

**Meeting Summary**  
**NPRB Advisory Panel**  
**September 25-26, 2007**  
**NPRB Conference Room**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**  
**(Started 9 a.m., Tuesday, September 25)**

The Advisory Panel met on 25-26 September at the NPRB in Anchorage. Present were Steve MacLean (chair), Arni Thompson, Shirley Kelly, and Frank Kelty. Clarence Pautzke, Francis Wiese, Carrie Eischens, Carolyn Rosner and Nora Deans staffed the meeting.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda (Tuesday, 9:00-9:20 a.m.)
  - a. Approve agenda.

Agenda was approved after changing Wednesday start time to 9am

- b. Safety briefing.

Clarence Pautzke provided a safety briefing and indicated mustering locations outside the building.

- c. Science Panel meeting summary

It was noted that Francis would point out Science Panel findings and decisions for each item as the topic was reached.

2. Budget Review (Tuesday, 9:20-10:00 a.m.)
  - a. Status of EIRF funds (with new MMS estimates)

Clarence Pautzke gave a summary of the current EIRF status; grant 1 will be closed out by the end of the year, supporting boards operation and current projects under Grant 2

- b. Directed funding decisions for 2008

Clarence pointed out directed funding commitments and allocations as noted in Action memo

- c. Research funding levels for 2008 and beyond

Long term projections up to 2012 were presented. Clarence noted that budgeting for future was done assuming no future earmarks. Grant 3 will be used for the first time in 2009. Cash Obligations and cash flow analysis were summarized. It was pointed out that it may be necessary to wait 4-5 years between IERPs in order to build up funds. An estimated \$3.5 and \$4M should be available for annual RFPs over the next 5 years.

3. Advisory Panel Policy (Information only)  
Consider future and role of Advisory Panel

The Executive Directory summarized Memo 2 regarding the history and purpose of the Advisory Panel, and the recommendation made by the AP in April that the Board consider the future role of the AP. The AP members present discussed the current role and limitations of the AP and summarized contributions of the AP in past years, including the creation of the LTK Committee, line items for crab research, Native scientist on the Science Panel. There was some concern raised about the AP not reviewing proposals,

although it was pointed out that the AP has input in proposals through the design of the RFP. All members present stated their belief that that AP still has relevance and is a cost effective method of generating stakeholder input, and encouraged the Board to continue the AP. Attendance of AP members was raised, and attendance commitments were encouraged for future AP members.

4. Summary of previously funded NPRB Research (Tuesday, 10:00-11:00 a.m.)
  - a. Status of 2007 projects and finalization.
  - b. Overall summary of ongoing research projects.
  - c. Update on Education and Outreach.

Staff provided overview of 2007 projects, and highlighted the canceled polar bear project. Steve asked if the fact that it was dropped likely to effect incoming proposals and funding decisions. Francis noted this has been done in the past with a seabird project, which worked, here it did not. Steve suggested that if something is going to be a challenge grant the PIs should know that ahead of time (i.e., in the RFP) not a surprise to the PI as a funding decision from the board.

Summary of all projects – staff presented a summary on allocation of \$\$ across all LMEs, and pointed out that out of the 172 Projects funded to date, 76 are now complete. The status of the Publication library was presented, metadata and data requirements were summarized, and system of data/metadata archiving was explained.

Update on Education and Outreach – Nora Deans and Carolyn Rosner summarized Education, Outreach and Communications. Recently published printed products were distributed.

5. Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.-noon)
  - a. Summary of program, including BSIERP and BEST.

Staff provided a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the funded BSIERP program including the status of ecosystem modeling as well as data and project management.. A question was raised about collaboration with international (Russian or Japanese) stakeholders. Staff responded that the only collaboration with researchers from the western-side of the Pacific is remote sensing work with the Japanese.

- b. Review patch dynamics and LTK revised statements of work and budgets.

Staff summarized the history and the new statements of work of the Patch and LTK component of BSIERP. The AP chose to review documents overnight and posed no further questions after this review.

- e. Summary of Principal Investigator meeting

Staff summarized the PI meeting held the previous week in Seattle

- f. Plans to address identified research gaps

Staff gave a presentation summarizing the data gaps in the BSIERP program as identified and refined at the PI meeting in Seattle, and a strategy for addressing these gaps using the \$800K put aside by the Board in April. The AP thought that this was a reasonable approach.

- g. Next steps in implementing program (including plans for education and outreach).

Staff summarized next steps – decision on Patch, LTK and Gaps by the Board. EMC must make decision

on modelers before December; Staff working to set up and facilitate communication between PIs before the first field season.

6. 2008 Request for Proposals (Tuesday, 1:00-5:00 p.m.)  
a. Science plan research themes and other bases for research priorities.

