

SUMMARY
North Pacific Research Board – Science Panel Meeting
March 28 – April 1, 2016

The Science Panel met March 28-April 1, 2016 at the Inn at the Market in downtown Seattle, WA. The meeting was attended by panel members Milo Adkison, Vera Alexander, James Berner, Stew Grant, Melissa Haltuch, Tuula Hollmen, Patricia Livingston, Lloyd Lowry, Phil Mundy, Tom Royer, Chris Siddon, Suzann Speckman, Pat Tester, Polly Wheeler, and David Witherell. Dee Williams and Rick Raymond of BOEM and Robert Suydam of the North Slope Borough joined the meeting on Monday and Tuesday. Carin Ashjian joined the meeting on Wednesday. The meeting was staffed by Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Susan Dixon, Denby Lloyd, Jo-Ann Mellish, and Brendan Smith.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Science Panel Chair Tom Royer started the meeting by asking the Science Panel and Staff to introduce themselves to the group. Following introductions, the agenda for the meeting was approved. Chris Siddon was elected as the new Science Panel Chair. Vice co-chairs Tuula Hollmen and Stew Grant were re-appointed. Susan Dixon reviewed travel claims. All Science Panel members submitted signed conflict of interest declarations.

2. Internal Operations and Systems

NPRB's new proposal submission, peer review and panel review systems were showcased for the Panel by Matt Baker. All three have been updated and in some cases completely developed by Resource Data, Inc. (RDI). Each was described in detail, with an overview of their intended uses and outcomes.

The proposal submission system was the first of the three to be tasked to RDI with the departure of NPRB Data Manager, Igor Katrayev. The previous submission protocol required the download of a stand-alone java application that was problematic for many organizations with strict network administrator regulations. The new submission system works entirely through a web-portal that eliminates this consideration. The structure of the online submission also enforces proposal formatting and document compliance. Parallel versions were created and specialized for the Arctic and GSRA programs. Those Science Panel members who had submitted a proposal this year noted that this was considerably easier than the old system and worked very well for a new process.

The peer reviewer assignment system was also updated with an entirely new interface. This pulls data from the NPRB peer reviewer pool, proposals and the peer reviewer survey. The assignment interface identifies conflicts, reviewer sources, and allows for strategic monitoring of the peer review assignment process. It also integrates with the assignment of Panel members, including the creation of individualized review pages. It also allows Science Panel members to directly enter Tier ranking and summary. Comments were taken that the Science Panel the review interface was much improved and that the system worked very seamlessly.

Over the course of the last year, all data management has been transferred to Axiom Data Sciences. This includes housing and curating of all legacy and active datasets, as well as the development of the Ocean Workspace. This is another web-based tool which provides PIs with a portal to share data with their collaborators. The project metadata becomes part of the public view, however, the data and documents are shared only with authorized users at the PIs request during the active portion of the project. The 2015 annual program projects were the first to be included in this approach. All legacy projects have also been ported over but PIs do not have access to modify these records, and they have not yet been made public. Moving forward, all new projects will be given a project-specific page at the time of funding. The Ocean Workspace users were also the test subjects for an online reporting tool to replace the email submission of

prior years. These reports are then linked to their workspace accounts, and provide an area for comments and dialogue with the Program Mangers. Axiom has also assumed metadata review services to ensure compliance for all upcoming project close-outs.

3. Arctic Program

Danielle Dickson presented an overview of the framework and anticipated schedule for the Arctic program. The main program will 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.

Invitations to submit full proposals were extended 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. Linked packages were defined through cover letters that were standardized to clarify the overall goals of the packages. Letters of support were also allowed for informal collaborations outside of linked packages. A separate logistics budget was also required of each proposal to clearly identify the costs associated with logistics and vessel time. Danielle noted that external peer reviewers did not have access to logistics budgets or linked package cover letters.

Staff reviewed the protocol for peer evaluations and Tier assignments. It was decided that the first half of the day would be spent reviewing the individual proposals and a separate discussion of linked packages would take place in the afternoon. The partners from BOEM and North Slope Borough expressed their appreciation for the process to date and their anticipation to see the program come to fruition. The NPRB process was recognized as a regional version of the National Ocean Partnership Program (NOPP), which facilitates interagency coordination on a national level.

The Primary and Secondary Science Panel reviewers provided commentary on each of the 23 individual proposals. The standard ranking system of Tier 1 (excellent/very good), Tier 2 (very good/good), Tier 3 (fair/poor/do not fund) was applied. Ultimately, the Panel ranked 8 proposals in Tier 1, 13 proposals in Tier 2, and 2 proposals in Tier 3.

Science Panel members were asked to consider the following criteria for linked packages: applicability, feasibility, statistical robustness, development of new data and models, leverage of existing operations and infrastructure, integration, human dimensions, and modeling. Four linked packages were submitted; each was discussed at length and their strengths and weaknesses were identified.

The Science Panel strongly endorsed the ASGARD linked package that focuses on the period of spring sea ice retreat. The panel ranked three of the six proposals associated with the ASGARD linked package Tier 1: proposals 2.19 (marine mammal acoustics), 3.16 (oceanography and lower trophic levels), and 4.7 (modeling). The panel ranked the other three proposals associated with the package Tier 2: 1.2 (social science), 2.5 (fish), and 3.20 (benthic ecology). The panel recommended that the Tier 1 ASGARD proposals be funded.

The panel discussed the option of replacing the Tier 2 proposals in the ASGARD linked package with other strong stand-alone proposals, including 2.3, 2.12, 3.17, 4.6, and 5.6. While panel members

expressed support for this idea, the panel was reluctant to make mixing and matching proposals a firm recommendation to the Board.

