



www.nprb.org

NORTH PACIFIC RESEARCH BOARD

"Building a clear understanding of the North Pacific, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean ecosystems that enables effective management and sustainable use of marine resources."

1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 100 | Anchorage, AK 99501 | tel 907.644.6700, fax 907.644.6780

North Pacific Research Board

Meeting Summary

September 21-25, 2015

Harbor Conference Room, Best Western Kodiak Inn
Kodiak, Alaska

The North Pacific Research Board met from September 21 through September 25, 2015 in Kodiak, Alaska. In attendance were Michelle Longo-Eder, Gerry Merrigan, Katrina Hoffman, Dorothy Childers, Jan Jacobs, Carl Markon, Paul MacGregor, Bradley Smith, Caryn Rea, Cpt. Phillip Thorne, John Gauvin, David Benton, Mike Miller, Mike Castellini, Pete Jones (for Doug Mecum, NOAA), Charlie Swanton, Dan Hull (chair), and Tara Riemer (vice chair). Science Panel Chair Tom Royer and Advisory Panel Chair Jeff Stephan were also present.

Also attending substantial portions of the meeting were Robert Suydam (North Slope Borough), Louis Brzuzny (Shell), and Dee Williams (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management), representing funding partners for the developing Arctic Program, as well as Cheryl Rosa from the U.S. Arctic Research Commission. Contractor Tom Van Pelt attended on September 22, 2015.

The meeting was staffed by Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Susan Dixon, Denby Lloyd and Jo-Ann Mellish.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Chair Dan Hull called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm, and it was determined that a quorum was present. Staff provided a safety briefing. Jan Jacobs, new board member recently appointed to fill the fishing interests seat, and Pete Jones, alternate to Doug Mecum for the Department of Commerce seat, were introduced.

The board moved to approve the meeting summary for the Spring 2015 board meeting:

MOTION: Approve summary from May 2015 board meeting as written.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The chairs of the Science and Advisory panels next provided brief reports about their fall meetings.

Tom Royer, as Science Panel chair, wished to make a few comments outside of the summary. He identified the new Science Panel member Melissa Haltuch (NOAA/NWFSC). He also noted that there had been a heavy workload with the Arctic Program pre-proposal review of 79 packages on top of development of the draft 2016 annual RFP. The Science Panel strongly encouraged the Board to not utilize a mix-and-match system in making funding decisions for the Arctic Program, but allow the PIs to develop their own collaborations. The Science Panel thanked the Board for their additional funding

resulting in 6 PhD graduate student research awards rather than the more standard 3 doctoral awards as in the 2015 funding year.

John Gauvin wished to have metrics on how many of the masters and doctoral students who have been funded under the GSRA have actually graduated. **It was agreed that metrics on how many GSRA recipients have graduated will be prepared for Spring 2016 meeting.**

Jeff Stephen, as Advisory Panel chair, wished to recognize Louis Brzuzy as a new member of the Advisory Panel.

2. Conflict of Interest Policy

The general terms of NPRB's Conflict of Interest (COI) policy were reviewed and all members of the Board were advised to have a signed COI form on file prior to any discussions of proposals or pre-proposals.

Staff noted that the policy as it stands identifies organizational level and discussed the recusal of members during proposal discussions. A recent amendment to the policy provided some leniency for the Department of Commerce representative, and lead to similar allowance for representatives from other resource management agencies (DOI, ADF&G). These three representatives are allowed to stay in the room even when recused from consideration of any particular proposal; they cannot vote or participate in the conversation but are available to respond to direct questions.

It was noted that other board members are also frequently recused due to organizational relationships (although often they are fairly distant relationships) and are required to leave the room multiple times during a meeting, which can cause significant disruption. The question was put to the Board whether or not they wished to allow any and all board members to remain in the room when recused, but not vote or actively engage in the conversation. Another option would be to have more specific, finer-scale identification of organizational units for the Board such as is used for the Science Panel and the Advisory Panel.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed to bring the issue back up, for possible amendment of the COI policy, just prior to the meeting's discussion of the Arctic pre-proposals (Agenda Item 9).

