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**SUMMARY**  
**North Pacific Research Board – Spring Science Panel Meeting**  
**March 27-30, 2018**

The Science Panel met March 27-30, 2018 at the Inn at the Market in downtown Seattle, WA. The meeting was attended by panel members: Milo Adkison, Carin Ashjian, Colleen Duncan, Stew Grant, Melissa Haltuch, Brad Harris, Tuula Hollmen, Lloyd Lowry, Phil Mundy, Matt Reimer, Chris Siddon (Chair), Leandra Sousa, Suzann Speckman, Diana Stram and Tom Weingartner. Polly Wheeler attended Monday and Tuesday. Panel members Courtney Carothers and David Hill were absent for the entirety of the meeting. The meeting was staffed by Betsy Baker, Matt Baker, Crystal Benson-Carlough, Danielle Dickson, Jo-Ann Mellish, and Brendan Smith.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Executive Director welcomed the panel and thanked them for their attendance and efforts. Science Panel Chair asked the science panel and staff to introduce themselves to the group. The agenda for the current meeting and the minutes for the prior meeting were approved. The conflict of interest declaration of disclosure was approved.

**MOTION: Approve fall meeting summary.**

**Action: Motion passed with no objections.**

**MOTION: Approve Conflict of Interest declaration of disclosure.**

**Action: Motion passed with no objections.**

2. GSRA

The senior program manager opened GSRA with half an hour of brief of the submissions and a review of the process for the evaluation. Next hour was then used as a coordination period for the panel before reviewing as a group. The draft recommendations at the end of this period were used to define the pool triage for discussion. The panel opted to discuss MS applicants who received two very good rankings or better. At the Ph.D. level, the panel discussed only applications that received at least one excellent ranking.

Final recommendations were made for five MS and six PhD students to go forward to Advisory Panel and Board.

**TASK: 2019, make it a requirement for the undergraduate transcripts to be included. Update in application guidelines appropriately. Disqualify before reaching panel if non-compliant.**

3. Core Program

The senior program manager provided a summary of the submissions and a review of the process for the evaluation. The remainder of the afternoon was used as a work period for the panel prior to reviewing as a group the next day. Draft decisions, recommended tiers and discussion required status updates were completed by the end of the work period. Tier 3 applicants were not discussed.

The panel concluded it was valuable to have working time during the meeting to discuss proposals and seek advice from members who weren't assigned to a given proposal. The process felt more deliberative.

The following day opened with full panel review of proposals presented in order of SP1. 12 proposals were flagged for additional discussion, mostly Tier 1. Some proposals were dropped immediately and two were moved to Tier E discussion. Proposals took five to ten minutes for consideration. Tier E proposals were reviewed last, with nine initial candidates. Each proposal was presented by the SP1 and SP2 before a vote was taken for top three selections of each member. Two were dropped in Tier before the vote. A final single voting round was required to get three final selections: proposal numbers 34, 120, and 127.

The panel discussed how many times can a proposal be submitted. The panel concluded tier rank counts, tier three proposals will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and the SP1 will include a statement in the summary section.

Fall meeting agenda items to consider:

1. General – geographic criteria, sample size, federal agency funding, budget review, stakeholder engagement (fatigue).
2. Tier definitions – update and further define terms (exceptional status, conditional status).
3. Review form – structure like decisions pages and add language to include a statement requiring the applicants to notate their permit status (no need to upload permit).
4. Tech requests – filter capability on overall page, all summaries pdf option, comments box for feedback to the applicant but not the Board.

#### 4. Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

The senior program manager provided a program update indicating the Gulf of Alaska synthesis project was granted a no-cost extension to July 31, 2018. The project is progressing well, and the PIs are preparing several papers for publication in Deep-Sea Research II. A full-day workshop entitled “To unpathed waters, undreamed shores: Current and future marine research in the Gulf of Alaska” was held in association with the Ocean Sciences conference on February 11, 2018. The workshop was organized jointly by the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (GOAIERP) synthesis team and leads of the Gulf Watch Alaska Program and an NCEAS synthesis. A workshop report was provided that included recommendations about research priorities for future studies in the Gulf of Alaska.

#### 5. Arctic Program

The senior program manager explained that the program is making good progress and provided a report on the 2017 summer/fall cruise. Notable findings included lack of sea ice even as far as 72.5°N latitude and very high abundances of age-0 Arctic cod over the Chukchi Sea shelf.

