



North Pacific Research Board
Meeting Summary -approved spring 2021
Fall Board Meeting - of the Executive Committee
September 22-23, 2020

The North Pacific Research Board held a virtual meeting September 22-23, 2020, via Zoom. The meeting was attended by Board members: Forrest Bowers, Becca Robbins-Gisclair, Katrina Hoffman, CDR Jon Kreisler, Doug Mecum, Andy Mezirow (Chair), Mike Miller, Brad Moran, Tara Riemer, Matt Robinson (Vice Chair), Brad Smith, Dee Williams, and Cheryl Rosa as U.S. Arctic Research Commission designee for John Farrell . Panels: Brad Harris (Science Panel Chair and pending Board appointment) and Ruth Christiansen (Advisory Panel Chair) attended. Annika Saltman, a pending Board appointment with Fisherman's Finest, Inc., also attended. The meeting was staffed by: Lynn Palensky (Executive Director), Matt Baker, Danielle Dickson, Jo-Ann Mellish, Brendan Smith and Kayla Wagenfehr.

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

1. Call to Order/Approve the Agenda

Andy Mezirow chaired the meeting and called it to order at 9:07 a.m. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions and health concerns, the Board meeting was held virtually via Zoom. Andy said he hopes the Board can meet in person for the spring meeting. He introduced pending Board member Annika Saltman, who is replacing former Board member John Gauvin, and Deston Nokes, the meeting's notetaker.

Andy said they will use a consent agenda to group together administrative business. Another change is there is no quorum because they have not received a confirmation from the Secretary of Commerce on six appointments made from Washington and Alaska. However, the Executive Committee has the authority to make all decisions on behalf of the Board. To give the funding cycle the attention it deserves, the Executive Committee unanimously decided to move forward and work through the agenda, inviting input and discussion from all members and nominees present. The Executive Committee will have to do a roll call vote for each agenda item that requires a decision.

MOTION: The chair moved to open the meeting as an Executive Committee meeting with participation from the full Board.

Action: No objections.

ED Lynn Palensky discussed the meeting agenda, which includes the items held over from the spring meeting. She said the Consent Agenda includes approving the spring meeting summary, COI draft, SOPPs revisions, outside meeting requests and spring 2021 meeting dates.

Kayla Wagenfehr discussed Zoom Board participation protocols and introduced meeting participants.

MOTION: Approve the meeting agenda (included both consent and main agendas).

Action: Approved without objections.



2. Consent Agenda Approval

1. **Spring Board meeting summary** - Approve
2. **Governance Update**
 - a. Conflict of Interest –Approve review plan
 - b. SOPP Updates – Approve proposed update and changes
3. **Other Matters**
 - a. Outside Meeting Requests -Approval of outside meeting request 2021 meeting dates
 - b. Spring 2021 Meeting Dates – Approve

A question was asked about the outside funding requests for this year. Lynn provided a listing of outside meeting requests. NPRB has \$50,000 to spend each year and only had three requests come in, so we are under budget. There was \$1,000 approved for Sea Grant Young Fisherman’s Summit, \$5,000 for Sitka Sound Science Center’s Whale Festival, and a \$10,000 request for a PICES Symposium. Board approval is needed for the \$10,000 PICES symposium. A companion change in the SOPPs is proposed to raise the Executive Director’s approval level from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

MOTION: Approve the Consent Agenda

Action: Approved without objections.

Lynn/Andy asked for any comments on the Information Only section. There were none.

Main Agenda

1. Core Program

Jo-Ann Mellish recapped the rolling submissions metrics requested by the Board. The Board agreed to take two years to examine how not having a hard deadline would impact the program, and this meeting would be the final funding decision at the end of the two years. The Board had previously asked for three types of information: proposal submission, funding success and institutional distribution. Additional requests for the spring included: comparison of proposal Tier rankings, the range and mean funding amount for projects, and lead institutional representation as a proportion of funded proposals.

