

**Summary
North Pacific Research Board
Science Panel Meeting
Anchorage, AK
August 20-22, 2013**

The Science Panel met on August 20-22, 2013 at NPRB in Anchorage, Alaska. The meeting was chaired by Tom Royer and the following other members were in attendance: Vera Alexander, Dick Beamish, Jim Berner, Stew Grant, Tuula Hollmen, Pat Livingston, Seth Macinko, Cheryl Rosa, Chris Siddon, Pat Tester, Polly Wheeler, Bill Wilson, and David Witherell. Absent: Carin Ashjian, Don Bowen and Andre Punt. The meeting was staffed by John Hilsinger, Carrie Eischens, Danielle Dickson, Abigail Enghrist and Susan Dixon.

Call to Order and Approve Agenda

The meeting started at 8:30am with a review and approval of the agenda. Staff gave a safety briefing regarding procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. John Hilsinger, the interim Executive Director, gave a staffing update which included: 1) the re-introduction of both Susan and Abby, 2) Tom's current status as a contractor through the end of March and the conclusion of the Bering Sea Program, 3) the status of the two open staff positions (Executive Director and Science Director) the goal of having the NPRB staff up to full capacity by the end of the year, if not sooner. Given the current absence of an NPRB Science Director, the panel discussed the possibility of additional members attending the Board meeting in Nome to assist with the presentation of the RFP and LTM pre-proposals to the Board. Cheryl Rosa noted that she would be attending during the last two days of the meeting as a USARC representative and would be able to assist staff. Pat Tester volunteered to attend the Board meeting in Nome as well.

Conflict of Interest Working Group

The spring 2013 Board and panel meetings were the first set of meetings in which the new Conflict of Interest (COI) policy was fully implemented. Due to concerns raised by the Science Panel, as well as several by the Advisory Panel and Board, the COI working group was reconvened to examine how the policy might be adjusted to make it more consistent, manageable, and less disruptive to the functioning of the panels and Board. As a reminder, it was noted that the Science Panel felt the recusals were very disruptive and made the proposal review process very inefficient. It was suggested that the units of institutional recusal be narrowed to increase consistency while also alleviating the impact of the physical recusals.

Staff reviewed the working group's draft amendments to the COI policy, which included a revision to the policy to implement two tiers of recusal in addition to the existing disclosure process. In the proposed amendment, recused individuals would be required to leave the room when they had a "Direct" or "Personal" conflict but could remain in the room when the conflict was "Institutional" or "Collaborative." When remaining in the room, individuals would be allowed to listen and answer direct questions but could not participate in discussions or voting. By remaining in the room during discussion, the individual would be better informed and would rejoin the group discussion more efficiently once they are no longer in conflict with the subject at hand. The working group also recommended a change in the level of institutional unit that constitutes a recusal vs. a disclosure; upon review, the Science Panel felt the revised divisions of institutional disclosure were appropriate.

Overall, the Science Panel supported the revisions proposed by the COI Working Group with one exception. The Science Panel found the language added to the Categories of Conflict – Recuse, Bullet 6

to be too vague. The amended language would require recusal even if an individual is employed outside the specific unit that submitted the proposal if the larger institution has taken a position on a proposal. They found the original language, which requires recusal in the event an individual has been directed by their organization how to vote, to be clearer.

During its re-evaluation of the COI policy the working group also raised a question regarding conflict when science panel members submit proposals to an RFP that they participated in developing. The panel discussed this question at length and discussed various options to mitigate the perceived conflict. Panel members did not all see this as a real conflict because the RFP is guided by the overall Science Plan. Many also felt that RFP categories have never been (nor should they be) so specific that only one group of researchers are capable of addressing the research priority. It was also noted that there are many different inputs to the RFP – including agencies, individuals in the scientific community – in addition to Board and panel members. The panel recommends putting clear, prominent information on the website regarding how the RFP is formed to demystify the process. The panel also asked that staff compile the data to see how often panel members submit proposals and how successful those tend to be.