On Wednesday, September 23, the Board brought the issue back up.

MOTION: Amend COI Policy to apply circumstantial aspects of organizational recusals that are currently applied to the three resource agencies to all board members (allowing recused board members to remain in the room but refrain from voting or discussion, but be available to answer direct questions).

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

It was later clarified, on Thursday, September 24, that it would be more expedient to utilize the language for organizational conflicts that applies to the Science and Advisory panels, rather than the more complicated and somewhat ambiguous language currently applied to the three resource agencies, to all board members. It was agreed, without formal motion or amendment, that this would better serve the original motion's intent which is to allow all board members to remain in the room even if there are organizational recusals. **Staff was asked to modify the COI policy language as appropriate.**

3. Budget Review

Staff presented projections of the future earnings of the EIRF, including the impact of low interest rates for the past several years and in the foreseeable future. Projections are for a gradual decrease in NPRB's annual funding.

There was also discussion of the sequestration of over \$700,000 imposed by OMB and NOAA for NPRB's Grant 6, Year 2 funding (FY 2015). Repeated inquiries have not generated complete answers for questions such as why the sequestration occurred for FY 15 and why the sequestered funds were not "popped back" the following year for NPRB as they apparently are for many other accounts. However, board members agreed that unless circumstances changed (e.g., another round of sequestration is imposed), no further inquiry or investigation should be pursued.

Staff expressed concern about potential lack of funding for future IERPs and indicated that they have begun working on developing strategies to allow for future IERPs. Options include foregoing the "annual" RFP for one or more years every so often, reducing the annual RFP from its current planning level of \$4.5 million, or incorporating the IERPs as elements (necessarily reduced in scope and expense) of the annual RFP similar to the current "focus sections."

Staff asked for clarification on how the Board would like the staff to develop planning options. Substantial concern was expressed by several board members about skipping years in the annual program. It was also noted that the reduction of the scope of the IERPs to correspond with focus sections in the annual call might not provide sufficient resources for development of a broad scale integrated and synthetic program. No strong or obvious guidance emerged, and **the Board encouraged the staff to be creative and think broadly in developing alternative strategies for consideration at the Spring 2016 board meeting**, including the use of the North Pacific Marine Research Institute (NPMRI) as a vehicle to solicit and administer outside funds.

4. Annual Program

Staff presented a summary of the 2015 annual RFP decisions made by the board, and reviewed some basic metrics and statistics on the ongoing annual program.

Staff and Science Panel chair Tom Royer presented an outline of potential revisions to the "tier ranking system" used as the basis for evaluation and preparation of proposal recommendations to the Board. The Science Panel recommended that rankings retain the current Tier 1, 2 and 3 structure overall, but that the current subdivision of Tier 1 into 1a and 1b be replaced with a complete and separate, second round of Science Panel reviews. This second round of review would focus on Tier 1 proposals only, and allow for potential reassignment downward to Tier 2 or upward to an E (for exceptional) category.

After initial questions and discussion, the Board decided to postpone action until later in the meeting. On September 22 and 23 **the Board returned to the issue and strongly endorsed the concept of a second round of review of proposals by the Science Panel and concurred with the separate E designation as a replacement for the more ambiguous Tier 1a and 1b designations.** Discussion centered on the idea that the E designation should be reserved for truly exceptional proposals, and should only be applied to a relatively small proportion of available proposals, rather than just allowing for "grade creep" among Tier 1 proposals. The Board noted that a full description of the revised ranking structure should be provided in the upcoming RFP.

5. 2016 Request for Proposals

Staff described the various ways that stakeholders and other interested parties have been provided opportunities to propose research priorities and to provide other input into development of the annual request for proposals, including a survey email sent to all prior proposers and reviewers and an online submission form available on the NPRB website. For the 2016 RFP, five formal letters and documents outlining research interests and priorities were received from agencies and institutions (e.g., NPFMC, NOAA, PWSCC); in addition, 74 individual submissions were received online.