Staff presented an overview of the RFP evolution since 2002 and explained the basis for the current proposed research priorities

- b. Draft 2008 RFP

The following amendments or comments were made to the 2008 draft RFP as presented by staff:

Oceanography and lower trophic level productivity items:

AP suggested that \$350K may not be enough \$\$ to get the level of detailed study desired, and questioned whether topics within this category should be prioritized.

There was some discussion about including item iii. Sea ice charts in the RFP. Some AP members felt that this was an important item, due to past use of the hand drawn charts by industry, although other members pointed out that this should be an agency responsibility.

**MOTION** by Kelty, second Thompson to delete item iii. Sea Ice charts from the 2008 RFP was passed unanimously.

Fish Habitat

One member of the AP suggested that this specifically mention bottom trawling. Other members pointed out that mid-water trawls do sometimes impact bottom habitats. There was again concern that the funding cap was not sufficient to fully fund a detailed study, and questions about whether this was intended to be a Challenge Grant. It was further suggested that this could be designated as a cooperative/collaborative study opportunity.

**MOTION** by Kelty, second Thompson to recommend that the Board consider this as a collaborative effort since an effective, meaningful, successful study would exceed the \$250K cap passed unanimously.

Fish and Invertebrates

Concern was again raised that the funding cap for individual studies was too low to fully fund quality projects. Much time was spent discussing the number of research topics in this section, and suggestions were made to reduce the number of topics, or phase topics over several years. It was suggested that reducing the number of topics may reduce the number of proposal received, but raising the cap may increase the quality of proposals.

**MOTION** by Thompson, second Kelly to increase the individual cap for this section to \$333K was passed unanimously.

The AP felt strongly about the fact that this change provides an opportunity for improving the quality of proposals for a category that has some very important focal topics.

Marine Mammals

There was concern raised that the ecological term "Carrying Capacity" was misunderstood. Carrying capacity is not a measurable quantity, but rather an ecological concept. Staff summarized the Science Panel discussion pointing out that the goal of the SP was to solicit proposals to investigate whether the SSL population is at a stable equilibrium, and whether SSLs are ever likely to reach previous population

levels. AP members then suggested that the RFP language should not include “carrying capacity” and suggested to replace the term with “vital rates” and “current population dynamics”, using non-politicized terms that get directly at the data question.

**MOTION** by MacLean, second Thompson to replace the current language regarding SSL with the following paragraph was passed unanimously.

“Steller sea lions – current vital rates and population dynamics

The western stock of Steller sea lions declined by 80% between the 1970s and the late 1990s, resulting in the listing of the species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990. The western distinct population segment (DPS) was subsequently upgraded to Endangered in 1997. It has been suggested that due to regime shifts in the North Pacific Ocean the carrying capacity for Steller sea lions has been reduced, thus preventing the recovery of the western stock of Steller sea lions to pre-decline population levels. The NPRB is requesting proposals to investigate current population dynamics and vital rates of western Steller sea lions. Proposals are to focus on the current state of the Steller Sea Lion population, not on the factors which contributed to the decline of the population. Results of this research are expected to provide important information to management agencies. This topic has been noted as a top research priority by the Scientific and Statistical Committee of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.”

#### Cooperative Research with Industry

Staff explained that section a. Topics identified by fishing industry was a carryover from the 2007 RFP, as no new topics had been brought forth and the SP had not made any modifications either. No new suggestions were made by the AP.

Staff explained that new research topics had been received from the oil and gas industry. Some of these topics are appropriate for the RFP, while others did not seem appropriate. It was pointed out that priority i. long term monitoring was addressed by the Long Term Monitoring directed funding. It was further pointed out that other topics, including polar bear research and walrus research was covered in the Marine Mammal section of the 2008 RFP. A suggestion was made that the 2008 RFP Marine Mammal section should clearly state that polar bear and walrus research were interests of the oil and gas industry, and proposers should seek industry matching funds.

**MOTION** by MacLean, second Kelly to delete sections i, ii, and vii from the cooperative research section with the oil and gas industry and add a statement in the marine mammal section that polar bear and walrus research are interests of the oil and gas industry and proposers should seek industry matching funds was passed unanimously.

#### Aleutian Islands

AP members questioned whether NMFS is going to fund research in the Aleutian Islands. Staff pointed out that the AI-FEP is a guidance document and no funds are attached to the recommendations. One member suggested that some of the language suggested could fit under the LTK and the Fish & Invertebrate sections, but staff responded that it would not be appropriate in those sections and the wish to highlight these issues for the Aleutian Islands specifically.

**MOTION** by Thompson, second Kelly to accept funding level and text as presented was passed unanimously.

Long-term monitoring

Staff summarized the SPs plan for developing criteria for long-term monitoring funding decisions for the Board. In the mean time the SP proposed to fund two LT monitoring projects for a total of \$300K. This was supported by the AP.

Comment on recommended research priorities and target funding amounts for 2008 RFP.

