

Final Summary  
North Pacific Research Board  
NPRB Conference Room  
Anchorage, AK  
March 29-31, 2006

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

The Board convened at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 29, 2006. Present were Tylan Schrock, David Benton, Nancy Bird, Dorothy Childers, Douglas DeMaster, John Gauvin, Leslie Holland-Bartels, Howard Horton, Earl Krygier, Michele Longo-Eder, Paul MacGregor, Stephanie Madsen, LT Alan McCabe, Gerry Merrigan, Pam Pope, and Dennis Wiesenburg. Alexandra Curtis, Robert Gisiner, John Iani, and Robin Samuelson were absent. Clarence Pautzke, Francis Wiese, Carl Schoch, and Ramona Brown staffed the meeting.

The agenda was approved and a safety briefing was given. Tylan Schrock and Stephanie Madsen were re-elected Chairman and Vice Chairman for another one-year term. The Board meeting summary for September 2005 was approved.

The Board was provided a copy of the October 18, 2005, letter that had been written on its behalf to OMB supporting the proposed Alaska Regional Research Vessel which is in the design phase and soon will be ready for construction. The Board also received a copy of a February 21, 2006 press release by UAF indicating that the President's budget request to Congress included \$56 million for the National Science Foundation to begin construction of the vessel. This is a major step forward in the vessel becoming reality.

2. Budget Review

Audit Report for FY2005

The Board received an audit report from KPMG for FY2005. There were no deficiencies, except for a late progress report to NOAA Grants for July-December 2004. There were no questions from the Board on the audit.

Status of EIRF Funds and Appropriations

The Executive Director provided an overview of the various grants under which the Board is operating. He noted that earnings of the Environmental Improvement and Restoration Fund for 2005 will be applied to 2007 and will exceed \$6.8 million. It is projected that EIRF earnings for the Board will be \$7.1 million for FY2008 and \$7.4 million for FY2009. It was unclear whether any appropriations for the Board would be available for FY2007 given the budget climate back east.

Grant 3 Award Budget

The Board reviewed a proposed budget for the new award for \$8.788 million. The administrative funds would be used in 2008 and science funds would be used initially to fund projects approved in April 2007 under the 2007 RFP. The Board approved the proposed budget.

3. Implementation Activities for 2006

Integrated Ecosystem Research Plans

The Board received a progress report on development of the integrated ecosystem research plans (IERPs) for the Bering Sea and Aleutians and the Gulf of Alaska. Last September the Board had approved funding for planning teams for each of the two core regions, the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, to develop the details of 5-year implementation plans for input into the 2007 RFP. The Board also approved funding for a Bering Sea ecosystem modeling committee that would develop standards for statistical robustness of the models and validation of model results.

The Board reviewed a draft implementation plan that included many suggestions offered by the Bering Sea Interagency Working Group as well as those received from scientists that attended a workshop in association with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium held in Anchorage in late January 2006. The Board discussed how to further develop the IERPs, including whether to stagger the IERPs for the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, appointment of a scientific steering committee to further focus and develop thematic research topics, whether to call for pre-proposals, and the length of the overall programs.

The Board visualizes the IERPs as 5 or 6-year modules that would continue in a series over a long period of time to shed new light on processes at work within the marine ecosystems off Alaska. It was noted that there needs to be annual research reviews and reports to the Board. There must be an interactive process. The Board also needs to know how its program will fit into the larger picture of other scientific programs being conducted in the Bering Sea. An example of such a program is the Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Loss of Sea Ice (LOSI) program which is a 10-year commitment by the Center to develop better predictability over the following 5 years of major fish stocks and major ecosystem components in the face of climate change. Dr. DeMaster noted that the Alaska Fisheries Science Center is committed to covering fish and marine mammals if there is a partnership with the NPRB in studying the Bering Sea.

A motion was made to adopt as a framework the approach on p 15 of the BSIERP that would include formation of an independent scientific steering committee and the review of its products at an open implementation plan workshop if it would help produce the best product.

A friendly amendment was accepted to hold annual reviews with team members present.

An amendment passed to have 5-6 members on the SSC along with 3 science panel members. Among the 5-6 members on the team would be a management type. There is a need for a mechanism for public input into the implementation plan and for a focused RFP.

