

Final Summary  
North Pacific Research Board  
NPRB Conference Room  
Anchorage, AK  
April 25-26, 2007

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

The Board convened at 10:11 a.m. on Wednesday, April 25, 2007. Present were Tylan Schrock, 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, Robert Gisiner, John Iani, Gerry Merrigan, Pam Pope, and Dennis Wiesenburg. David Benton, Alexandra Curtis, and Robin Samuelsen were absent. Clarence Pautzke, Francis Wiese, Carolyn Rosner, and Nora Deans staffed the meeting.

The agenda was approved and a safety briefing was given. Tylan Schrock was re-elected Chairman for another one-year term. Stephanie Madsen was re-elected Vice Chairman until her term on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council ends in mid-August 2007.

The Board received a report from its Advisory Panel outgoing chair and vice-chair Heather McCarty and Patricia Cochran. They offered closing comments indicating they were disappointed about not being able to review proposals and then raised issues about the continued relevance of the panel to the NPRB process. The Board responded that it would agenda a full discussion of the role and future of the Advisory Panel for its September 2007 meeting, and the topic would be scheduled at the beginning of the meeting so it would receive the proper attention.

2. Proposal Review for 2007

Overview of current research funded by NPRB

Since 2002, NPRB has funded 139 projects, for a total of \$24.1M. Sixty-one projects (\$9.6M) have been completed to date. Summary tables were provided to the Board showing how the 139 projects relate to the primary ecosystem priorities identified in the 2005 Science Plan.

Overview of 2007 Request for Proposals and proposals received

The Board was presented with a summary of the 93 proposals received requesting over \$15M. NPRB staff developed a series of initial evaluation criteria to determine if proposals followed RFP guidelines and whether they were responsive to the chosen research priority. This process resulted in six proposals being returned as non-compliant. The remaining 87 proposals were sent out for anonymous technical review as well as review by primary and secondary Science Panel members.

Science Panel recommendations

The Science Panel met on April 10-12 to develop the funding recommendations that were presented to the Board by panel Chairman Rich Marasco. Of the 87 viable proposals, the panel recommended 28 for tier 1 for \$3.894M, and another 20 proposals for tier 2 for \$3.35M. Tier 2 proposals are scientifically meritorious and could be considered if the Board decides to exceed the RFP funding ceiling of \$3.895M.

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 U.S. Secretary of Commerce for final approval.

A framework motion was made to adopt the tier 1 recommendations of the Science Panel, modified to add the two workshops (proposals 4 at \$60k and 51 at \$30k), add proposals 20 (\$221k), 35 (\$50k), and 43 (\$299k), and delete proposals 27 (\$161k) and 62 (\$99k).

A substitute motion was made to adopt the Science Panel tier 1 recommendations in full. It failed on a vote of 0-4 (excom) and 4-9 (other).

An amendment was made to add the Beaufort Sea to the survey design for the Chukchi Sea but have more focus on the Chukchi. The workshop would need to flesh out the difficulties of expanding to the Beaufort Sea, which possibly could narrow the design back down to just the Chukchi Sea. This was accepted as a friendly amendment, after another friendly amendment was withdrawn to focus on the Chukchi, but expand to the Beaufort if more funds were available.

The Board clarified for proposals 7 and 11, that these were being funded for just one year, and that the Board would discuss long term monitoring at its September meeting.

Concerning proposal 35 on the life history, ecology, and fluctuations in BSAI crab stocks, it was noted that this research is very important to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. It was suggested that the statement of work be discussed with the crab biologists in NOAA and ADFG to make sure that it is acceptable to them. A friendly amendment was accepted to fund proposal 35 at the full amount requested, \$99,459 rather than the \$50k in the main motion.

Regarding proposal 27 on ichthyophonous in pollock, it was explained that although it was deleted in the main motion, it is nevertheless a very important issue to industry and there should be a place for it in the 2008 RFP. It occurs in several other important commercial species as well.

Concerning shark proposals, of which two were submitted but not recommended for funding, the Board asked staff to review past RFPs and received proposals to help determine why so few shark proposals were submitted or successful. They asked that the shark topic be included in the 2008 draft RFP.

Concerning proposal 43 on sea otter research, the proposers should resubmit a revised statement of work to address the Science Panel concerns. The revision could be approved by staff.

Concerning proposal 62 on beached bird monitoring, the Board accepted a friendly amendment to move it to the community involvement category.

An amendment was offered, but failed (2-2 excom, 10-3 other), to fully fund proposal 63 to translocate short-tailed albatross chicks. An amendment to focus only on translocation and not telemetry failed. An amendment to fund 63 at \$200,000 and find the remainder of funds needed (\$96,701) from conservation organizations or elsewhere, passed.