Jo-Ann reviewed proposal submission numbers and success data. Overall proposal submissions received for review in 2020 are half what were received in 2014. There was a rapid increase between 2014-2018, which led staff to consider how to manage it. RFP funding peaked at \$7 million in 2015, but has been advertised at between \$4-4.5 million level for the last few years. The switch from a deadline approach to rolling submissions has led to an increase of funding success for applicants from less than 20% to 40%.

2020 Core RFP

Jo-Ann said last spring, the Board had 17 proposals to look at and it chose to fund seven. All Tier 1 proposals were funded and a couple of Tier 2s. The total amount funded was about \$2 million.



Jo-Ann reviewed the 15 fall pending projects. The Science Panel ranked seven proposals as Tier 1, six as Tier 2 and two as Tier 3. The Advisory Panel gave six proposals a single star, but there were no two-star elevated overall proposals.

There was a discussion about Board member recusals. Some Board members did not believe it was necessary to have members leave the room during proposal discussions. It was a good reminder that the COI policy is currently being updated and the Board were tasked with reviews of the edits before the next meeting.

Andy said the Board will approve the conflict of interest plan in the future, so the Board will keep things as they have been in practice for now.

MOTION: Fund all Core Program Tier 1 proposals: 1905, 1937, 1941, 1932, 1933, 1942 and 1934.

AMENDMENT: Add proposal 1885.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the amendment failed.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

2. Arctic IERP Update

Danielle Dickson summarized the scope of the Arctic IERP, which started with a \$7 million investment from NPRB and leveraged considerable partnership funding and in-kind contributions to result in a total investment of >\$18 million 2016-2021. Matt Baker presented some highlights of scientific results from the 2019 field season and provided a summary of publications to date, including a synthesis manuscript on recent changes observed in the Arctic published in Nature Climate Change and a Special Issue in Deep-Sea Research II, which includes 14 peer-reviewed manuscripts communicating research from this program and parallel partner research efforts. A new Special Issue is underway and will include 19 peer-reviewed manuscripts.

Staff anticipate releasing an RFP in Fall 2021 for an Arctic Synthesis to leverage existing data from this program and other recent research programs in the region to contribute to new analyses. This synthesis would also serve as an assessment phase for a new IERP centered in the Northern Bering Sea that is anticipated to begin in 2025.

Staff explained that in January 2020, NPRB co-hosted workshops with AOOS, USARC, and NOAA in association with the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, the Alaska Forum on the Environment, and the AGU/Ocean Sciences Conference on “Coordinating future research efforts in the Bering Sea/Strait and adjacent regions”. Participants at each event were invited to share their perspectives on:

- (1) emerging research questions and needs.
- (2) methods to facilitate research design and implementation that draw on indigenous, traditional, local, and scientific knowledge, and
- (3) approaches for gathering input from interested audiences on an ongoing basis and communicating the resulting research plans and results in a timely and appropriate manner.



Staff are communicating interest in developing partnerships to fund the Arctic Synthesis and the future IERP and encouraged Board members to reach out to their colleagues to pursue partnership opportunities.

3. Long-Term Monitoring Update

Danielle provided an update on the three projects that NPRB funds via the LTM program.

The Chukchi Ecosystem Observatory (CEO) collects data using autonomous moored instruments and data collection has continued during 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans to turn the instruments around in 2020 were interrupted by COVID-19 and NPRB provided supplemental funding to contribute to the charter of an alternate vessel.

The Continuous Plankton Recorder project continues to make steady progress despite the COVID-19 pandemic. It is collecting data on schedule; however, analysis might be slowed due to lab access restrictions.

Sampling for the Seward Line/Northern Gulf of Alaska Long-Term Ecological Research project continued in 2020 during spring, summer, and fall despite the COVID-19 pandemic, although the scope of the research was somewhat limited.