An amendment was passed that the SSC would be chosen by the chairman and vice chairman of the Board, the chairmen of the science and advisory panels, and the executive director.

An amendment to strike the pre-proposal phase failed.

The above framework, though drafted for the Bering Sea and Aleutians IERP would also apply to the Gulf of Alaska. The Bering Sea and Aleutians IERP would be developed the first year, followed by the GOA IERP the second year based on the experience with the BSIERP. Each team that is invited to submit a full proposal could receive up to \$5,000 for travel for the purpose of completing their full proposal. They would need to submit their request to the executive director.

The main motion passed as amended above and has the following components:

1. Independent Scientific Steering Committee (SSC). Members should be knowledgeable but mostly uninvolved in participating in research planned under IERP, and Bering Sea experience may not be essential. It would have 5-6 members and 3 science panel members. The team would not be involved in reviewing proposals. There must be a resource manager on the team. The team would be chosen by the chairman and vice chairman of the Board, the chairmen of the science and advisory panels, and the executive director.
2. Based on an assessment of current research initiatives and research gaps (BIAW assisted), the SSC should develop a first narrowing of the six main questions into 3 main themes.
3. Main themes should be presented at an open implementation plan workshop, if such a workshop would help produce a better product (preferably adding on to another meeting with relevant expertise?). The SSC would write a final scientific plan for the BSIERP that will go into the 2007 RFP.
4. Given the amount of work required in preparing proposals for such a large scale multi-year, multi-disciplinary program, and to ensure that proposals submitted really meet the expectations and goals of the Board, the NPRB should implement a Pre-Proposal system for the IERP portion of the RFP.
5. Program could be for example, 5-6 years, with 1 year planning and synthesis, 3 years of field work, and 1-2 years of integration and write up, and could be extended beyond the first five years.
6. Teams should be inter-disciplinary and multi-institutional; \$5,000 could be requested by each invited team for help in supporting travel to write an integrated proposal.
7. Teams need to integrate with the ecosystem modeling committee.
8. Field work of different components should be conducted simultaneously.
9. Need annual reviews with team members present.
10. The BSIERP would be developed first, followed a year later by the GOAIERP.

#### Local and Traditional Knowledge (LTK)

The Board also discussed where local and traditional knowledge (LTK) should fit in the overall BSIERP. This fall, when approving the 2007 RFP, the Board members will discuss whether it is better to place LTK inside or outside the IERP RFP and, if the latter, whether to use a target amount in dollars or put in a percentage (e.g. 10%) of IERP. It was noted that if the Board really wants a strong commitment to LTK in the proposal development phase, then it should be incorporated directly as a component of the IERP.

#### Graduate Student Research Fellowships

The implementation plan for the draft IERPs contained a provision for a Graduate Student Research Fellowship program that would provide an individual award of \$25,000 per year that may be used for tuition or any research-related expenses. The program envisioned about \$100,000 in support each year with fellowships for masters students lasting three years and doctoral students for four years.

In Board discussion, it was noted that the typical student costs \$33,000-39,000 per year according to discussions of the Rasmuson Foundation Board in their funding of students. The Board may wish to consider doing only three fellowships, at the higher level, for them to be prestigious. Other discussion raised issues of whether this should only be for Alaska students and whether there would be efficiencies in running the fellowships through other institutions that already have all the procedures established. Would the students or their professors apply? How would students report back to the Board? The Board will discuss these issues and how to structure the fellowship again this fall when developing the overall 2007 RFP.

### Status Report on Alaska Ocean Observing System

The Board received a status report from Carl Schoch on the Alaska Ocean Observing System.

### Expanded Alaska Marine Information System

The Board received a status report on developing an expanded Alaska Marine Information System that would provide data not only from NPRB and AOOS, but also from NOAA and other agencies so that ecosystem-related information is available at one web portal. It also was recommended that the Board provide funding support to a data expert that would gather data from relevant agencies for presentation on the new web site. This would require a set-aside of approximately \$100,000 per year to support this ongoing process. The Board did not voice any concerns with supporting such a data position.

### Collaboration with Oil Spill Recovery Institute

Ms. Bird noted that she would like to continue the collaboration with NPRB for a second year and will work with the NPRB staff over the coming months to identify potential topics for the collaboration.