An amendment was made, but failed (1-3 excom, 8-5 other), to remove proposal 65, a study of crab rationalization on the basis that the project needed more involvement of the fleet itself, there needed to be 3-4 targeted questions, and there may be deficiencies in the sample size and experimental design.

An amendment was made, but failed (0-4 excom, 3-10 other), to add proposal 67 on shipping risk assessment at \$50,000, that could be leveraged against State of Alaska funds for risk assessment.

An amendment was made, but failed (0-4 excom, 5-8 other), to add proposal 66 on shipping risk assessment at \$50,000 and fund only half the sites proposed in the original proposal. The Board desired more information on what is being done on such assessments and what funds are being expended so that they may consider inclusion of this topic in the 2008 RFP.

An amendment was made, but failed (4-0 excom, 4-7 other), to add proposal 72 for \$88,000, to use bivalves as indicator species for contamination in subsistence communities. Concerns raised by the Board were that this could lead to long-term monitoring and that there would need to be more collaboration with other mussel watch groups. The Board requested that this topic be carried forward as a potential focal area in the 2008 RFP.

An amendment was made, but failed (0-4 excom, 2-10 other), to delete proposal 75 concerning a herring synthesis.

An amendment was made, but withdrawn, to delete proposal 80 to do a cooperative pollock acoustic biomass survey. The Board directed that the revised statement of work would need to go back for Science Panel review and concurrence.

The main framework motion on funding proposals to the 2008 RFP, as amended above, passed unanimously. As a result, the Board recommended 29 new projects and two workshops (arctic survey design and Cook Inlet belugas) for funding totaling \$4,558,647 in response to the 2007 Request for Proposals. The Board recommended the requested funding levels for 23 proposals and reduced funding for 6 proposals (7, 44, 53, 63, 64, and 79). The Board applied the following stipulations, most of which were recommended by the Science Panel:

#### Funding Revisions and Stipulations

Proposal 7. Fund for one year only and require revised statement of work for this duration.

Proposal 11. Fund for one year only and revised dates that were submitted.

Proposal 20: Revise statement of work to address Science Panel issues, mainly the concern regarding the feasibility to collect and examine the large number of samples needed, and the fact that mortality of snow crabs may occur after the time during which crabs will be observed onboard.

Proposal 35: Revise statement of work to address Science Panel issues and focus on crab diet and collection of life history rates (fertility and morphometrics, etc). Particularly, the Science Panel noted that the size distributions and prominent instars to be studied are very different in each area, so a comparison may be impossible. Additionally, it was cautioned that the study may be unlikely to construct a realistic bioenergetics model, given the limited range of information (size of crabs, water temperature, etc.) from published studies that would be used in the growth model simulations. A laboratory component of the study to address this issue was suggested.

Proposal 43: Revise statement of work to address Science Panel issues. In particular, The Science Panel pointed out that the proposal was unlikely to adequately evaluate the role of predation as a cause of the decline because predatory events are unlikely to be observed given the rarity of such events. Further, the decline in sea otters may have led to a decrease in killer whale predation because too few otters are available to make such predation worthwhile. It was also noted that the evaluation of “factors other than predation” could probably be conducted using only one year of data (rather than the two years proposed). Finally, it was suggested that the proposal more adequately describe the analysis of tissue samples for disease (e.g., what analyses would be conducted to evaluate which diseases?).

Proposal 44: Revise statement of work to address Science Panel issues and focus on a proof of concept for the predictive habitat modeling. The Science Panel noted that the modeling may find that the calving grounds do not occur in the NWHI area where the field study was to be centered, so it recommended that in the first instance the predictive habitat modeling should be supported and if the model seems to be quite accurate, then the predicted locations of right whale breeding habitat could be used in future studies targeting those areas.

Proposal 53: Seek a challenge grant to provide the other \$150,000 required to perform the research.

Proposal 63: Seek a challenge grant to provide remaining \$96,701 needed to perform this research.

Proposal 64: Revise statement of work to focus on captive feeding studies only. A concern raised by the reviewers was that the underlying assumption behind the proposed field work is that the diets of the birds to be characterized will reflect the resources that eiders need to be successful. However, this work will be sampling individuals from populations that have declined by 95%. Thus, the availability of captive eiders to validate the use of fatty acids as tracers of shifts in resource use is a unique feature. Results from these birds will provide a foundation for the interpretation of data from eiders captured in the wild and the proposed data analysis methods should provide new insights into the composition of the eider diet.

