

**North Pacific Research Board 2016 Spring Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes
April 25-28, 2016
NPRB Board Room, Anchorage, Alaska**

Monday, April 25, 2016

The Advisory Panel (AP) met on April 25-28 in Anchorage, Alaska. In attendance were Jeff Stephan, Chris Krenz, Edward Poulsen, Gay Sheffield, Dan Falvey, Steve Reifensstuhl, Nagruk Harcharek, and Vera Metcalf. The meeting was staffed by Danielle Dickson, Denby Lloyd, Matthew Baker, Jo-Ann Mellish, Brendan Smith, and Susan Dixon. Representatives of funding partners for the Arctic Program joined the meeting for the Arctic discussion. They included Rick Raymond representing BOEM and Qaiyaan Harcharek and Willard Neakok representing the North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies Program.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on Monday, April 25, 2016.

The meeting agenda was accepted without amendment.

Motions were introduced to elect Jeff Stephen Advisory Panel (AP) Chair and Gary Freitag Vice Chair. Both motions passed without objection.

Staff reviewed NPRB travel claim regulations and provided a safety briefing.

The Executive Director (ED) provided opening remarks at the invitation of the Chair. The ED announced his intent not to renew his contract in October and explained that the Board will begin seeking candidates for the ED position soon.

A motion was introduced to accept the September 2015 meeting minutes without amendment and the motion passed without objection.

Each AP member signed a statement affirming that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by the NPRB Conflict of Interest Policy.

2. Science Plan Update

Staff explained the anticipated structure and timeline of the Science Plan update and the expected role of the AP. The external review committee will meet in May and may provide further guidance. AP members were invited to comment and were encouraged to volunteer to work on editing sections of interest to them.

An AP member suggested that in Chapter 2, under Human Dimensions, Non-Governmental Groups (NGOs) be listed separately from Research & Management Agencies and Institutions.

Several AP members volunteered to work on the language under Human Dimensions (see below).

- Commercial Fisheries - Edward Poulsen & Jeff Stephen
- Coastal Communities - Gay Sheffield
- Alaska Native Communities - Nagruk Harcharek
- Research & Management Agencies and Institutions - Chris Krenz

AP members suggested that language be added in Chapter 2 under “Approaches to Improve Understanding Ecosystems” to explain the role of the AP in evaluating proposals, specifically with respect to the perspective of stakeholder groups and holders of Local & Traditional Knowledge.

Gay Sheffield volunteered to work on the Research Approaches section in Chapter 2.

In discussion of Chapter 3, AP members suggested that the Science Plan should include language about the value of integrated multi-disciplinary research. How the board provides for it mechanistically is a separate issue for discussion.

AP members felt that the Science Plan update should include a discussion of expected outcomes of NPRB-funded research, including discussion of outreach products, building capacity in communities and among stakeholders, and application of research results to resource management.

In discussion of Chapter 4, Research Approaches & Partnerships, AP members suggested that the introduction to this chapter should emphasize NPRB's interest in developing cooperation among researchers and stakeholder groups. This section should include a statement explaining that NPRB is interested in fostering cooperation among researchers and interest groups in Alaska.

Staff suggested that comments from the AP would be particularly welcome with respect to Chapter 7, Communications and Outreach. AP members suggested that this section would be a natural place to include discussion of expected outcomes of NPRB research.

The AP suggested that the Science Plan include discussion of how research priorities are identified as requests for proposals are developed. Discussion should also be included to make clear to the research community the role of the AP in commenting on proposals. Perhaps this would best be included in Chapter 6, Policies and Procedures.

Staff explained the Board's intent to include external review in the process of updating the Science Plan. External reviewers have already been identified and have been invited to attend a two-day workshop in May to begin the process of providing input. Staff provided the AP a list of questions that external reviewers will be asked to consider at the outset and invited the AP to provide additional ideas.

AP members suggested that the process of updating the Science Plan include someone who communicates with rural communities on a regular basis.

Edward Poulsen is the AP representative on the Science Plan Update working group, and specific suggestions from other AP members could be passed through him or to staff directly.

The AP was encouraged by the direction of the conversation about updating the Science Plan. Several AP members volunteered to work on specific sections of the plan that are of interest to the stakeholder groups that they represent.

3. Internal Operations and Systems

NPRB's new proposal submission, peer review and panel review systems were showcased for the AP. Resource Data, Inc. (RDI) was contracted to perform the programming associated with updating these systems.