In September, NPRB staff coordinated a workshop at the Annual North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) meeting in Vladivostok, entitled, “the role of the northern Bering Sea in modulating the Arctic II: International interdisciplinary collaboration.” The workshop and associated activities increased international collaboration and synergies among researchers on both sides of the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

The senior program manager summarized the Arctic IERP annual PI meeting which occurred March 6-8, 2018. The presentations on Day 1 were designed to foster collaboration across the ASGARD (spring) and Arctic IES (summer/fall) aspects of the funded program, as well as with the social science side of the Program and collaborating projects funded by other institutions. The meeting was a great success.

Regarding program integration and international outreach, the request for proposals for the Arctic IERP included Appendix A, a list of 22 existing, separately-funded projects that committed to collaborating with the Arctic IERP. NPRB staff are actively working to foster collaboration among those projects and the projects directly funded by the Arctic IERP and are drawing new relevant projects in whenever possible. Several opportunities exist for collaboration with international entities. The Pacific Arctic Group includes regular participation by colleagues from Canada, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and China who share data collected along the Distributed Biological Observatory that our research program also samples. Additionally, fisheries surveys conducted by Norway and Russia may offer opportunities to collaborate, and conversations are ongoing to discuss the details of such collaborations. A new large-scale marine research program led by several Norwegian institutions called the Nansen Legacy Program may also offer collaboration opportunities that staff are beginning to explore. Staff welcomed suggestions from science panel members about potential collaboration opportunities.

## 6. Budget Overview & Strategic Planning

Executive Director provided as summary on budget overview and strategic planning. The projections of the earnings from the EIRF out to FY 2030 as prepared by ONRR will be provided by the Executive Director. Since February 2018 the rate on 10-year Treasury notes has improved, reaching a four-year high of 2.95% on February 22, 2018, and hovering around 2.88 %. This compares favorably to the 1.81 to 2.00% yields (plus or minus) reported to the panels and Board over the last three years. While these developments are promising, they are not likely to produce a significant upward trend in projections for NPRB grant revenue over the next five years. NPRB should plan on annual grant revenue through 2022 remaining close to the new lower levels seen in recent years.

Under the topic of strategic planning panel members expressed ideas such as linking Integrated Ecosystem Research to the Core. Potentially using an IERP type program to strengthen a Core Program category where proposals are weak, such as human dimension. Use white paper as interdisciplinary in the Core. Hold a session at AMSS for generating ideas and give folks guidance as to what would need to be delivered. Consider providing a range of funding prospects to present. Advertise prior to an AMSS session to provide guidance on the scale of projects the Board is interested in.

## 7. Rolling Submissions

The senior program manager reminded the panel that at the fall 2017 meeting the Science Panel discussed investigating the National Science Foundation model of rolling submissions/no deadline approach to proposals for applicability to the NPRB Core program. This recommendation was part of an extended effort by the Board and both panels to alleviate the pressures on peer reviewers and panelists, to increase flexibility and funding success for the science community, and to provide stability in an overall unpredictable funding environment. The Board took interest in the preliminary information provided and tasked staff to compile additional background and logistics details.

The Board released this statement on the NPRB website in advance of a special information session held during the Alaska Marine Science Symposium on January 23, 2018:

‘The NPRB is working on updating our Core program proposal process to provide a more stable and flexible funding platform to our researchers.

The Board’s preferred alternative is to move from the current fixed proposal deadline with one funding meeting a year to a rolling submissions approach with no deadline and funding decisions spread between two annual meetings.’

Feedback was requested for the following three questions:

- What aspects of this process under consideration will enhance your proposal writing experience?
- What specific concerns do you have with the proposed removal of a fixed deadline?
- If you have experience with a similar approach by other funding organizations, please comment constructively on what worked well and what could be improved.

The feedback on the session and online submittals was provided via memo links to Rolling Submissions AMSS, NPRB website, and Attachment 7.1.

The Panel is asked to consider and provide comments on two commonly expressed concerns:

- How will funds be allocated between the two Board meetings for each RFP year?
- How will proposal retention time be defined and clearly communicated to applicants?