The AP noted that the large number of categories in the RFP limited funding amounts for each category. There was some concern, also expressed earlier, that limiting funding may compromise the quality and scope of proposals. Recommendations were made to limit the number of categories for funding in any given year, with perhaps thematic foci, and to rotate these through RFPs in future years.

**MOTION** by Kelly, second Thompson to urge the board to consider rotating themes in the science plan through annual RFPs or frame RFPs around thematic processes to increase funding levels in the themes that are being proposed in individual years was passed unanimously.

It was later pointed out that this is similar to the modular approach suggested for the GOAIERP, as noted below.

7. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (Wednesday, 8:30-10:00 a.m.)
  - a. Status report on development and schedule.
  - b. Update on potential EVOS partnership.
  - c. Lessons learned from BSIERP process.
  - d. Science Panel recommendations.
  - e. Board direction for future development and schedule.

Staff presented a summary of the current GOAIERP status and the idea of doing a modular approach. Concern about EVOS commitment was raised given the unanimous decision procedure followed by the EVOS Council. This new modular approach as presented was supported by the AP. The AP felt it made the process independent of partnership with other agencies, but did not limit partnerships. It was also felt that this new approach successfully incorporates lessons learned from the BSIERP to date.

**MOTION** by Kelly, second Thompson to endorse the modular approach for the GOAIERP as described was passed unanimously.

8. Other Matters (Wednesday, 10:00 a.m – noon and adjourn)
  - a. Status report on AOOS.

Molly McCammon was unavailable to give an update to the AP.

- b. Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Workshop.

Staff summarized efforts to date by NPRB to arrange a Cook Inlet beluga whale workshop. Staff pointed out that the Alaska SeaLife Center and NMFS are also planning beluga workshops, and wished to avoid duplicate efforts. Staff summarized recent developments suggesting a beluga whale Panel session at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January 2008 to update researchers and public about research priorities in the NMFS beluga whale draft Conservation Plan, followed by a workshop focusing on research recommendations generated at the Panel discussion. The AP endorsed the Panel approach and recommended full representation on the panel – including federal, state, academic, industry and tribal members.

- c. Arctic Study design workshop.

Update from staff, no discussion by AP

d. Principal investigator profiles.

Staff presented the draft PI profile elements. Some AP members questioned whether new researchers, with no NPRB profile would be penalized during future proposal review. Staff assured the AP that this would not be the case. AP members questioned whether these would be public documents, and were assured by staff that they would not, the profiles would be for internal NPRB business only, but that individual researchers would have the opportunity to view their profile. The PI profile concept was endorsed by the AP.

e. Graduate research fellowships.

Staff provided a history of past actions in the AP, SP, and Board regarding Graduate Research Fellowships, including the latest proposal to provide presentation awards at the Marine Science Symposium. The AP supported small financial (~\$250) awards for best student presentations at the Symposium, but also supports student fellowships to support new scientists. Some discussion around the meaning of fellowship (continuous support) or award/scholarship (one time award) ensued. The AP supported the idea of one time awards to graduate students rather than full (multi-year) fellowships. It was suggested that 5, \$20K one time awards would provide support directly to top-quality students, supplemental to other project support (NPRB funded or not) and raise exposure of NPRB programs. Some discussion ensued about the mechanics of judging award applications. It was suggested that a committee composed of SP, AP, and Board members would judge applications. It was recommended that the awards be limited to students proposing research that is consistent with the NPRB science plan and limited in geographic scope to the NPRB LME's.

**MOTION** by Kelty, second Kelly to encourage the Board to adopt the following language passed unanimously.

“Graduate Research Awards”

The NPRB will offer qualified masters and doctoral students the opportunity to address scientific, technological, and socio-economic issues identified in the NPRB Science Plan through a Graduate Research Award. It is anticipated that the NPRB will make a total of \$100K available per year for the GRA program. Up to five awards will be available on a competitive basis to students admitted to or enrolled at accredited colleges and universities. The individual award amount is \$20,000 in one year that may be used for tuition and research related expenses. Students will be limited to one award per degree.

A question was raised as to whether this is limited to US universities or US citizens, and to whether original language earmarking one award to Alaska native students should be retained. The AP recommended that these awards be available to all students enrolled in graduate programs at universities in and outside the US, and not limited to US citizens. The key qualifying characteristic should be that research be relevant to the NPRB and be conducted in Alaska. The earmark for Alaska Native students was not recommended, as all applications should be judged on merit. The AP also recommended student awards at the AMSS – 4 awards (2 Masters, 2 Doctoral) at \$250 each. It was suggested that students could enroll in the competition when abstracts are submitted to the AMSS, a committee would select the top abstracts and invite oral presentations to be given during an evening session, during which the winners would be selected.

i. Meeting schedule for 2008.

No future meetings were scheduled pending Board decision on the AP.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.