Staff explained that the new proposal submission system enforces proposal formatting and helps applicants to ensure that proposals conform to the submission guidelines. The system is accessible via the internet and no longer requires download of a Java application. The new proposal submission system was

used for the Annual, Arctic, and Graduate Student Research Award programs and comments from applicants were generally positive.

Staff further explained that a new peer review system was developed this year that greatly improved staff efficiency in assigning reviewers and monitoring their progress. Science Panel members provided their reviews using the same system and it worked seamlessly.

Axiom Data Science has been contracted to manage the archive of data collected by NPRB projects. Axiom has established an Ocean Workspace portal for NPRB. The Ocean Workspace, accessible via the internet, provides Principal Investigators (PIs) a password-protected portal for sharing preliminary datasets with co-investigators. Tools provided within the Ocean Workspace facilitate the development of metadata that meets national standards and allow submission of progress reports.

The AP noted the for-profit nature of Axiom Data Science and raised a question about NPRB's ability to transfer data and metadata to another entity if necessary. Staff explained that the contract stipulates that NPRB maintains ownership of the data and NPRB could decide to contract a different group if the board so desired. The Ocean Workspace is proprietary and a similar portal would need to be re-created by another contractor.

An AP member suggested NPRB capture permit numbers for research and/or DOI numbers for datasets. This might allow tracking of the products that result from NPRB-funded projects.

The consensus of the AP was that the improvement of NPRB's systems is fantastic. At the end of the meeting the AP reiterated that the AP review system greatly improved the efficiency of the AP review process and thanked staff for implementing it.

4. Arctic Program*

Staff presented an overview of the framework and anticipated timeline for the Arctic program. The main program is expected to be five years in duration and will extend through September 2021. Field years will include 2017 and 2018 or 2019 depending on the program selected. The synthesis phase will last through 2023.

A total of \$8 million will be available to fund this program; NPRB will contribute \$6 million and funding partners Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies Program will each contribute \$1 million. A portion of the funds will be held back to support program management, data management, and communications and outreach. A total of \$6.75 million will be available to support the research and logistics of the program.

Staff explained that the Board extended invitations to submit full proposals to 23 applicants. The board encouraged proposers to form "linked packages" to illustrate how they might combine forces to develop an integrated program and leverage logistical resources if they were funded in combination. Staff introduced the proposals and linked packages and reported the outcomes of the Science Panel discussion. Two of the 23 proposals were ranked Tier 3 by the Science Panel and were not forwarded to the Advisory Panel for discussion.

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4. Arctic Program* (continued)

The AP discussed the proposals and flagged four of them as having particular stakeholder or community relevance. The proposals that the AP flagged were numbers 1.2, 2.3, 4.5, and 5.6.

In considering proposals for the Arctic IERP, the AP noted that in this region of Alaska, the linkages between the local people/communities and the regional ecosystem and its natural resources is extremely strong. Humans are part of the ecosystem. The NPRB Arctic IERP will significantly increase the amount of research activity occurring in the region over a number of years with potential impacts on local residents and their subsistence activities. For example, AP members and funders noted concern over the potential impact on subsistence activities associated with spring research activities, noted concerns with an existing Arctic research project that did not provide sufficient outreach and education regarding objectives, methodology, and outcomes, noted concern with the number of equipment/walrus darts washing up on local beaches, and questioned the impact of increased research efforts without local buy-in and/or involvement in planning.

Mechanisms to ensure exceptional communications and coordination with local communities and tribal governments should be a requirement of any proposal funded (e.g., coordination through the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee and other relevant organizations). Research activities associated with the Arctic IERP should be explained to tribal, local governments, Alaska Native Marine Mammal Co-management partners, and residents of coastal communities throughout the study area. The AP requests the NPRB Board direct Staff to work with successful applicants to enhance this aspect of their proposals at the June PI meeting before contracts are signed.

The AP debated the merits of each integrated package and determined not to endorse any particular package. No single linked package was of sufficient geographic scope to involve the full extent of Arctic communities and affected stakeholders. The ASGARD proposals do not include many areas of the Chukchi and the Beaufort seas. The Arctic IES proposals cover a broader geographic range, but have lower resolution coverage of important areas of the Bering Strait. Discussion in the AP focused on the need for the Arctic IERP to consist of a suite of proposals that encompass the broad geographic scope of the originally envisioned Arctic program from Barrow to St. Lawrence Island. Therefore, we recommend that the Board consider augmenting the selected linked-package with additional proposals that address important areas, processes, and interactions relevant to communities and stakeholders throughout the extent of the Bering Strait and northeast Chukchi Sea.