Proposal 65: Revise statement of work based on Science Panel and Board comments. Most importantly, it was requested that more attention should have been given to both the sample size selected and anticipated analysis, and that the proposal take a more structured look at crew movement with specific questions (ideally including those that are of concern to the Council) rather than open ended approach.

Proposal 79: Revise statement of work to address Science Panel concerns. The main concern was raised regarding the narrow application to fisheries management, the small sample size and the lack of seasonality. Based on the otherwise strong components of this proposal, the Science Panel felt that as a pilot project it was a good investment, and endorsed the joint panel recommendation to request a new statement of work from the applicants, providing them an additional \$20K so that the amount of tags could double, and so that they could include a seasonal component by adding trawls.

Proposal 80: Revise statement of work based on Science Panel comments. Specifically it was requested that the linkage of the SSL research to the cooperative industry-agency pollock surveys be further clarified, that the explanation of stated objectives be expanded, particularly the discussion of the hypotheses and related analyses that were only briefly touched on, and that a justification for the purchase of a \$12,000 camera for the SSL surveys be provided. It was also noted that a revised statement of work should show some detailed results from that past study.

### Long-Term Monitoring

The Board discussed the issue of formulating a policy on long-term monitoring. Many of the proposals it receives are continuations of previously-funded projects. The Board has taken action in some cases to tell the proposers, that even though they have been successful in receiving funding, the Board does not anticipate repeatedly funding their research and they must seek ongoing support elsewhere. The Board concluded that it needed to have an in-depth discussion of criteria and policy for long-term monitoring that it could apply in future RFP decisions. The Board requested the staff to bring the issue back up in September if ready. If not, it could be postponed. The Board requested a list of projects that are currently being funded that have a long-term monitoring component. The Board also requested a presentation on the role that EVOSTC would play in long-term monitoring. Then it will proceed to consider a plan for long-term monitoring.

### 3. Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Two full proposals to the BSIERP RFP were received by March 15, 2007 and are now being technically reviewed. Board actions on the two proposals will occur in June. At this current meeting, Board members reviewed its conflict of interest procedures that were adopted in March 2003, which state the following:

Board members must refrain from voting under three circumstances: (1) on approval of funding for a research project if the Board member is listed as a principal investigator or collaborator whose curriculum vitae is included in the proposal, (2) if the decision would have a significant and predictable effect on their financial interest, or (3) if the Board member believes he/she has a conflict of interest.

Examples of instances covered under (3) include:

- Current employment in the specific department of the applicant for research funds
- Ownership of the institution's securities or other evidences of debt
- Known family or marriage relationship, if relationship is with a principal investigator or collaborator whose curriculum vitae is included in the proposal
- Business or professional partnership with a principal investigator or collaborator whose curriculum vitae is included in the proposal

In preparation for the June meeting, the Board discussed under what circumstances members should consider recusing themselves. Obviously, being a major director, dean, or supervisor for investigators on either of the proposals, or actually being named in a proposal, would constitute a major conflict. A more difficult situation occurs when defining a "business or professional partnership with a principal investigator or collaborator." For example, if someone's organization already provides support to another organization, and could be perceived as having a stake in its long-term success, is this an inherent partnership and thus grounds for conflict of interest?

The Board members discussed their own personal/professional situations and associations with other entities. The general conclusion was that Board members need to disclose their relationships in the interest of full disclosure, but not necessarily recuse themselves from voting, unless, of course, they or their organization has a major stake in one of the full proposals.

The only other action the Board took under this agenda item was to go on record that they may decide to mix and match components of the two full proposals as necessary and appropriate to field a comprehensive and meritorious BSIERP program.

The Board did not take any action on the issue of whether to include funding for the M2-M8 moorings inside or outside the BSIERP. The Board was reminded that it will meet in late June to take final action on the BSIERP program.

#### 4. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

The Board discussed further development of the GOAIERP which started about a year ago. Some Board members noted that they were uncomfortable with moving ahead with the GOAIERP until they know better how the BSIERP would play out. After hearing from Michael Baffrey, Executive Director of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustees Council, the Board considered a potential collaboration with the Council. Though the original intent was to possibly release a call for pre-proposals in October 2007, the Board concluded that it would be better to delay until the February-March 2008 timeframe for such a release, but not as late as October 2008. This would provide time for the BSIERP process to play out and be assessed for its application to the GOAIERP. The Board expressed its interest in pursuing a potential partnership with EVOSTC. The Board also would like the EVOSTC to consider providing funding for the GAK line.