## 4. Proposal Review for 2006

### Overview of Proposals

The Board was presented with a summary of the 126 proposals received, requesting over \$24 million. Four proposals had been returned as non-compliant with the requirements of the RFP. The remaining 122 proposals were sent out for anonymous technical review and for review by primary and secondary Science Panel members.

### OSRI-NPRB Collaboration on Forage Fish Research

The Board received three proposals in response to the \$200,000 NPRB-OSRI collaboration in the 2006 RFP. Only one of the proposals was recommended for funding by the Science Panel. It recommended that Proposal #103 be funded, but at a level of \$150,000 and include an extra scope of work as recommended by the panel. The Board considered the OSRI-NPRB collaboration in context of its decision on all proposals, as discussed below.

Science Panel Recommendations. The Science Panel met on March 13-15 to develop funding recommendations. Chairman Rich Marasco reported that the panel members went through a rough sort of proposals and then extensively discussed each remaining proposal to come up with consensus on 39 proposals recommended for tier 1 for funding for \$5.35 million, and another 12 proposals for tier 2. Total funding recommended for tiers 1 and 2 was \$8.14 million, far exceeding the advertised RFP targeted amount of \$5.15 million.

Public comments. There were no public comments.

Develop Funding Recommendations for Secretarial Approval. The Board reviewed its conflict of interest procedures and then proceeded to develop recommendations for funding to be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

A motion was passed to establish \$6 million as the total funding guideline. This action was based on a review of anticipated available research funds over the next five years.

A framework motion was made to adopt the tier 1 recommendations of the Science Panel, modified to delete proposals 12, 16, and 35, and add proposals 47, 57, and 95, replace 108 with 107, and choose proposal 111 for subsistence rockfish. All other recommendations by the Science Panel regarding tier 1 were included, for example the notes on proposals 15, 26, 36, 49, 53, and 103, and combining proposals 79, 80, and 81 for \$300,000. The total amount funded under this framework was \$5,213,103.

An amendment to add proposal 12 (jellyfish in SE Bering Sea) failed.

An amendment to add proposal 16 (sea ice and ocean climate projections) failed.

An amendment passed to stipulate that the habitat workshop for proposal 36 (habitat mapping technologies) had to be open to the public unless there were trade secret issues to protect technology developments.

An amendment passed to add proposal 42 (halibut migrations in SE Bering Sea) to tier 1, funded for \$150,000 contingent on other agencies or entities (e.g. IPHC or CDQ organization) funding the other approximately \$150,000 requested.

An amendment passed to include proposal 45 (Greenland halibut nursery areas) for \$244,984.

An amendment to add proposal 35 (deep sea sponges) failed.

An amendment to delete proposal 57 (red king crab stock assessments) failed.

An amendment to delete proposal 84 (right whale distributions) and add proposal 86 (prediction of right whale habitat) passed.

An amendment to delete proposal 95 (fur seal foraging habitat) failed.

An amendment to add proposal 105 (GOA and Prince William Sound forage fish) for \$25,000 failed.

An amendment to add proposal 100 (extend lessons learned on Steller sea lions to fur seals) passed.

An amendment to fund proposal 108 (Bering Sea community-based ocean monitoring) instead of proposal 107 (Bering Strait LTK) passed.

An amendment to fund both proposals 110 (PSP) and 111 (subsistence rockfish) for \$150,000 each, passed.

**The Board now took a break while a revised spreadsheet with their decisions was developed and copied.**

An amendment to add proposal 12 (Bering Sea jellyfish) passed.

An amendment to add proposal 16 (sea ice and ocean climate projections) failed.

An amendment to reduce funding of proposal 24 (COASST seabird monitoring) to \$100,000 (from \$232,099 requested) passed with the intent that the investigators demonstrate they have community support next year. A substitute amendment to remove the project altogether failed.

An amendment to add proposal 61 (sperm whale depredation on longlines) at \$150,000 passed.

An amendment to add proposal 71 (maternal effects in Alaska black rockfish) failed.

An amendment to add proposal 107 (Bering Strait LTK) and delete proposal 108 (Bering Sea community ocean monitoring) passed. A substitute amendment to support both proposals, but at a lower amount, failed.