In advancing any integrated program in the Arctic, the AP further requested the program develop strong outreach and communications with Arctic stakeholders and address any potential impact on subsistence activities as described below.

Outreach and communication will be pivotal in the success of the Arctic Program. It will be important to develop meaningful and relevant outreach / community involvement goals, objectives, and strategies for the Arctic Program at the outset of the program (e.g., June PI meeting). A successful outreach program to Arctic communities will consider regional food security concerns. The AP's recommendations for the outreach and communications plan are:

1) Establish strategies tailored to Arctic communities and stakeholders that recognize Arctic communities and their culture are part of the ecosystem. For example:

- The Arctic Program should consider hiring local subject matter expert communication advisors for each region to help share information to and from communities, including translation where necessary.
- The Arctic Program should also take into account the diversity of local and regional organizations within the study area (co-management, tribal, local government, corporation, and others).
- NPRB, PIs, and agencies, should integrate and work with appropriate regional organizations to ensure good communication (e.g., North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic Borough, Kawerak, local colleges, and Alaska Sea Grant).

2) Ensure outreach and communication starts well in advance of the field work, continues consistently through the program, and returns with sharing of results at the conclusion of the research program. Too often in the Arctic, research programs don't follow through with reporting results and products back from urban centers to rural communities.

3) Communication needs to be two-way with opportunities for feedback from communities (including incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into study plans where appropriate as well as identification of anomalous events), meaningful community and individual involvement in research and outreach (including appropriate recognition of contributions), and coordination with regional community members and stakeholders. Opportunities for transboundary communication should be explored.

4) Outreach and communication should strive for strong, age and culturally relevant, educational components. Coordinating with school districts, colleges, and other communication entities in regional coastal hubs (e.g., NSB, NWAB, Kawerak, and Alaska Sea Grant) would be helpful.

5) Ensure that outreach and communication is integrated; builds local and regional capacity to handle future challenges and opportunities; mitigates potential maritime subsistence (and other) conflicts; and provide benefits to diverse stakeholders, investigators, and funders.

Staff described solicitation of proposals for data management for the Arctic Program and presented a proposal from Axiom Data Science and four technical reviews.

A motion was introduced to recommend to the Board that they move forward with a data management contract for the Arctic Program to Axiom Data Science and the motion passed without objection.

5. Budget Overview and Strategic Planning

Staff provided an overview of NPRB's budget projections for coming years, noting an anticipated decline in funding due to recent consistently low interest rates on the federal treasury notes in which the Environmental Improvement and Restoration Fund (EIRF) is invested. During their fall 2015 meeting, the Board asked staff to develop a set of feasible options for the future allocation of NPRB funds in anticipation of initiating a discussion about strategic planning in May 2016. Staff presented their ideas to the AP for comment in advance of the Board meeting.

Regarding EIRF Projections:

- The AP suggested that the potential funding scenarios and comparisons be adjusted for inflation to provide a comparison of real dollars available over the ten-year timeframe of the projections.
- The AP voiced some concern about recent events where treasuries in countries such as Japan, Sweden and Germany are either negative or near negative at 10-year terms. The Board may wish to consider what to do in the event that US treasuries approach negative levels as well.

Regarding the Five Funding Scenarios:

- The AP felt that the "Core" program is very important to stakeholders, as it is much easier for these programs to react to more immediate and urgent concerns from the stakeholder community.
- Having said that, the AP voiced strong support for the IERP process but acknowledged that to have a robust IERP process, dropping the Core program in some years or leveraging outside money may be necessary.
- The AP voiced concern with dropping the Core program every other year, but was not opposed to dropping the Core program every 3rd or 4th year.
- Finally, the AP had strong support for Option 5, which would leverage outside funding. The AP provided the following feedback regarding Option 5 and leveraging outside funds in general:

- Further discussions are necessary to consider ways in which NPRB could leverage outside funds. For example, industry groups may be willing to provide significant funding if they knew their contributions would have some direct benefit to expanding, advancing and addressing relevant research needs that are associated with fisheries in which they have an interest and investment.
- It may be helpful for staff and some NPRB board members to seek out input and feedback from industry, non-profits and government agencies regarding opportunities to leverage funds for NPRB.
- The Advisory Panel was concerned that staff should not become “fundraisers” and that outside funding only be used as a supplement to support NPRB, instead of a key driver of funding.

