



**North Pacific Research Board
Meeting Summary
Fall Science Panel
August 18–19, 2020**

The Science Panel held a virtual meeting August 18–19, 2020. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions and health concerns, the meeting was held over Zoom. The meeting was attended by panel members: Milo Adkison, Courtney Carothers, Doug DeMaster, Colleen Duncan, Melissa Haltuch, Brad Harris (Chair), David Hill, Liza Mack, Phil Mundy, Josep Planas, Matt Reimer, Suresh Sethi, Leandra de Sousa, Suzann Speckman, Diana Stram, Bill Sydeman, Tom Thornton and Tom Weingartner. Attending staff: Matthew Baker, Danielle Dickson, Jo-Ann Mellish, Lynn Palensky (Executive Director), Brendan Smith and Kayla Wagenfehr.

1. Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Chair Brad Harris called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Matthew Baker, the Science Director, welcomed everyone and hoped everyone was well and dealing with the challenges of COVID-19. He thanked staff, the chair and vice-chair for putting the virtual meeting together. They added updates to two programs: integrated ecosystem research and long-term monitoring programs. There are new developments with the Arctic IERP. A new IERP program is being developed for the Northern Bering Sea — those discussions will be happening next year. Five new members joined last spring. It was noted that the conflict of interest for proposal review was received from all the members prior to the meeting. Matt reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Postponed items include system updates, budget, strategic planning, and governance. He encouraged panel members to read the memos on those topics.

The meeting was scheduled to take place in two blocks, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 18, and Wednesday, August 19, 2020.

MOTION: Approve the fall 2020 meeting agenda.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Members and staff briefly introduced themselves, as there were some new members.

MOTION: Approve the spring 2020 meeting summary.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Kayla Wagenfehr reviewed the virtual meeting protocol.

2. Core Program

Jo-Ann Mellish, the Senior Program Manager, noted that the 2020 RFP target is \$4 million in funding, with \$2 million funded by the Board last spring. This set of 15 proposals requests \$4.5 million, almost double the amount remaining in the budget.

The ranking system for the proposals was briefly reviewed prior to starting the Panel discussion: Tier 3 proposals have a flaw and are off the table. Tier 2 proposals are fundable, but there are areas that could be improved. Tier 1 proposals are fundable and recommended to the Board. Tier E proposals are infrequent. There were no Tier E proposals put forward at the beginning of the discussion period. Tier E



and Tier 1 proposals were to be discussed in detail. Tier 2 proposals with a consensus ranking were limited to presentation of the proposal strengths unless otherwise requested by the assigned reviewers. Tier 3 proposals were not discussed.

Following presentation by the assigned reviewers and discussion with the full panel, the final distribution of recommendations was: Tier E (0), Tier 1 (7), Tier 2 (6) and Tier 3 (2).

3. Arctic IERP

Danielle Dickson, the Senior Program Manager, outlined the Arctic IERP for the benefit of new members. She listed the funders, including NPRB, who turned a \$7 million investment into an >\$18 million research program. The IERP seeks to answer: “How will reductions in arctic sea ice and associated changes in the physical environment influence the flow of energy through the ecosystem in the Chukchi Sea”.

Matt Baker shared the science highlights, such as seeing bottom temperatures exceeding 0 °C. He discussed the impact of the blob on bottom temperatures. Sea surface temperatures reported in 2019 are already exceeding mid-century forecasts (20 years out). There have been surprises with sub-arctic stocks of Pacific cod and walleye pollock being seen north of 60° N. Many 2020 surveys planned by other organizations (e.g., NOAA Fisheries) have been constrained or cancelled due to COVID. Matt discussed how the Arctic IERP is facilitating collaboration with Russian scientists. He described a collaborative paper published in Nature Climate Change earlier this year that included Arctic IERP data and the papers published in the first volume of the special issue in Deep-Sea Research II. The second volume of the special issue will open in September 2020.

Danielle noted the NPRB Board’s commitment to augment the \$1 million set aside for the Arctic IERP synthesis by \$400,000. NPRB plans to release an RFP to synthesize data collected in 2017-2019 during Arctic IERP studies in the Bering and Chukchi seas and also provide an assessment that will inform the Board as they develop a new IERP centered in the Northern Bering Sea. Danielle explained that NPRB is beginning to coordinate with other entities with interest in the region and described workshops that NPRB helped organize at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium and Alaska Forum on the Environment during winter 2020 to invite input.

4. Long-term monitoring

Danielle Dickson said the three projects funded through NPRB’s long-term monitoring program have continued to gather data throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. She read summaries of each project:

- a) **Chukchi Ecosystem Observatory** – The observatory collects data using autonomous moored instruments. The principal investigator (PI) expects the instruments to be retrieved and redeployed by a NOAA Distributed Biological Observatory cruise.
- b) **Continuous Plankton Recorder** – The CPR is towed by commercial vessels that have continued to operate on schedule. Analyses may occur at a slower pace due to limitations on laboratory access. NPRB funding is allocated only towards analysis of samples collected in the North Pacific (i.e., Gulf of Alaska). The PIs will work to secure funding to continue sampling in the Arctic and hope to coordinate their analysis of Arctic samples with other NPRB-funded scientists.
- c) **Seward Line/Northern Gulf of Alaska Long-Term Ecological Research** – Sampling has continued, but on a more limited scale. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has provided the vessel R/V Sikuliaq



for the spring, summer, and fall cruises in 2020. Last spring, they conducted the basic suite of oceanographic measurements.