4. Communications & Outreach

The Board considered four outreach proposals totaling \$79,898 for the spring 2020 Outreach RFP. Funds available for the Fall 2020 Outreach RFP (up for review in Spring 2021) would total approximately \$50,000. Staff are exploring options to open the Outreach RFP to previously funded Core Program awardees and/or resubmission capabilities similar to the Core Program. These considerations will be introduced at the spring 2021 Board meeting.

MOTION: Fund all outreach proposals 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1955.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

Meeting recessed at 3:29 p.m.

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Andy called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. All Board members were in attendance.

5. GSRA Working Group

Board member Doug Mecum served on the WG and presented the background and recommendations. The aim of the group was to tighten up the approach in granting awards and to increase our scientific capacity to support the mission of the NPRB. It is a great program, but it could be more focused on North Pacific science. One way is to limit funding to only U.S.-based institutions. It also recommends being more specific about the amount being granted and leveraging partnerships. The target should be funding three awards at the MS level and three at the PhD level.



Science Panel Chair, Brad Harris said many Science Panel members voiced reluctance to limit to U.S. students due to the potential for hurting international cooperation. The Science Panel also recommends that MS and PhD be held to the same scientific merit.

Advisory Panel Chair Ruth Christiansen said the Advisory Panel (AP) agreed with Science Panel recommendations and their reasoning. For the AP, the most important thing for these awards is the work getting done in our area. The AP did not want to limit unnecessarily on who could get this important work done and get their scientific careers launched in this area. The statement proposed to address the intentions of the awardee would mitigate the domestic versus international questions.

MOTION: adopt the GSRA Working Group recommendations:

The Board affirms:

- the program needs to remain at the current funding level of six awards each year to remain fiscally responsible.
- a 3:3 MS to PhD ratio for funding is appropriate.

Updates for the 2021 RFP will include:

- awards should be given only to students based at US 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.
- the Science Panel is requested to evaluate applications based on three criteria: scientific merit, student ability, relevance to NPRB mission and region of interest.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

Andy said the working group is closed out until it is needed in the future.

6. Human Dimensions Working Group

Lynn provided an overview of the Social Sciences Working Group – it was reestablished in fall 2019 and the name was changed to Human Dimensions in May 2020. The group seeks to better attract and fund Human Dimensions projects. The group met three times following the May 2020 Board meeting and developed a comprehensive list of recommendations for the Board to consider.

Board members Becca Robbins-Gisclair and Mike Miller provided an overview of the Human Dimensions Working Group (HDWG) initial priorities for the next year. The group recommends the following four actions as a first step as a minimum, with additional action to be taken by the Board as desired.

1. Training for Staff/Board/AP/SP: Provide training to the Board, Staff, SP, and AP conducted by Indigenous people/organizations to include the history of Alaska Native Peoples, the history of colonialism, decolonization training, co-production of knowledge and cultural awareness and sensitivity training.
2. Initiate a process to develop a new RFP section for next year (2022) to support Co-production of Knowledge: Work with the signatories to the letter from Tribal organizations to co-produce the RFP itself and ensure we have appropriate review procedures in place.



3. Ensure review by qualified reviewers in discipline for the SP and peer reviewers.
4. Take a CPK approach to any IERP or NPRB-initiated project.

Mike noted the groundswell of indigenous organizations moving to research. He thinks it's important that the board remain focused on sovereignty issues rather than resource issues. He also noted a debate between social science and non-social science, and we need to understand more about what co-production means to indigenous communities. Becca and Mike suggested that the considering seeking training to understand the issues better.

The board discussed

MOTION: That the Board supports the Human Dimensions Working Group's short-term actions as presented.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

Lynn explained that NPRB sent an initial response to a letter received from Kawerak, Inc., the Association of Village Council Presidents, the Aleut Community of St. Paul, the Bering Sea Elders Group, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium acknowledging the concerns expressed in the letter and noting that the Board planned to meet in September. Lynn will work with the Executive Committee and Board Members Becca and Mike to send a follow-up letter summarizing the actions the Board plans to take to address the concerns raised by these organizations and inviting additional conversation with respect to process.