Staff summarized these submissions as well as prior board decisions to maintain a cyclical approach to funding levels among categories within the annual RFPs. The 2016 RFP was scheduled to emphasize fishes and invertebrates, seabirds, human dimensions, and other prominent issues. Those categories to be de-emphasized for 2016 included oceanography and lower trophic levels, and marine mammals. Narratives for the seabirds and other prominent issues sections of the draft RFP were substantially reworked by the Science Panel.

Also, the “other” designation within each category was highlighted, in order to encourage rather than discourage submission of proposals on topics not specifically identified in the RFP. Staff noted that, since 2006, NPRB has received 91 proposals in response to “other” categories and has funded 18 of them. This represents a success rate of about 20%, in comparison to the overall proposal success rate of 28%.

The Science Director and the Science Panel forwarded a recommendation to include an additional “integrated research” theme to the RFP, intended to accommodate of the increasing suite of proposals that integrate multiple ecosystem components or methodological approaches, and are therefore not easily delimited into specific and discrete categories. Funding for “integrated research” theme could be drawn from the funding allocated to the various discrete themes integrated into any such proposal, rather than requiring the segregation of funding amounts specifically for integrated research in the RFP.

Staff also presented and described ongoing revisions to NPRB’s proposal submission system, which is moving to an online structure instead of the previous system that required users to download an external application in order to prepare and submit a proposal.

Staff presented details of the draft 2016 RFP and board members engaged in preliminary inquiries for clarification, including discussion of three possible focus sections: anomalous warming in the North Pacific Ocean, early marine life history of Pacific salmon, and issues related to anticipated sea level rise.

The Board then moved through the draft RFP section by section.

MOTION: Do not include a focus section in the 2016 RFP.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Delete item g (integrated research) from the 2016 RFP, but add language in the introductory section of the RFP that encourages integrated research proposals and development of linkages with other PIs, and also include concepts of integrated research and synthesis in the Science Plan update and future RFPs.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MAIN MOTION: Adopt the draft 2016 RFP allocations by category, with the removal of the \$600,000 originally allocated to the newly-deleted focus section.

- Amendment 1:** Add \$100,000 to Data Rescue, for a total of \$200,000.
Amendment to Amendment 1: Add \$200,000 to Data Rescue, for a total of \$300,000.
Action on 1: Amendment to Amendment 1 passed with one objection, and carried the amendment.
- Amendment 2:** Add \$100,000 to Cooperative Research with Industry and also \$100,000 to Technology Development.
Action on 2: Amendment passed with one objection.
- Amendment 3:** Add \$200,000 to Fishes and Invertebrates.
Amendment to Amendment 3: Add \$100,000 to Fishes/Invertebrates and \$100,000 to Oceanography.
Action on 3: Amendment to Amendment 3 passed with two objections, and carried the amendment.

Thus ended the round of amendments to the main motion.

Final action: Main motion passed as amended with no objections.

Discussion moved to projections for the 2017 RFP, to be included in the text and tables of the 2016 RFP.

MOTION: Accept the 2017 RFP allocations by category as presented in the draft 2016 RFP.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

On September 23, the Board made a final motion to approve the 2016 RFP as worked on and amended during the meeting.

MOTION: Approve the 2016 RFP as amended and worked on during the meeting.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

During discussion of the 2016 RFP, on September 22, Tom Van Pelt presented the completed Bering Sea Magazine to the Board. The magazine culminates more than a decade of effort in the Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (BSIERP) and summarizes much of the results of the program in general language suitable for a broad audience. Staff outlined initial plans for distribution of the magazine and requested ideas and assistance from board members.

6. Communications and Outreach

Dr. Jo-Ann Mellish presented a Communications and Outreach report on behalf of Brendan Smith, who was absent in order to attend to the birth and post-partum of his daughter, Summer Ashcroft Smith.

Topics included development of a communications strategy, potential convening of a Communications Working Group, planning for a Communicating Ocean Sciences workshop at the 2016 Alaska Marine Science Symposium, and details about production of project synopses and the 2016 NPRB calendar. Board members were also referred to a variety of press highlights and recently completed project outreach activities.