She said a special issue in Deep-Sea Research II entitled “Understanding Ecosystem Processes in the Gulf of Alaska” will publish the results of several research programs, including the Seward Line/Northern Gulf of Alaska Long-Term Ecological Research project, the Continuous Plankton Recorder (CPR) project, the Gulf of Alaska IERP synthesis, and the EVOS-funded Gulf Watch Alaska program.

5. Communications & Outreach

Brendan Smith, Communications and Outreach Director, led a discussion on four outreach proposals under consideration for funding. A subgroup of four panel members were asked to provide reviews. The proposals totaled \$80,000 in funding. The Program Manager also provided a recommendation. After discussion, four proposals were flagged for funding consideration by the Panel:

- 1952 – Bridging Our Generations Through Social Media
- 1953 – Deep conversations.
- 1954 – Students Observing Sikuliaq Satellite Information
- 1955 – Birds of Sanak

Motion: Fund proposals 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1955.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Brendan observed that NPRB has a 50% response rate in PIs submitting proposals. He requested input from science panel members on how to boost the numbers of proposals, perhaps by allowing previously funded parties to submit proposals. There was discussion among panel members.

Meeting recessed for the day at 3:27 p.m.

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

The meeting reconvened at 9:00 a.m.

Brad Harris asked for any housekeeping items. There were none.

6. Partnerships

Matt Baker led a discussion on how to further existing partnerships and develop new ones. Partnerships are represented in the composition of the organization. NPRB Board has a variety of representatives and longtime coordination with a variety of different partners, including research institutions and grant-making organizations. It has a successful history of funding with different partners and wants to develop more tribal, industry, universities, research and foundation partnerships. He covered the criteria, benefits and types of partnerships. Panel members offered a variety of suggestions.



7. Graduate Student Working Group

Milo Adkison, the Science Panel representative on the working group, presented the executive summary and recommendations to the Board:

- awards should be given only to U.S. students at U.S. institutions;
- update language to the 'personal statement' to better address the intentions of the awardee;
- increase the value of each award by \$1,000 to directly cover travel expenses to the Alaska Marine Science Symposium; and
- revise the Science Panel evaluation protocol, part of which would emphasize student ability for MS applicants; and emphasize scientific merit for PhDs.

Many panel members voiced their reluctance to limit to grants to only U.S. students, saying it would inhibit international cooperation and participation. The panel supported a staff suggestion to recommend to the Board an option to select US citizens over international students in cases where the GSRA proposal ranks were equal.

The panel agreed the addition of a third evaluating metric (relevance to NPRB mission) would be useful in addition to the two already considered (scientific merit, scholarly ability). The panel was split almost down the middle between on the proposal to evaluate Masters-level applicants primarily on scholarly ability and Doctoral applicants on scientific merit. In an effort to address potential inconsistencies in authorship of applications (e.g., advisor input), every panel member voted in favor of a proposal to have a statement from the student that the submitted proposal was their work, not the work of an advisor. With the addition of that statement, a majority of the panel voted not to adopt different criteria for evaluating MS and PhD applications. All applications would be evaluated primarily on scientific merit during the review process.

9. Human Dimensions Working Group (formerly the Social Science Working Group)

Courtney Carothers reported that the group met and talked about general challenges at the Board and panel level. They are seeking support to diversify membership to include more tribal members, and to look at indigenous issues that are less understood. They discussed how to build trust and facilitate deep engagements. She said they felt it was important to look at criticism of the Arctic program. There are crises in Arctic communities and much of what is being funded is not relevant to those problems. They discussed the funding review process, including methods to encourage indigenous scholars to participate and the language for the Human Dimensions category of the 2021 Core RFP. There was a lengthy discussion among panel members and recognition that additional time and effort would be required to address the concerns of the working group.

10. COVID Impacts

Jo-Ann Mellish shared how NPRB is working to adapt its operations to COVID. In the spring, they sent messages to PIs, to let them know staff were working virtually, but still working. Staff are working on ways to keep projects moving forward. A survey was sent to PIs in early August to help inform the Board on what stakeholders are going through. For example, 96% of 42 PIs said there has been a negative impact to their NPRB project due to COVID. There have been some impacts to field work and lab work as well.



Jo-Ann said they are suggesting to the Board that some COVID support funds be made available to those with open projects. They could also consider using the RFP focus section to encourage smaller, short-term projects.

The panel recessed for lunch.

11. Core Program

2021 RFP: Matt Baker provided background on how NPRB solicits research ideas and priorities from institutions. Ten organizations responded this year.

Jo-Ann said the RFP is a long-term document requiring less editing each year. This is the first year revisiting the restructured RFP format, with plans to review the general topics of interest section of one major category each year. The category for review this year was Oceanography and Productivity. Panel members wrestled with language and had suggestions for revising portions.

Panel members were divided into breakout rooms to discuss topics of particular interest from website suggestions in the following categories: Oceanography and Productivity, Fisheries and Invertebrates, Marine Birds and Mammals, and Human Dimensions. Each returned group offered their comments on topics of particular interest in their category.

Jo-Ann asked for input on the use of the Focus category to try out short-term projects for budget balancing and to be responsive to COVID situations. There was a mixed reaction from panel members.

12. Other Matters

Nominations: Matt Baker announced that one new science panel member would be coming on. Six nominations have been received — all extremely strong. The Nominations Committee met in July and ranked the candidates. The new member will be announced after the Board meeting.

2021 Schedule: There was a discussion on whether to move the August meeting one week later. Staff is seeking panel feedback. Two members want to hold it to the current week, seven voted for changing it and eight said it made no difference.

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting.

ACTION: Motion passed with no objections.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.