As a result of the above actions, the Board took their final vote on March 30, 2006, and recommended 44 new projects for funding totaling \$6,001,100 in response to the 2006 Request for Proposals. The Board recommended the requested funding levels for 30 proposals and reduced funding for 10 proposals (15, 24, 26, 36, 42, 49, 51, 53, 61, and 111), and combining of three proposals (79-81) into one proposal at a reduced funding level of \$300,000. One proposal (103) received more funding than requested. The Board applied the following stipulations, most of which were recommended by the Science Panel:

#### Funding Revisions and Stipulations

Proposal #15. Based on an NPRB Science Panel recommendation, the Board reduced the proposed budget to \$200,000 or \$100,000 per year for two years to demonstrate that the model will be successful in describing the response of the Bering Sea circulation-ice-ecosystem to forcing by climate and the adjacent North Pacific and Arctic Oceans. The Board believes this may be an overly ambitious project as written. The applicants need to resubmit a revised statement of work for review by the Science Panel and also confer with the ecosystem modeling committee.

Proposal #24. The Board decided to fund this project as a pilot or proof-of-concept project for one year at a reduced level of \$100,000 and request that the applicants reapply in the next RFP cycle and demonstrate more support from local communities. The Board requested a revised statement of work that better explains the benefits that will derive from this research. The applicants also will need to confer with members of the Board's Local and Traditional Knowledge Committee as appropriate for the region where the research will occur.

Proposal #26. Rather than approving the full \$404,057 requested, the Board accepted its Science Panel recommendation to only approve \$100,000 to ensure that Jeff Napp (Alaska Fisheries Science Center) would be able to participate in a related NSF BEST-funded project in 2007. If the proposal to NSF by Hopcroft and Strom is not funded, then the \$100,000 should not be expended and will be available to the 2007 RFP.

Proposal #36. Based on a Science Panel recommendation, the Board reduced the funding to the target amount of \$150,000 for the intended habitat mapping technology workshop, noting that this level of funding would be very adequate for such a workshop and the resulting synthesis and reports. The Board also made funding contingent on the whole meeting being open to the public, unless some portion needs to be closed to protect intellectual property rights. The workshop also is encouraged to consider how to ensure that habitat mapping is cost effective and useful to resource managers.

Proposal #42. The Board reduced the funding to \$150,000 from the \$309,101 requested, for this proposal to perform research on migration patterns of Pacific halibut in the southeast Bering Sea was an excellent study. That funding is contingent on the project receiving support for the other \$150,000 needed from other entities such as the International Pacific Halibut Commission or an appropriate community development quota organization.

Proposal #49. The Board adopted a recommendation of its Science Panel to reduce the funding to \$150,000 for this study on the diet and ecology of skates in the GOA. With this reduced funding, the study should focus on analyzing stomach sample contents and not on the stable isotope analysis.

Proposal #51. The Board adopted a recommendation of its Science Panel to reduce the funding of this study on fall, winter, and spring predation of key groundfish species, to \$150,000 from the \$155,335 requested.

Proposal #53. The Board adopted a recommendation of its Science Panel to reduce the funding from \$209,755 requested to \$75,000, and request the applicants to focus solely on the conventional end-point polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in assessing Hematodinium disease loads in Tanner crab populations.

Proposal #61. The Board recommended providing only \$150,000 for this work on testing low-cost methods to reduce sperm whale depredation in the Gulf of Alaska. The Board has provided substantial funding for sperm whale depredation-related research in the past and believes this additional funding will provide sufficient funding for the testing involved in deterring depredation.

Proposals 79-81. Based on a Science Panel recommendation, the Board recommends that these three proposals, focused on walrus research in the Bering and Chukchi seas, be requested to come back with a combined statement of work for a total of \$300,000, and to have clearly identifiable products from the research. The panel believes that NPRB should support this field research which is part of a larger program to assess walrus distributions and habits in northern seas, but that the total request of over half a million dollars was excessive when compared to the marine mammal section target of \$600,000.

Proposal #103. The Board adopted a Science Panel recommendation which was based on a previous recommendation of a subcommittee of the two science panels for the OSRI and NPRB to fund this proposed work on the seasonal distribution, habitat use, and energy density of forage fish in the nearshore ecosystem of Prince William Sound. The funding for that project was increased from the \$59,906 requested, to \$150,000 for two years to better study seasonal changes in energy content of the forage species and to examine day-night effects. The applicants must submit a revised statement of work for the 2-year study.