The Board deferred further discussion on strategy and a potential working group until such time as broader strategic discussions could take place regarding future budgets, IERPs, and science planning.

7. Graduate Student Research Awards

Staff reviewed the 2015 GSRA program, for which the Board had approved nine awards (6 PhD and 3 masters) rather than the more usual six (3 PhD and 3 masters). Some metrics regarding application success were presented, and **Board members reiterated their request that staff research the graduation rates of past GSRA recipients for discussion next spring.**

Similar to the annual RFP program, the application submittal process for the GSRA program is moving to an online system, rather than requiring applicants to download an external application to their computers.

8. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Project

Staff reported briefly on the GOA IERP meeting of principal investigators last spring and updated the Board on the special journal issues planned for Deep Sea Research II.

Jeff Stephan, chair of the Advisory Panel, requested that summary presentations of the GOA IERP be made to the Advisory Panel during upcoming meetings, similar to the substantial presentations on the BSIERP in the recent past. Staff indicated that such presentations could be made, perhaps at least once in the near future to relay recently collated final results and again later to present more synthetic products.

On Wednesday afternoon, September 23, the Board and Staff had a tour of the US Coast Guard North Pacific Regional Fishery Training Center, Air Station Kodiak, and a flight on a C-130 aircraft (CG-1713) around the north end of Kodiak Island in clear and smooth weather.

9. NPRB Internal Systems

Discussion was deferred to Friday, in order to allow the Board to move directly to the Arctic Program first thing on Thursday morning.

Staff described efforts that are underway to update and streamline a variety of internal systems at NPRB, especially elements of IT support in the administrative offices (servers, software and migration to Microsoft Office 365), the development and implementation of new proposal submission systems (annual RFP, GSRA, and Arctic Program), an “ocean workspace” being made available for project tracking and data submission for annual program PIs similar to the existing ocean workspace for the GOA IERP, and consolidation of data storage, metadata processing, and data archiving for all of the projects that NPRB has funded.

10. Arctic Program

Staff reported on the 51 pre-proposals that had been ranked as either Tier 1 or Tier 2 by the Science Panel (out of a total of 79 pre-proposals submitted to NPRB’s Arctic Program solicitation). There were three large-scale consortium submissions of linked proposals as well as a number of individual proposals ranging in size from large to small.

The Science Panel had further recommended that 33 of those 51 pre-proposals be invited back for full proposal submission, based upon their tier ranking and their perceived value to an integrated program.

Representatives of NPRB’s funding partners in the Arctic Program (BOEM and the North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies Program) shared their observations of the pre-proposals as well as their general concurrence with the Science Panel recommendations.

The board members engaged in detailed discussions about how best to proceed, and began by identifying and considering “core proposals” that reflect the linked proposals submitted by the consortiums noted above (UA-F, NOAA, and WHOI). It was recognized by staff and board members that, while some proposals explicitly identified their linkages with other proposals, other proposals were less explicit. Therefore, in many cases staff had to apply a certain level of judgment to identify potential or probable linkages among proposals.

- MAIN MOTION:** Accept two of the three consortium proposals as “core program proposals”. Further, accept all Science Panel recommendations for pre-proposals to invite for full proposals. Instruction would be for all proposers to link or align with one or both core proposals.
- Amendment 1:** Delete 2.13.
Action on 1: Amendment passed with one objection, and one recusal.
- Amendment 2:** Delete 2.18.
Action on 2: Amendment withdrawn.
- Amendment 3:** Delete linked proposals: 2.16, 2.21, 2.27, and 4.4.
Action on 3: Amendment passed with no objections.
- Amendment 4:** Delete 5.2.
Action on 4: Amendment failed, with a 1-yes to 2-no vote of the Executive Committee and a 6-yes to 6-no vote of the remainder of the board.
- Amendment 5:** Delete 2.11.
Action on 5: Amendment passed with three recusals.
- Amendment 6:** Delete 3.7.
Action on 6: Amendment passed with no objections.
- Amendment 7:** Delete 4.1.
Action on 7: Amendment passed with no objections, and one recusal.
- Amendment 8:** Delete 3.25.
Action on 8: Amendment passed with no objection.
- Amendment 9:** Add back in 2.16.
Action on 9: Amendment passed with no objections.
- Amendment 10:** Delete 3.5.
Action on 10: Amendment withdrawn.
- Amendment 11:** Delete 3.4.
Action on 11: Amendment passed no objections.
- Amendment 12:** Delete 3.17.
Action on 12: Amendment withdrawn.
- Amendment 13:** Delete 3.19.
Action on 13: Amendment passed with no objections, and one recusal.