NPRB invited three organizations with prior Arctic data management experience to respond to the Arctic Program data management RFP, and the RFP was also posted on the Arctic Program website. Only one proposal was received, from Axiom Data Science. The Science Panel reviewed the proposal and four external technical reviews. The Science Panel noted that the proposal was responsive and there was no objection to letting the contract to this provider.

4. 2016 Annual Research Program Proposal Review

Jo-Ann Mellish provided a summary of the proposals received in response to the 2016 RFP. A total of 112 proposals were submitted by the deadline of December 4, 2015, requesting a total of \$25 million. Conflicts of interest for both the Panelists and the Staff were presented in Attachment 6.3. The updated two-stage discussion process was reviewed. The majority of the discussion provided time for the Primary and Secondary to present each proposal with accompanying peer review summary, and to assign a consensus ranking of Tier 1 (excellent/very good), Tier 2 (very good/good), or Tier 3 (Fair/Poor/Do not fund). Those proposals ranked Tier 1 that the Panel felt were eligible for further distinction were noted. All Panelists were given access to these proposals for consideration in the second discussion for a Tier E (exceptional) ranking. There were six proposals under consideration for joint funding by the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI). Program Manager Scott Pegau called in to participate in the discussion of these proposals.

Four proposals were given the highest designation of Tier E, comprising \$1.0 million in total funds requested. A total of 37 proposals were ranked Tier 1, comprising \$7.2 million. There were 38 Tier 2 proposals (\$10.1 million) and 33 Tier 3 proposals (\$6.7 million). There was consensus among the Science Panel that the revised Tier ranking system with distinct discussion periods and additional review time was a welcome improvement.

8. Communications and Outreach Update

Brendan Smith provided an update on the progress of the NPRB website redesign. The website will integrate an entirely new method of navigation, as well as file management, vertical layout and blog design. These combined updates will significantly streamline the current website, with an enhanced user experience. Content has been completed for the Annual Research Program, GSRA, LTM and main pages. A summary of Google analytics was shown for the current website traffic (Table 8.1).

The biennial report for 2015-2016 will be in the format of both a traditional print and digital format. The digital format will increase accessibility and improve engagement with NPRB stakeholders. Staff will have the ability to prepare content which will result in cost-savings over a print-only version. Similarly, the 2016 NPRB calendar was designed and produced in-house.

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools available to NPRB were discussed. This included a shift from *JangoMail* to *MailChimp* for email services. *MailChimp* has several distinct advantages over *JangoMail*, including the ability to centralize subscriber records from multiple mailing lists.

The Communications Plan is in the development phase and will be prepared for the Board meeting in May.

The Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January 2015 had a strong attendance at both the conference and the Communicating Ocean Sciences Workshop. New to the symposium this year was the mobile app from Guidebook, which was well received.

Finalists in the 2016 photo contest were presented to the Panel for their vote.

9. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Danielle Dickson provided a brief update on the PI meeting and wrap-up status of the GOA IERP. All awards ended on January 31, 2016. The first synthesis workshop was held March 2-5, 2016, in Friday Harbor. The full synthesis phase is expected to continue through January 2018.

5. Science Plan Update

Matt Baker updated the Panel on the structure and timeline of the Science Plan revision. The external review committee would meet in May. The staff members on the drafting team (Matt Baker, Jo-Ann Mellish) would provide a template for assigned sections to Advisory Panel and Science Panel members in June. It was requested to have edited versions returned in August in time for review at the next Science Panel meeting.

The proposed revised table of contents and the standardized chapter sections were reviewed with the Panel for their input. Panel assignments were reviewed and volunteers were added where necessary. It was noted that staff were investigating a digital format rather than solely a print document to provide a more contemporary approach. The Panel agreed that this iteration will be much more functional and accessible overall.

7. Budget Overview & Strategic Planning

Denby Lloyd directed the Panel to the budget projections provided for their information. Given the anticipated declining return on the IERF for the foreseeable future, the Board had tasked staff to prepare some alternative strategies to funding allocation. Five scenarios were presented to the Science Panel, including: no future IERPs, reduced funding to the annual RFP, two alternating frequency scenarios, and an IERP-funding partner option. The Science Panel agreed that some version of a core program should remain. There was support both for and against an alternating schedule. It was suggested that IERPs could instead be provided for by smaller, focus sections that are more flexible and could be contained within the core program.

6. Graduate Student Research Awards

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 Panel, leaving a total of 49 applications for discussion (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. It was agreed by the Panel to only discuss applicants with overall rankings of at least two very goods, one excellent or higher.

Thirteen Masters applications and fifteen Doctoral applications did not meet the minimum criteria for Panel discussion. Of the remaining nine Masters applications, five were recommended to the Board for funding. Eight of the remaining thirteen Doctoral student applications were put forward for funding consideration.

10. Other Matters

Denby Lloyd discussed the upcoming changes in Panel membership. There are three members rotating off without eligibility for reappointment (Vera Alexander, Jim Berner, David Witherell). These three members were presented with plaques at the group dinner on Thursday evening. The three subject areas comprise oceanography, physiology/disease and fishery management. The applicants that had responded to the call for vacant seats were reviewed for Science Panel comments. The Panel supported the

reappointment of the two eligible members (Chris Siddon, Polly Wheeler). They also noted their support of Diana Stram (fisheries management), David Hill (oceanography), Colleen Duncan (physiology), and Leslie Cornick (physiology).

Denby requested that all remaining proposal reviews and summaries be submitted by close of business, Wednesday, April 6.

The fall meeting will be 22-26 August 2016. The spring meeting is currently scheduled for 27-31 March 2017, however there was a requested to investigate moving this to the week prior in order to avoid overlap with the Gordon Research Conference. Denby noted that Staff will investigate this possibility and return to the Panel with recommendations at the Fall meeting.