**SP recommendations:**

Areas of concern included: moving meeting dates as it could conflict with NPFMC meetings or spring break etc.; does the change increase reviewer time; would it overload certain panel members based on area of expertise; if the change was made and the process fails would reverting to the original structure portray a negative view on NPRB. Large in part the concerns were followed up by recognizing the rolling submission could allow for higher quality submittals and could afford the reviewers an extension of time for reviewing.

The science panel recommended the board set aside at least 50% of the annual funding allocation for the second cycle in a given year. They raised a question about how the Board will advertise how much money is available for a given category for the second cycle. One panel member suggested the board

should hold all proposals over for at least one cycle to have the most information to consider in making funding decisions.

Scientists are in the field in summer and NPRB is likely to see most proposals come in during the winter. PIs with summer field work also won't serve as reviewers. Most panel members suggested they will write proposals at the same time of year (during the holidays would be nice because other burdens are lower), October to February being ideal, and no one thought they would write during summer. Is it possible to change the cycle to publish the RFP earlier and reduce the pressure to move to rolling submissions? That would lengthen the proposal writing period for proposers.

The panel wondered about a web-based interface where proposers can check the status of their proposals. PIs who are relying on match funds, developing partnerships, and recruiting students will want to know the status of their proposals as soon as possible. The panel recommended a website where a list of anonymous proposal numbers and a dashboard indicating the status of peer reviews is provided so that proposers can track the status of their proposals and the likelihood that they will be considered in a given review cycle. Currently individual web-based profiles are too expensive to implement. In the absence of a web-based system, the program manager could email those applicants whose proposals are held over for the next review cycle.

Formally the panel wants updates to be provided to proposers following each board meeting at a minimum. After each science panel meeting applicants should be notified that a proposal has been ranked Tier 3; restarting their clock for resubmission. NPRB would send them their peer reviews at the same time.

#### 8. Science Plan Revision

The science director sought input on retaining the Interdisciplinary Research category and soliciting some former categories as approaches under other categories.

##### *Should chapter 5 stand alone or be included in Chapter 3?*

The panel felt the material in Chapter 5 should stand alone and it would be difficult to give it proper consideration and emphasis under Chapter 3. One member suggested that Partnerships be separated into its own chapter. Perhaps Data Rescue and Technology Development could be handled together separately because they deal with temporal (past and future, respectively) issues.

Community definition currently seems to imply that the fishing industry could represent a community - the definition should be clarified. Current definition includes geographic, occupational, cultural communities.

##### *Should NPRB retain the Interdisciplinary Research category?*

In 2018 that category seemed to be a catch-all and it needs better definition. Encouraging interdisciplinary teams is a good approach to addressing fishery management. The panel consensus was it deserves its own category. If the board moves to rolling submissions and proposers have more time to develop proposal's we may see more responsive proposals.

The science director asked that any edits to the document be provided no later than Friday April 6, 2018.

#### 9. Partnerships

The science director provided the background for funding partnership development with the Core program. The goal is to increase funds to support the mission of NPRB while balancing NPRB ownership of the process and ensuring means to offset any additional administrative burden. Partners have expressed interest in partnerships with NPRB to access NPRB's broad pool of investigators and to leverage its respected and comprehensive proposal review process. Input was requested from the Science Panel on the revised proposed timeline, the types of organizations that would be appropriate to partner with, and how to define the appropriate level of engagement.

The panel questioned if their summary and tier ranking would go to partners with proposals and staff indicate no. Tier 3 proposals will not be shared with partners. Applicants will be asked to opt-out of sharing proposals with partners. One panel member suggested that the RFP could specify applicants would have the opportunity to access partner funds only during the spring review cycle, that may alleviate partner concerns over the timeline for rolling submissions. The question was posed if we could announce the opportunity in the Federal Register. Staff will explore the possibility. The question of whether a partner could fund a given project 100% that NPRB wouldn't otherwise fund. They could theoretically take advantage of the NPRB review process and fund it separate from NPRB after the fact. Independence of NPRB is important to ensure that NPRB receives quality science proposals.

#### 10. Communications & Outreach

The communications and outreach director expressed to the panel that for the 2018 funding cycle, the call for outreach proposals will be separate from the Core Program RFP and held immediately following the spring announcement of funded Core projects. Only projects that received 2018 Core Program funding may have the opportunity to submit outreach proposals. The due date will be the end of July, in time for review at the 2018 fall Science and Advisory Panel and Board meetings. The change responds to Board suggestions that timing of the outreach call and overall success rate of outreach proposals could be improved. Implementing the Core and Companion Outreach proposals at the same time may have unduly taxed applicants. Requiring the Board to make funding decisions for yet another set of proposals at the spring meeting also proved challenging.