- Amendment 14:** Delete 3.22.
Action on 14: Amendment passed with one objection, and one recusal.
- Amendment 15:** Delete 4.2.
Action on 15: Amendment withdrawn.
- Amendment 16:** Delete 2.3.
Action on 16: Amendment withdrawn.

Thus ended the round of amendments to the main motion.

Final action: Main motion passed as amended with no objections.

The result of the board's amendments and final action was to invite 22 pre-proposals, valued at \$19,448,986, back for submission of full proposals to the Arctic Program.

On Friday, September 25, the Board took up discussion again on the Arctic Program, especially the consideration of "core programs" or "core proposals" and whether or not such designation would provide undue advantage and leverage to the PIs associated with those core proposals.

MOTION: Reconsider the main motion on the Arctic Program from yesterday, for the purpose of modifying reference to "core programs."
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The Board continued discussion on the issue, and many members noted that to facilitate flexibility, innovation, and potential integration among proposers that pre-determined "core proposals" should not be specified.

MOTION: Invite the same set of pre-proposals as identified in the previous main motion for submission of full proposals, but make no mention of required linkage to core proposals.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

11. Science Plan Update

Staff presented a summary of progress on preparing to update the NPRB Science Plan, including two teleconferences with the NPRB Science Plan Working Group and staff discussions with the National Research Council (NRC) about potential external reviewing of a draft plan update.

After some discussion the Board agreed that the combination of expense and formality of an NRC-type review would not be appropriate for what is planned to be an update, rather than a wholesale revision or re-creation, of the Science Plan.

In addition, the Board and staff agreed to a revised timeline, to provide sufficient time to coordinate an independent external review process, effectively engage the internal expertise of the NPRB community, and accommodate demands associated with other scheduled but non-routine efforts (e.g., updating of internal IT systems, development and implementation of an Arctic Program).

MOTION: Amend timeframe for development of a Science Plan update, to include presentation of a rough draft in Fall 2016 and a final draft in

Action: **Spring 2017; agree to a streamlined document that describes processes and procedures, rather than repetition of broad descriptions of the affected environment; develop a simplified external review process rather than an NRC-style external review. Motion passed with no objections.**

12. Other Matters

Staff presented information on the term lengths and eligibility for reappointment of individual Science and Advisory panel members, and the recruitment schedule that the Board will face over the next several years. A plan was presented that could equalize the number of terms expiring each year as well as equalize the number of terms each year for which members would and would not be eligible for reappointment. However, the complexity of such action, the need to adjust some existing terms substantially, and the fact that such a solution might only provide equalization for a short time period all argued for a more fluid, ad hoc approach.

Therefore, the Board directed staff to provide opportunities to the Board to adjust panel membership on an ad hoc basis. This guidance included, for the short-term, to offer within next year's solicitation for nomination to the panels an additional year to all members whose terms are expiring in 2016 and who would otherwise be ineligible for reappointment.

The Board considered dates for upcoming meetings. **They reaffirmed the week of May 2, 2016 for the Spring 2016 meeting, and agreed to a starting time of 8:30 am on Monday, May 2,** given the substantial work load that will include not only selection and approval of proposals for the annual RFP but also for the Arctic Program.

The Board selected the week of September 19, 2016 for the Fall meeting, with a start time of 8:30 am on Monday, September 19.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm on Friday, September 25 with only 7 of 18 board members remaining.