6. Other Matters

Staff explained that the Board intends to discuss AP membership and will consider nominations for new panel members during their upcoming meeting. Five of the AP members whose terms are set to expire have volunteered to serve another term and they will also be considered.

Proposed changes to the Conflict of Interest Policy were presented to the AP and those will be considered by the Board when they meet next week.

The Board will also discuss requests for support of future outside meetings and will decide which, if any, they intend to support.

The AP will plan to meet September 13-15, 2016 and the week of April 24-27, 2017. Panel members suggested beginning meetings on Monday afternoons and ending them on Thursday morning. When three-day meetings are possible, the panel discussed beginning on Tuesday morning instead of on a Monday. Two panel members travel from Nome, Alaska and pointed out that flights from Nome on Mondays don't allow arrival until 2 pm. Panel members agreed that flying on Sundays is acceptable in order to begin the meetings on Monday.

7. Communications and Outreach

Staff presented recent work related to Communications and Outreach, including progress towards redesigning the NPRB website and plans to update the format of the NPRB biennial report to include electronic distribution.

Both AMSS and the Communicating Ocean Sciences workshop were well-attended in 2016. Staff implemented use of the Guidebook app for AMSS in 2016 and it was well-received. Several AP members attended AMSS and voiced appreciation for the app.

Staff described the distribution of the Bering Sea IERP magazine to a variety of stakeholder groups.

Eighty-nine photographers submitted over 300 entries for the 2016 photo contest. AP members reviewed the finalists in the photo contest and voted on the entries.

Staff presented highlights of outreach products produced recently, including screening of videos about the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program at high-profile venues.

The AP expressed appreciation for the update and acknowledged the significant progress reported by the Communications and Outreach Director.

8. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Staff provided an update on Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (GOAIERP) and reported on the first of two planned workshops associated with the GOAIERP synthesis. Staff highlighted

workshop attendance by NOAA stock assessment authors and described significant progress towards applying the results of the program to fishery management.

9. 2016 Annual Research Program*

Staff explained that the Science Panel reviewed 112 proposals submitted in response to the Annual Request for Proposals. Four proposals were given the highest designation of Tier E ("Exceptional"). A total of 37 proposals were ranked Tier 1, 38 were ranked Tier 2, and 33 were ranked Tier 3.

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

9. 2016 Annual Research Program* (continued)

The AP reviewed the 79 proposals ranked Exceptional, Tier 1 or Tier 2 by the Science Panel. The AP flagged 30 proposals as having particular stakeholder or community relevance, including all four of the proposals ranked Exceptional by the Science Panel.

The AP recommended that in drafting future requests for proposals NPRB encourage applicants who propose to work on subsistence species to communicate with the appropriate Alaska Native Co-management Organization(s).

10. Graduate Student Research Awards*

Staff explained that a total of 59 applications were received in response to the 2016 GSRA solicitation, however, nine applications lacked the mandatory letter of support from their advisor and were disqualified. An additional applicant dropped out prior to consideration by the Science Panel, leaving a total of 49 applications for discussion by the Science Panel (21 MS, 28 PhD). Two Science Panel members ranked each application based on the demonstrated ability of the student and the scientific merit of the proposal. The Science Panel agreed to only discuss applicants with overall rankings of at least two very goods, one excellent or higher. Thirteen Master's applications and fifteen Doctoral applications did not meet the minimum criteria for Science Panel discussion. Of the remaining nine Master's applications, five were recommended to the Board for funding. Eight of the remaining thirteen Doctoral student applications were put forward for funding consideration.

In evaluating Graduate Student Research Award applications, the AP used the criteria applied in 2015, which focused chiefly on the Advisory Panel evaluation and perspective with respect to the applicant's potential to become a good scientist, and with special attention to initiative, originality, good communication skills, awareness of the research context, the expectation of student and project success, and the applicants' initiative to engage stakeholders and to conduct outreach aimed at audiences most relevant to the proposed research (e.g., local communities, commercial fishermen, Alaska Native organizations), and the ancillary elements of stakeholder or community relevance.

The AP flagged eight of the GSRI applications as meeting the above-described criteria. At the Master's level, the AP flagged three applications; that is, numbers 3, 20, and 21. At the Ph.D. level, the AP flagged 5 applications; that is, numbers 27, 28, 30, 40, and 49.

The AP suggests that the Board include language in the GSRA solicitation that will clearly draw the applicants' attention to the AP's desire to see student initiative to engage stakeholders and to conduct outreach aimed at audiences most relevant to the proposed research.

A motion to adjourn was entered at 4:50 PM and passed with no objection.