Given the “living document” nature of the COI policy, the Science Panel suggests going forward with the modified COI policy as presented by the working group for now and suggests reevaluating the policy periodically.

Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff gave an update on the Gulf of Alaska Project noting that the team is in the midst of the 2013 field season. Panel members were encouraged to look at the “Field Notes” blog on the NPRB website for this project and were also directed to the Gulf of Alaska Facebook page for updates.

Dr. Andre Punt has been hired on contract to serve as an advisor for the modeling component of the project, a role previously filled by out-going Science Director Francis Wiese.

The GABI (scientific leadership) has begun thinking about the synthesis phase of this project now that the field work is coming to an end. The team is starting to make plans for several “special issues” in the published literature. Staff will be developing a close-out plan for this program in collaboration with the GABI. Science Panel members noted they would like to see a concluding statement about what was learned through this project – what we know now that we didn’t know before. Staff noted that sharing that information would be part of the close out plan and would extend beyond scientific publications.

The project is scheduled to conclude in January 2015 but it is anticipated that synthesis work may continue through January 2016.

Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff provided an update on the Bering Sea Project noting that final reports for individual projects within the overall program are coming in and being reviewed by program leadership and NPRB program management. Metadata and data files are being submitted to the data management team and things are going well.

NPRB received a NSF grant for \$325K in the spring to help fund the close-out activities which include meeting support, publications (both general and scientific) and other outreach activities. The results of the program will be presented at AMSS 2014 and the final close-out event is planned in association with

the AGU/ASLO/TOS Ocean Science Meeting in February 2014. The Ocean Science Meeting will tentatively be preceded by a special Bering Sea Project open science meeting on 23-Feb-14; the main meeting will also feature a special session on the Bering Sea Project. Bering Sea Project scientists will also be presenting their work at the upcoming PICES meeting on Nanaimo, BC this October.

For general audiences, headline highlight articles are being produced and are currently going through technical editing. A Bering Sea Project magazine will be produced the AMSS in January. The science panel noted that it would also be beneficial to produce a document, perhaps an internal document, about why we didn't learn everything that we sought to learn at the outset. It was suggested that perhaps it would be beneficial to go back to the original questions posed and examine what is being done in respect to pollock stock assessment as a result of the BSIERP findings.

Science panel members noted that a "lessons learned" document in terms of the development and management of an integrated ecosystem program would also be beneficial and informative based on NPRB's experience with developing these kinds of programs. Staff noted that this was in fact part of the Bering Sea Project close-out plan and could potentially include both the GOAIERP and the BSIERP experience.

Long-term Monitoring

The panel reviewed 36 pre-proposals that were submitted to NPRB by the July 15, 2013 deadline. The 36 pre-proposals requested a total of over \$26M over the five-year study period. Each pre-proposal was independently reviewed by three Science Panel members and discussed by the full Science Panel during the meeting. On a consensus basis the panel was asked to rank each pre-proposal into one of three categories: Tier 1 – Invite to submit a full proposal; Tier 2 – Consider inviting to submit a full proposal; or Tier 3 – Do not invite to submit a full proposal.

After discussion of the individual pre-proposals the panel ranked 5 pre-proposals in the Tier 1 category for a total of \$3.3M over five years, an additional 6 pre-proposals (\$4.9M) in Tier 2 and the remaining 25 pre-proposals (\$18.7M) in Tier 3. Many of the Tier 3 proposals did not meet all of the necessary criteria for long-term monitoring projects as defined in the pre-proposal RFP. This meeting summary will be accompanied by a spreadsheet identifying the tier for each of the pre-proposals, and an internal document that summarizes the panel comments for each of the 36 pre-proposals.

The panel also reviewed the draft invitational RFP prepared by the LTM working group and made several suggestions. The panel recommended that the "Research Plan" section require applicants to include a definitive statement about the purpose for the monitoring activity, explain how the study provides a long-term indicator of ecosystem change, and identify the time frame that the applicant thinks is important for continuation of monitoring and why.

