



**North Pacific Research Board
Meeting Summary
Fall Science Panel
August 20-21, 2019**

The Science Panel met August 20-21, 2019, at the NPRB offices in Anchorage, Alaska. The meeting was attended by panel members: Milo Adkison, Courtney Carothers, Colleen Duncan, Brad Harris, Phil Mundy, Matt Reimer, Chris Siddon (Chair), Leandra de Sousa, Suzann Speckman, Diana Stram and Tom Weingartner. David Hill, Melissa Haltuch and Josep Planas were absent. Polly Wheeler resigned her seat prior to the meeting. Colleen Duncan and Suzann Speckman were absent Wednesday afternoon. Attending staff: Betsy Baker, Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Jo-Ann Mellish, and Kayla Wagenfehr.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

After welcomes and a safety briefing, the Chair introduced the agenda. He identified the need for a Co-Chair, either interim for the fall Board meeting or to serve through the spring 2020 meeting, noting the decision would be made later in the meeting. It was noted that conflict of interests for the Core program had been received from all members prior to the meeting. Panel members were asked to identify any conflicts for the Outreach Program and none were named. The Executive Director noted the three-year review of the Conflict of Interest Policy would be discussed later in the meeting. The travel claim process was reviewed by the Program Support Specialist.

MOTION: Approve fall meeting agenda.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Approve spring meeting summary.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

2. Budget Overview

The Executive Director provided a brief update on the current status of the budget. This year's grant was the smallest NPRB has received to date, \$6.8 million compared to a high of \$9.9 million in 2011, and grants through 2025 are expected to remain in this lower range. The ED is in regular contact with the Office of Natural Resources Revenue to discuss investment options and will be meeting with NOAA officials in September to discuss options for augmenting current grant levels.

3. Communications and Outreach

The Science Director presented this section for the Communications and Outreach Director (COD) who was at sea with the Arctic IERP survey.

Proposals funded in the spring Core program were given until July 31 to submit for a companion outreach award. Two outreach proposals were received, for a total request of just under \$40,000. For comparison, \$60,000 was awarded in 2017 and \$130,000 in 2018. The review process does not include peer review but, at the Board's request, does include a Staff review. After hearing the COD's assessments of the two proposals, the panel members reviewed both in a group work session, using the criteria set out in the Outreach RFP.



RECOMMENDATION: The SP recommends proposal 1883 (Core 1902) for funding. The panel acknowledged good potential in proposal 1884 (Core 1905) but its quality was clearly lower than 1883.

The SP decided that members should be assigned to lead the review of each outreach proposal, as with the Core Program proposals. The SP felt their expertise is useful in terms of commenting on how the proposed outreach enhances the science proposal by, for example, engaging stakeholders. Therefore, the SP should also read the science proposal when reviewing the companion outreach proposal. It was noted the Science Panel might wish to have different criteria for review than the RFP list developed by the AP and COD to reflect different experience and perspectives.

The panel prefers to receive review assignments prior to the meeting when possible.

The Engagement Strategy Guide, requested by the AP and still in development, was briefly presented, as was the Strategic Plan 2019-2024 adopted by the Board at its spring 2019 meeting.

Rolling submissions has had an impact on Outreach proposal submission rates in 2019. **Staff shared ideas for using funds set aside for outreach proposals in the event they are not spent on schedule:**

- rolling over funds into 2020 for outreach proposals
- adding to the outreach budget for the Arctic IERP
- increasing efforts in Alaska-based science engagement and outreach training
- Supporting the project to evaluate NPRB's research impacts
- revitalizing the Spotlight program for select Core research projects

A lively and extended discussion ensued. The SP suggested NPRB consider which of the ideas suggested above would require sustained funding and developing a thoughtful strategy before the need for any such spenddown arises. A working group on communication and outreach was considered unnecessary.

RECOMMENDATION: The SP recommends the Board use any future non-allocated outreach proposal funds to engage external expertise to facilitate and prioritize Alaskan-related engagement and outreach opportunities. The SP reiterated the importance of outreach, considering it imperative to ensure such funds be used for outreach activities.

The Chair reported back to the panel that he and the AP chair had, at the Board's spring 2019 meeting, conveyed both panels' concern with the Board's earlier decision to fund an outreach proposal that the review bodies had not flagged.

4. Arctic IERP

The Senior Program Manager provided an update on the Arctic IERP, explaining that the NOAA survey that is currently underway is the final field data collection opportunity for the program. Several papers have been submitted for publication in the first special issue and will be published in the journal Deep-Sea Research II later this year.

Staff described recent outreach to potential partners for the Arctic IERP synthesis and suggested some potential directions for the synthesis. Staff discussed the opportunity for the Arctic IERP synthesis to use the data collected by the Arctic IERP field program and other research initiatives (e.g., Distributed Biological



Observatory) to inform the development and validation of Arctic ecosystem models. Staff also explained that the Arctic IERP field program has been well-positioned to document unprecedented warming of the waters in the northern Bering and Chukchi Seas and the northward shift of subarctic species, including commercially-important fishes. Potential partner organizations (e.g., NOAA, USARC) have expressed interest in renewed research in the northern Bering Sea. Staff identified the opportunity for the Arctic synthesis to double as the assessment phase for a potential future IERP centered in the northern Bering Sea and invited the SP to comment on this idea.