The Board took action to approve \$13,000 for Tom Weingartner to make the GAK-1 mooring data transmission real-time. This is in addition to the \$100,000 that the Board approved as direct funding for the mooring in September 2006 on the basis of a recommendation from the Science Panel. Weingartner had provided a revised statement of work for this project, which was reviewed by the Science Panel and then by the Board.

#### 5. Contaminants

The Board discussed how to develop a contaminants research priority for the 2008 RFP which will be available for review and release at the September 2007 meeting. An overview of current contaminants research and priorities had been developed by a panel at the 2007 Alaska Marine Science Symposium. The idea of having a contaminants panel originated in Science Panel discussion last September when concerns were raised about the quality and quantity of contaminants proposals received and the few that were actually funded. The Science Panel was interested in better defining that priority in future annual RFPs.

The Board suggested that a 3-member team be established to help shape the 2008 RFP contaminants section, based on inputs from the Science and Advisory panels. There should be more collaboration with other organizations and periodic review of any long-term programs.

#### 6. Budget Review

The Board received a KPMG audit report on its financial activities for FY2005 and 2006 covering roughly \$6.3M. KPMG found no deficiencies or matters involving internal control and its operation that they consider to be material weaknesses. The Board recommended that audit results be sent to it electronically for future audits.

The Board received a status report on Grant 2 for \$19,860,115 (NA05NMF4721198), composed of EIRF earnings for FY03-05 and appropriations for FY05-06. The Board also reviewed and approved a budget request for a new award for \$7.8 million which constitute the EIRF earnings for FY2006.

The Board approved \$10,000 to support a PICES workshop on forecasting climate impacts on fish production, and a request from Tom Royer for \$8,187 to rewrite a freshwater runoff model. These expenditures from Grant 1 would leave about \$80,000 that will be applied to ongoing expenditures for the

Board, staff, Science Panel and Advisory Panel activities. This course of action to spend down those funds was approved by the Board.

## 7. Other Matters

### Graduate Research Fellowships

The Board again considered how to move forward with developing a Graduate Research Fellowship. It received an overview from staff on its past actions and conceptions of a potential graduate research fellowship. It also received a Science Panel recommendation to drop the idea and instead invest in a Best Student Presentation and Poster awards every year at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium. The Advisory Panel recommended providing up to \$50,000 each year total for three student awards. The Board directed staff to bring this issue back to the September 2007 meeting for further discussion.

### Education and Outreach Activities

Nora Deans and Carolyn Rosner provided a summary of education and outreach activities over the past six months and those planned for the coming months. The Board expressed its appreciation for all the efforts that are going into education and outreach and the many fine products of these efforts.

### Photo Contest

The Board reviewed the 14 finalist photos submitted in response to its first photo contest. They then chose the top three which will receive monetary prizes (first prize - \$1200, 2<sup>nd</sup> - \$600, and 3<sup>rd</sup> - \$300).

### Community Involvement and LTK planning in Bering Sea and Aleutian region

The Board received a status report on community involvement and planning for possible workshops. No further action was taken.

### Approve Advisory Panel Memberships

The Board was scheduled to consider approving new Advisory Panel memberships. However, having heard concerns from outgoing panel members at the beginning of the meeting, the Board decided not to approve new members or seek additional nominations. Instead, it would fully review its policy on the Advisory Panel at the September meeting and necessity of having one. The Board extended the terms of six of the panel members through September 2007 (Ron Hegge, Shirley Kelly, Frank Kelty, Steve MacLean, Arni Thomson, and Gale Vick) and asked staff to notify other applicants of this postponement and to place the issue at the beginning of the September meeting agenda so there could be a meaningful discussion.

### Meeting Schedule for 2007-2009

The Board reviewed prospective dates for Board meetings for the rest of 2007 and through 2009 to ensure the times are blocked on their calendars. They tentatively adopted the following meeting dates:

- June 26-27, 2007 (w/NSF on BSIERP)
- September 27-28, 2007 (regular fall meeting)
- April 30-May 1, 2008 (regular spring meeting)
- September 24-25, 2008 (regular fall meeting)

- April 29-30, 2009 (regular spring meeting)
- September 23-24, 2009 (regular fall meeting)

Other meetings may be scheduled as necessary to accommodate review of GOAIERP proposals.

Alaska Ocean Observing System Status Report

The Board received a written status report from Molly McCammon, Executive Director of AOOS.

Peer Review of Steller Sea Lion Draft Recovery Plan

The Board was notified that, at the request of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, it would be establishing a panel to review the Steller sea lion draft recovery plan and provide comments to the Council in early August 2007.