Social Science Working Group

One of the Science Panel representatives on the SSWG, who also serves as co-chair of the SSWG, updated the panel on the working group's activities since the spring meeting. It was noted that the whitepaper report delivered to NPRB just prior to the spring meeting had been returned to the authors for editorial revisions and the final version was returned to NPRB. Polly Wheeler will be drafting an introductory document from NPRB to accompany the report. Both documents will be posted on the website in conjunction with the release of the 2014 RFP. These documents will be referenced in the RFP in the relevant category.

The panel then discussed several aspects of the whitepaper, highlighting the need for the full breadth of social science to be recognized and the need to include social science in the development of projects rather than just including it as an add-on.

It was also noted that the social scientist members of the Science Panel are being asked to volunteer too much time to this effort and the Board should think strategically about whether it wants to address social science properly and if so, the Board should devote some resources to it in terms of staff/contractor support.

The Board member co-chair of the working group, joined the panel for this discussion and noted that some education on the topic of social science was still needed at the Board level. Seth Macinko agreed to attend the first day of the Board meeting in Nome in September to review the main findings of the whitepaper commissioned by the Board. He will participate in a discussion with the Board regarding the future of a social science initiative. It was noted that a discussion with the Board about what social science has to offer NPRB would also be beneficial.

Budget Review

John Hilsinger reviewed the budget numbers for the NPRB with the Science Panel and confirmed that \$4M was budgeted for the 2014 RFP. It was noted that with the recent low interest rates and the laddered 10-year Treasury Note manner in which EIRF funds have been invested, NPRB revenue would begin to decline in the next few years with significant tightening by 2020 if interest rates remain low.

It was noted that the Board plans to continue with the annual RFP funded at \$4M/year. The Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea Projects are both covered in the current budget, as is the first five-year installment of the long-term monitoring program. Staff noted that the LTM program is a standard line item in the NPRB budget and should be considered ongoing at the level of \$400K/year indefinitely, especially given the “re-evaluation” language in the LTM RFPs.

NPRB’s enabling legislation restricts the administrative costs of the Board to 15% of the overall budget. NPRB has generally been at the 13% mark but may see this percentage creep up as the overall budget declines and administrative costs increase. The 15% limitation could be increase to 20% if Congress passes Senator Begich’s Arctic legislation, but the fate of this bill remains uncertain and we have no definitive timeline for its consideration by Congress.

Summary of Previously Funded Projects

Staff gave a status report regarding the 23 projects (totaling \$4.2M) that were approved or conditionally approved for funding by the Board at their May 2013 meeting. Applicants of the three conditionally approved projects were asked to address all issues raised by the Science Panel and technical reviewers prior to receiving final project approval. All projects addressed these comments satisfactorily and received final approval.

Staff also reviewed the concordance between Science Panel recommendations and Board decisions since 2002. Since that time, the Board has funded 327 projects, 93.2% of which have been ranked as Tier 1 or Tier 2 by the Science Panel. It was noted and appreciated that the Board has not funded any Tier 3 proposals since 2008.

Information was also presented that summarized all previously funded projects in terms of institutional, marine ecosystem, and research theme distribution. Staff also noted that the rate of data and metadata

submissions is improving, thanks in part to the collaboration with USGS data experts and the hiring of a metadata specialist to help with the backlog of metadata review. The metadata specialist will also be assisting the Data Manager with publishing metadata and data records on the NPRB website. Publications from NPRB-funded projects also continue to be tracked with a total of 448 known publications and another 9 in press.

2014 Request for Proposals

It was noted that in May 2012, the Board committed to the approach of cycling RFP research themes and funding amounts for the 2013-2014 RFPs. As a result, the overall research themes and funding caps for the 2014 RFP have already been set.

Staff presented the panel with an updated table showing the amount of funds offered, requested and awarded by research category for RFPs since 2006. This table also included data by category on the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 proposals recommended to the Board each year to give a clearer view of whether underfunded categories were the result of poor-quality proposals being received. The Science Panel was appreciative of the amount of information in this table and encouraged the staff to develop a summarized version of this table to be made available to the public on the NPRB website.