The Panel expressed strong support for the idea of using the Arctic IERP synthesis as a mechanism to support an assessment phase for a potential future IERP centered in the northern Bering Sea, noting that recent observations in the region are unprecedented, and if there were ever an example of the need for an IERP approach, this is it. Such a study would address both the pressing fishery management needs and the ecosystem information needs aspects of the NPRB mission and would address fishery ecosystem considerations as well as human dimensions. The SP recommended that a future IERP should be centered in the northern Bering Sea and ideally the geographic scope should be large to welcome study in the adjacent southern Bering Sea and Chukchi Sea. The SP recommended including collaboration with Russian scientists and suggested that NPRB engage with USARC to apply political pressure at the State Department level for formal agreements with Russia. The Panel also recommended international collaboration broadly, especially with respect to synthesis, and mentioned that collaborating with the Chinese may draw in Russian collaboration.

MOTION: The Science Panel recommends the use of the synthesis phase of the Arctic IERP as the first phase of a new IERP centered on the northern Bering Sea.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

5. Graduate Student Research Awards (information only)

Staff reported that the Graduate Student Research Award program is due for a comprehensive review and solicited a volunteer from the SP to serve on a review committee to comprise one member each from the SP, AP, and Board. Milo Adkison volunteered to serve on behalf of the Science Panel.

6. Core Program

The Senior Program Manager provided a review of the submissions to date and the evaluation process, noting that this was the second half of the first year with a rolling submissions RFP. A total of 16 additional proposals received two or more external peer reviews in adequate time to be considered by the Panel at this meeting. The Panel was given an hour to coordinate with their partners and discuss proposals with other panelists as necessary. The Panel discussion resulted in the following distribution: Tier E (2), Tier 1 (3), Tier 2 (5), Tier 3 (6).

The discussion on how many times a poorly-ranked proposal can be submitted was revisited. The Panel reaffirmed their decision to deal with it on a case by case basis.

The Panel reviewed and edited the 2020 RFP. The panel self-selected into expertise areas for the 'Issues of Particular Interest' under the Oceanography & Productivity, Fishes & Invertebrates, Marine Birds & Mammals, and Human Dimensions categories.



Beginning with the 2021 RFP the Panel will also review one major category description each year to make sure that the template remains relevant. In particular, it was suggested that the ‘multiple stressors’ requirement for the Interdisciplinary Studies category be revisited after a few cycles.

The Panel also worked in self-selected groups to prepare four focus sections at the request of the Board.

Aleutian Islands

The marine ecosystems of the Aleutian Islands (AI) are among the least-studied in Alaska. These ecosystems, in which the physics are dominated by boundary currents, tides, winds, and complex topography, are characterized by substantially higher pelagic energy flow than those of the eastern Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, or Arctic Ocean. The physical environment results in large and convoluted gradients in habitats, biomass, and species richness and diversity. The complexity has enormous implications for the management of the AI’s marine ecosystem and its fishery resources. To assist in understanding the AI ecosystem we suggest research that uses existing data sets to develop research themes pertinent to better understanding the AI ecosystem as it functions now and as it may evolve under a changing climate. The results of this study would serve as a guide for future research foci, possibly including an integrated ecosystem research plan.

The Panel noted that while the language above does not explicitly so state, proposers should be encouraged to identify existing data sets and their status in addition to using such data to conduct research.

Wild-hatchery interactions

Salmon hatcheries in Japan, Russia, and Alaska provide obvious economic benefits but have raised concerns about less-obvious effects on wild salmon and other ecosystem components. Hatchery programs for additional species, e.g., king crab, are being developed. Competition for food at sea and in the near-shore or estuarine environments has been one public concern. Another concern is change to the fitness of wild stocks arising from interbreeding. We encourage proposals that examine the types and magnitude of interactions between hatchery and wild salmon, king crab, or other species and potential interactions with components of the ecosystem. While correlative studies are not precluded, we are especially interested in studies of the mechanisms underlying these interactions.

Cold Pool

Recent large-scale anomalies in the Bering Sea, such as the shrinking and/or disappearance of the Bering Sea cold pool (a layer of cold bottom water $\leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$), or dramatic reductions in sea ice, may have major effects on ecosystems and commercial fisheries. There is concern that climate change will make these effects more frequent or even permanent. We encourage proposals that evaluate the impacts of these changes on the distribution of Bering Sea commercial fish and shellfish stocks (i.e. groundfish, crab, and other managed species), including changes in distribution between the Eastern Bering Sea and Northern Bering Sea.

