (#42) should be funded at a higher level (\$120,000) than the \$75,000 first requested by the proposer. The number of days of the workshop should be expanded, as should the period of the project to a second year as indicated in the panel report on this project. The panel also suggests a second meeting be held involving the writers and steering committee to finalize the manuscripts.

## Component 2 General Research Priorities

The Science Panel recommends that proposals 27 (dietary specialization of killer whales), 17 (reproductive ecology of Atka mackerel), and 77 (Pacific ocean perch genetics) be funded for one year only to allow more projects to be funded under the \$3 million cap. The Panel believes that these are highly meritorious proposals and should be funded a second year if additional funding is made available.

Proposal #14 (modeling multispecies groundfish) also is a highly meritorious proposal, but should be funded for only one year for a total of \$90,000.

Proposal #62 (photographic identification of bowhead whales) also is highly recommended but should be funded for 1 year at only \$100,000 (versus the \$250k requested for 2 years), and the proposers should request additional funding from elsewhere such as the National Marine Mammal Lab or NMFS.

Proposal #2 (supply and demand model for king and snow crab) should receive \$80,000 in funding, with the remaining request co-funded by NPFMC because of the direct application of the potential results of this project to Council fishery management programs and writing of NEPA and economic analyses concerning the crab fisheries.

## Comments on Science Panel Review Process

Panel members believed that the review process was much better this year and that there was ample discussion of each proposal. To save some time next year, the Panel will request primary and secondary panel reviewers to comment on whether a proposal merits discussion based on the technical reviews. If not, they will be placed in a category labeled “not to be discussed” and only considered in full session if there is a strong argument to do so.

Proposals should be rated next year as excellent (must fund), good (should fund), fair (maybe), and poor (do not fund).

The RFP next year may want to delete the need for the \$2,000 for education and outreach in each proposal if that is going to be accomplished by a contracted education and outreach specialist. Those activities need to be ongoing and in many proposals, the education and outreach activities intended were not clearly defined.

To reduce the number of proposals, the Board may want to enforce more strictly the requirements of the RFP. If something is missing or a particular point is not spoken to, then the proposal could be dismissed out of hand without further review, either technical or by the Science Panel.