The panel discussed the advantages of having an “other” sub-category within several of the research categories and unanimously supported the inclusion of this sub-category in the 2014 RFP. Science Panel members suggested that staff compile a list of projects that have been funded through the “other” sub-category to see what would have been missed if that sub-category had not been available.

Staff then reviewed the documents used for developing 2014 RFP research priorities. The general framework was again based on the *NPRB Science Plan*. Research priorities identified by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, the Alaska Ocean Observing System, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the US Geological Survey, and the US Coast Guard PACAREA program were all considered. In addition, overlap with current projects funded by NPRB was considered when drafting the initial RFP document. Information gathered through science meetings, published literature, the public online RFP input form, past NPRB RFPs, as well as results from previously funded NPRB projects were also taken into account.

The Science Panel discussed all science sections of the draft RFP. Changes were made to sections as appropriate during these discussions, resulting in the current draft of the RFP. The Science Panel did not make any adjustments to the target funding amounts for individual categories that were determined by the Board in May 2012.

With respect to the focus section of the 2014 RFP, the panel agreed with staff and recommended neither Technology Development nor Chinook salmon as the focus section. Panel members felt that both of these topics were better served by addressing them in the main portion of the RFP. The Panel developed two potential focus sections for the Board to consider for the 2014 RFP – an Aleutian Islands synthesis analysis or a second year with Social Science as the focus section. Both options are included in the RFP draft.

Staff presented the “boilerplate” of the RFP to the panel and highlighted significant changes from the previous year. Panel members suggested highlighting changes and new components/requirements for proposal submission on the website as well as within the boilerplate section.

Communications and Outreach Report & Discussion

Abigail Enghirst, the new Communications and Outreach Director, provided a summary of the communications activities since the last Science Panel meeting, highlighting the annual and Bering Sea photo contests, development of an image library for all of the amazing photos NPRB has accumulated over the years, synopses of completed annual projects, the production of the Bering Sea magazine, development of an outreach close-out plan for the Gulf of Alaska project and the overall NPRB website re-design. Science Panel members voted on the Bering Sea photo contest finalist prior to this discussion and the SP top candidates were announced.

It was also noted that relationship-building has been an important part of Abby's first few months with NPRB as she begins to meet with the various marine science organizations that NPRB partners or works in collaboration with. This included meeting with folks at the AFSC, the University of Washington Center for Environmental Visualization, and the International Pacific Halibut Commission, among others. A strategic communications plan for the NPRB is under development. Panel members suggested using social media as a means of effectively reaching rural Alaska. Recent press and radio features on NPRB projects were also highlighted for panel members.

Arctic

PacMARS - Staff provided an update on the status of the Pacific Marine Arctic Regional Synthesis (PacMARS). A substantial interim report was received from the research group in June, however this report fell short of expectations and the PIs have been asked to revise the report to address the issues raised by program managers and the PacMARS Advisory Committee. Specifically, the report presented research needs in a discipline-specific manner rather than providing the interdisciplinary list of research priorities. For example, the report did not adequately address the upper trophic levels and lacked integration between the social science and natural science components. The revised report is expected in mid-October and will be followed by an in-person PI meeting to focus on integration. The Science Panel expressed disappointment at these developments, noting that these issues (integration and timing) were its two main concerns when this the PacMARS plan was in its initial stages. The Science Panel hopes for a much-improved product to be delivered in a timely manner come October.

Panel members asked for a reminder of the final products expected from this program. Staff indicated that this synthesis of arctic research was intended to inform the next phase of arctic research by identifying gaps and highlighting research priorities for the arctic region. The PIs plan to publish a special issue in the peer-reviewed literature. The data inventory hosted by UCAR will become public in June 2014. Panel members requested that staff include a list of the original performance metrics for this program when the revised interim report is distributed.