Proposals #110 and #111. The Science Panel found that both proposals were equally meritorious and that the Board should choose between the two, with funding not to exceed the section target of \$150,000. The Board decided to recommend funding for both projects at \$150,000 each. This represents a slight increase for #110 and a large decrease for #111 which came in well over the funding target of \$150,000 for this research priority.

#### Contingencies on Project Approval

Proposal #13. The Board adopted a Science Panel recommendation that the applicants for this modeling study on the response of lower trophic level production to climate change do a better literature review than represented in the proposal, and critically evaluate the models and their validation, in addition to conferring with the NPRB's Bering Sea ecosystem modeling committee before commencing work.

Proposal #45. For this proposal on Greenland halibut spawning and nursery areas in the eastern Bering Sea, the Board made funding contingent on the applicants responding to Science Panel comments that the stock assessment methodologies need to be improved and that an Alaska Fisheries Science Center stock assessment expert needs to be added to the project.

5. Status Reports and Future Directions

Community Involvement and LTK Planning in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Region

The Board received a report from the community involvement committee on the current status of the Board's program on community involvement and local and traditional knowledge activities. A prominent potential activity is to use community workshops to inform the public about the Board's research, especially the Bering Sea IERP and gather their views on research priorities. Plans now are to hold such workshops in Hooper Bay, Dillingham, Nelson Lagoon, and the Pribilofs.

The Board discussed the potential workshops and recommended pairing them with meetings with students and teachers. The community development quota (CDQ) programs should be asked to provide matching funds for the student teacher program. All of the CDQ programs have educational components and that would be a start in determining exactly what to do. Possibly the Board and CDQ programs could each provide \$5,000 in matching funds. We would need to flesh this out further and see how it meshes with other educational programs in communities and villages. The Board also recommended that if we travel through a hub community such as Bethel to get out to a community like Hooper Bay, then we should also hold a meeting in Bethel. The same goes for Nome if meeting in Unalakleet.

Education and Outreach Activities

Michael Illenberg, of the Alaska SeaLife Center, presented an update on education and outreach activities for NPRB. He also apprised the Board of the ideas of having a Board-sponsored photo contest and giving an award at the regional science fair. The Board had no objection to pursuing either activity.

Cooperative Research

The issue at hand was how to be more proactive in generating cooperative research with industry. The Board has funded several projects that involve cooperative research and encouraged such research in the recent RFPs. The Board has the options of (1) continuing that more passive approach, (2) placing a specific priority in the 2007 RFP that requires cooperative research, (3) contracting with someone to actively build our cooperative research program, or (4) partnering with other organizations which are doing cooperative research.

The Board noted that it should seek ways to achieve broader participation in cooperative research. Industry needs to partner with scientists on issue areas such as gear modifications and reduction of gear impacts on habitat and bottom. The industry also needs to be educated on how to develop proposals and apply for funding. It also was noted that the industry is more than fish-related – the oil and gas industries need to be involved also.

The Board recommended priming the pump by having a clear commitment of dollars for cooperative research projects in the 2007 RFP. It will consider having a specific section of the RFP identified for cooperative research with a dollar amount associated with it. The Board anticipates a funding target for this section of \$200,000-250,000.

6. Other Matters

The Board approved two new Science Panel members, Michael Simpkins of the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, and Mary Pete, Director of the Kuskokwim Campus of UAF, for 2-year terms.

The Board approved meeting support of \$10,000 for the Symposium on Fisheries Depredation by Killer and Sperm Whales, and \$10,000 for the Holarctic Symposium on Marine Mammals (with no strings attached to the funding).

The Board decided to meet on September 19-22, 2006, but start one day later if at all possible. They identified April 23-26, 2007 for the spring meeting to review proposals.

Several other items were discussed at the end of the meeting:

- The Board would like to have status reports on projects and assessments of how the projects are progressing.
- In next year's review of proposals, give online technical reviews and Science Panel reviews to Board members electronically as is done now with Science Panel members.
- Salary commitments should be more explicitly in budget descriptions for proposals.