Indigenous stewardship of marine ecosystems

Indigenous people have stewarded Alaska lands and waters for thousands of years yet have been largely excluded from science and management systems. This focus section seeks to engage Indigenous cosmologies and methodologies to better understand historical and contemporary ways in which Alaska Native peoples steward marine ecosystems. This could include: 1) understanding of Indigenous values, knowledge, management, and governance of marine ecosystems, 2) assessment of science and management systems from Indigenous perspectives, 3) development of best practices for better including



Indigenous stewardship in current management practices and systems, 4) exploration of local responses to environmental change.

No proposals were submitted under the 2019 RFP focus section “New approaches to fishery independent survey design and implementation”. That text will also be available to the Board as a possible focus section for the 2020 RFP.

There was a general consensus that the reduced workload from fewer proposal assignments, increased time during the meeting for one on one and group working periods, and increased lead time to develop a bank of Focus Section topics were positive changes. It will be of interest to the Panel to monitor the quality and distribution of proposals through the first few cycles. The Panel in general liked having assignments immediately as they come available rather than in a single batch (as under the fixed-deadline model). The current time period to complete reviews prior to the meeting is sufficient and should not be changed. The Panel did not wish to have assignments made any closer to the meeting dates.

7. Evaluation of NPRB Research

Staff provided information about work that NPRB has supported to date to evaluate the impacts of NPRB-funded research and shared a draft scope of work for continued investment. The SP noted that NPRB should take care that the evaluation not lose sight of both components – ecosystem information and pressing fishery management needs. It was recommended that NPRB track the development of scientists as a metric of success, building on efforts already underway with GSRA recipients. It was also suggested that an intern with library science background may be particularly skilled in the type of literature and data mining that could be useful to NPRB.

Staff requested that the SP share examples of impact brochures published by other organizations. The SP Chair tasked Panel members with noting NPRB research contributions at meetings like the NPFMC.

8. Strategic Planning

The Executive Director shared the Strategic Plan 2019-2024 adopted by the Board at the spring 2019 meeting. A draft one-year Implementation Plan that will be considered by the Board at the fall 2019 meeting was also presented for discussion, particularly as it related to the activities of the Panel.

The Science Panel Chair, who also serves as the Science Panel representative on the Strategic Planning working group, will provide the working group’s requested definition of basic and applied science.

Regarding efforts to better incorporate local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, the Science Panel felt it would benefit from the addition of a member who is an Alaska Native scientist. An extended discussion of other options resulted in many additional fruitful ideas (which staff is ready to provide to the SP chair for the working group’s consideration), and in the following recommendation:

SP Recommendation: Use additional or any outreach funding to reach groups through opportunities outside of AMSS such as AFN or a traveling presentation approach to provide an incubator program vetted by the Board pairing SP advisers with non-western science proposers.



There was extended discussion about how this approach would allow staff to remain neutral but for the Panel to engage more proactively in assisting proposals before they are submitted.

9. Governance Update and MOU review

Staff reported that NPRB is working with NOAA lawyers and Venable law firm to revise the NPRB-ASLC-NOAA MOU. The Board will review the revised MOU during either the Fall 2019 or Spring 2020 meeting.

10. Partnerships

The Science Director updated the Panel on the Board's discussion of partnerships and discussed recent developments with respect to potential new partnerships.

The Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation remains interested in discussing partnership and staff plan to attend the BSRF board meeting in September 2019. The Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center may be interested in an Oil Spill Recovery Institute-type partnership, contributing to a consortium approach, and/or developing a partnership to co-fund an IERP in either the northern Bering Sea or Aleutian Islands.

The Chair suggested that NPRB could host a gathering that coincided with either plan team meetings or included CDQ groups to promote partnerships. Other groups suggested for contact included: sport fishers, Army Corps of Engineers, Sea Grant, and the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

It was noted that the tax credit will sunset in a couple of years, however, the corporate tax credit applies to all industries, not just fisheries (e.g. cruise ships, oil and gas), and there is emphasis on supporting initiatives that include Indigenous perspectives.

11. Nominations

The SP considered the Nominations Committee report and identified recusals and disclosures as required under the NPRB Conflict of Interest policy. The SP comments will be provided to the Board for consideration at its Fall 2019 meeting.

12. Other Matters

Staff invited comments on the NPRB Conflict of Interest Policy prior to the meeting and received no input. There were no concerns with the existing policy or implementation.

NPRB has \$7,500 remaining in the outside meeting request budget for the calendar year.

The spring meeting dates were shifted earlier to March 17-19, 2020, in Seattle. The shift was to avoid a conflict with a Council meeting. A three-day meeting was requested to allow for sufficient discussion time in advance of knowing the proposal review load.

Staff informed the Panel that the Board is likely to disband some working groups whose tasks have been accomplished, including the Arctic Program Communications/Outreach Working Group and the Science Plan Working Group.



MOTION: Brad Harris is nominated to be the vice-chair for a one-year term.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Panel members thought it was a good idea to stagger the chair and vice-chair nominations.

Motion: Adjourn meeting. 4:02pm.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.