Arctic Plan – Phase 2 – Staff provided an update on the development of phase 2 of the Arctic Plan which has been delayed for a number of reasons. In addition to the lack of a prioritized list of research themes/priorities from the PacMARS program, potential partners for the Arctic Program, while enthusiastic, have not yet made firm commitments in terms of planning a program and providing funding. Various meetings via teleconference and in person have taken place over the summer resulting in the need for a framing document for the entire arctic program in order to allow partners to feel comfortable making previously discussed commitments. The development of this framing document will be drafted by an IARPC team on which Danielle is the NPRB representative. Francis Wiese will likely be contracted by IARPC to lead this effort with the expectation that this document will be ready by the end of the calendar year. NPRB is considering holding special panel and Board meetings in late-January or early-February to discuss plans for developing a coordinated research program with partnering organizations built around the framing document.

Panel members recommended consulting with the Arctic Council, as this group has already gathered a lot of research that would be useful if the focus of the group reaches beyond the U.S. Arctic. Staff noted that currently the focus is primarily a U.S. effort and not an international effort. Panel members noted that the Arctic Council could at least provide an example of how to approach the work of putting together a concept and implementation plan. Panel members inquired about the geographic scope of the research plan. Staff indicated that it would be dependent to some extent on potential partners, but the main focus will likely be on the Chukchi Sea with connection to the Beaufort Sea through partner studies that are planned by other organizations.

Arctic Legislation – staff provided an update on the arctic legislation that was re-introduced by Senator Mark Begich in February 2013 and revised in July 2013 (S. 1344). The revised legislation would increase the NPRB administrative cap to 20% of the overall budget, enable the Secretary of Commerce to accept non-federal funds to be used by NPRB to carry out its functions, eliminate the two-tiered voting structure of the Board (i.e., the Executive Committee), require the Board to have a COI policy as least as stringent as the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and give the U.S. Arctic Research Commission granting authority. The revised bill removes all changes to how the EIRF fund interest is distributed; a separate bill to seek additional funds for NPRB, USARC and AOOS is expected.

Other matters

Science Panel membership – staff reviewed the membership status of Science Panel members, noting that four members have terms expiring in May 2014 that are not eligible for reappointment. Those members are: Dick Beamish, Seth Macinko, Andre Punt and Cheryl Rosa.

Graduate Student Research Awards – staff updated the panel on the award winners as determined by the Board in May 2013. Staff noted that the Board was responsive to the recommendations of both the Science and Advisory Panels when selecting the six winners.

Outside funding requests – staff reviewed the requests for meeting support from outside organizations and indicated which outside organizations had been provided with support. These included the Pacific Seabird Group, the Alaska Young Fishermen’s Summit, the Dan Goodman Symposium, the Society for Marine Mammology and the Sitka Sound Science Center Whalefest. The Board is also providing financial support for the 2014 Wakefield Fisheries Symposium.

Alaska Marine Science Symposium 2014 – staff updated the panel on plans for the upcoming AMSS. New this year is a \$100 registration fee. The meeting will be held the week of January 20th at the Captain Cook Hotel with poster sessions at the Egan Center on Monday and Tuesday evening.

Goodman Symposium – Science Panel chair Tom Royer updated the panel on the plans for the symposium being held in honor of Dan Goodman on 20-21 March 2014 in Bozeman, Montana. Science panel member Andre Punt was selected by the steering committee to present a session on ecosystem modeling. At their spring meeting the Board approved funding the travel of two Science Panel members to this meeting in addition to providing \$5000 in meeting support. Andre’s travel is being supported by the symposium so the Science Panel suggested that the travel funding approved by the Board be provided to two of the four speakers in Andre’s session. The speakers are George Hunt, who served on the EMC with Dan, Kerim Aydin and Ivonne Ortiz who will both be presenting work from their BSIERP projects and Francis Wiese. There was consensus on this point; the SP will ask for Board approval of this change at the upcoming Board meeting.

Meeting Schedule for 2014 – The spring Science Panel meeting was confirmed for March 31st – April 4th, 2014 in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Pending finalization of the agenda, the meeting will either start at 9am or 1pm on the 31st and will conclude by 5pm on April 4th.

The fall 2014 meeting of the Science Panel has been tentatively set for the week of August 18th, 2014 in Anchorage.