The approved increases to both the individual funding cap (\$20,000) and overall funding availability (\$130,000) will enable the Board to potentially fund more projects and allow applicants to develop more robust outreach initiatives. All funded applicants will be required to attend scientific communication training as part of the subaward agreement in the 2018 Core RFP.

Staff asked for panel feedback on the Outreach program overview & 2018 RFP structure and expressed the panels review is for consistency. The panel expressed concern over the "uniqueness" criteria for reviewing outreach proposals because some existing methods are proven, and a novel approach may not be effective. "Effectiveness" should go beyond effectiveness of delivery. An SP member suggested omitting uniqueness and extensiveness and suggested that effectiveness of delivery could capture them. It might be nice to change uniqueness to innovative. The proposal should identify and discuss metrics. Concern resides that a third party could submit a proposal for outreach without the knowledge or involvement of the PIs of the science proposal. The RFP should state that the applicant must be affiliated with one of the institutions receiving funds through the Core Program science award or demonstrate that they have been approved by the Core-funded recipients. Outreach proposals need to include a reminder about the focus of the science and identify the target audiences for the outreach. The recipients of the Outreach Award should be required (or at least strongly encouraged) to attend the science communication training that is required of Core Program projects that don't receive outreach

awards. Include in the review criteria for evaluating outreach proposals an assessment of the experience of the applicant and their need for the training. Take out individual reference for Science Panel under the last section.

For 2018, the science panel will use the advisory panel criteria with the omission of "of delivery" from the effectiveness of delivery criteria. The Science Panel will review all proposals.

#### 11. Long Term Monitoring Program

Staff explained that the funding for first five-year increment of the three projects funded under the Long-Term Monitoring (LTM) Program expires in 2019 and NPRB will need to decide soon if these projects will be renewed to avoid a break in the time-series. Staff provided interim reports for each of the projects for the Science Panel to review and reported no concerns about their performance.

The panel expressed their view that if NPRB released a Request for Proposals for LTM every five years that is antithetical to LTM. The panel recommended that NPRB should continue investing in these projects unless fault is found. A panel member noted that the success of the Chukchi Ecosystem Observatory attracted Murdock Foundation investment in the same mooring design for the Seward Line. The Atlantic Continuous Plankton Recorder project has more dense sampling over longer time periods and the data clearly show their value in identifying evidence of climate change.

**MOTION: recommend status quo funding of the three existing projects funded via the LTM program.**

**Action: the panel requested a data-driven 30-minute presentation from each LTM project separately at future SP meetings. Motion passed with no objection.**

#### 12. Other Matters

Executive Director provided a brief update on outside meeting support requests and AMSS 2018. Action was requested on the topics of Science Panel nominees and future meeting dates. Six nominations were received.

Carin Ashjian thought three applicants (Kimmel, Napp, Pinchuk) would be excellent substitutes for her as her term expires next spring. Can the Board accept one of them now for a term that begins when another term is coming to an end? It is important to have someone with genetics/molecular techniques experience on the panel. Endorsements included:

(1st Choice) Josep Planas

Endorsement by Melissa Haltuch and Brad Harris

-fisheries

-genomics and

-outstanding scientist

-applied and connectivity to the IPHC

-strong background in academia

-less conflict with proposals

(2nd Choice) Carol Stepien

Endorsement – Phil Mundy

Opposition - Stew Grant - Proposals from Carol Stepien received a tier 3

Request that we inform Kimmel, Napp, Pinchuk that we would like to retain them for replacement of Carin Ashjians seat.

Proposal of dates for 2018/2019 Science Panel meetings were:

Aug 21-23, 2018

March 26-29, 2019

Week of August 20, 2019

2018 – Carin Ashjian, Colleen Duncan, Matt Reimer may all potentially be out. It is important to relay meeting schedule to new seat members to try and eliminate conflicts. Science Panel Chair wants to continue spring meetings at the Inn at the Market. It has been a perfect venue for the purpose of the meeting.

Stew Grant was presented with a plaque to recognize his contribution to the NPRB Science Panel.

**ADJOURN**