7. Strategic Planning Working Group

Board member Cheryl Rosa said the group had one meeting in August. The members are Cheryl, Dee, Tara and Matt Robinson. COVID is impacting research. They looked at year-one objectives for 2020, and what needed to be continued or revised.

Kayla projected the implementation plan table.

Starting with priority 1b: adopt metrics for tracking this information going forward, this will be extended, possibly under research partnership with the HDWG. We talked about a joint meeting with HDWG in the future. Priorities 1.2 and 1.3 are also ongoing. Some are being addressed by the HDWG. Lynn reported that staff are communicating with the Council to learn what they are doing in regard to tribal communications, co-production, training, etc. Andy added that the Council will hear reports from the Council taskforce this winter.

Priorities 1.4 a and b are to be updated in the spring, and c. engagement strategy is almost complete.

Priority 2: ensure long-term financing, security and resilience is on today's agenda, in he budget overview. Cheryl said much of 2.3 and 2.4 – partnerships work was moved to 2021.



Priority 3: practice adaptive governance. Cheryl said they had a discussion on updates to the SOPPs. There's a notation on a discussion about Board best practices training. Andy referenced a decision-making article from Harvard Business Review. Lynn will locate that and distribute. Lynn mentioned the review of the conflict of interest policy this winter, as that is an element of Governance.

Cheryl said rolling submissions and evaluation protocols will be assessed in 2021. She affirmed that there are no Board decisions at this meeting, this is just a report.

8. Nominations Committee

Matt Baker noted that no replacements were required in 2020 on the Advisory Panel, but one seat was vacant on the Science Panel. This is to refill former Science Panel Chair Chris Siddon's position. NPRB received six strong nominations. The Nominations Committee reviewed all applicants and convened in July to identify and advance the top candidates. The unanimous decision was to advance to the Board three candidates with an identified ranking of priority.

According to the Nominations Committee deliberations, Gordon Kruse was a clear standout for the group. He has extensive experience in state fisheries science at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and extensive knowledge of fisheries science and quantitative models through his applied work through work as a Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Leadership and knowledge of fisheries management as a longstanding member and Chair of the Science and Statistical Committee on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council were also noted.

The two alternate candidates were also recognized as extremely strong. It was noted that the ability to recruit and solicit interest from such a high caliber of scientists was a testament to the relevance and reputation of the organization.

MOTION: Nominate Gordon Kruse to the NPRB Science Panel.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

Lynn updated the board on open Board and panel seats. The Secretary of Commerce is close on appointments for three Washington seats, and appointments for the three Alaska seats are not far behind. Once the Board seats are filled, we will revisit participation on committee and working groups.

We are set through the spring meeting for Advisory Panel and Science Panel members. Six Advisory Panel seats expire after the spring meeting and those are all eligible for reappointment.

9. Partnerships

Matt Baker reviewed NPRB approaches to partnerships, criteria for partnerships and recent discussions and recommendations provided by the NPRB Partnerships Working Group. He also provided an update on recent developments and discussions in June and September with partner institutions, including the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI), Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center (PCCRC), and Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF). OSRI has committed to joint funding in the 2021 Core Program RFP through the existing MOU. BSFRF and PCCRC have expressed signing an MOU within the



year and continuing discussions towards joint funding related to the planned IERP in the northern Bering Sea. Both also expressed a continued interest and engagement related to the annual solicitation of research priorities and an interest in establishing an MOU for Core Program funding within the year. The Board expressed support for this development.

Board members also offered new ideas related to potential opportunities related to the Blue Economy, CDQ program, and industry match. Board members also endorsed Science Panel recommendation for continued work to secure partnerships, the Advisory Panel recommendation to contact the North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation, and the request for Board and Panel members to leverage external contacts towards expanding partnership opportunities.

10. Budget Overview

Lynn discussed the budget balancing plan. She referenced a table from the Office of Natural Resources Revenue, which projects what NPRB might receive for its share of the EIRF interest in the next few years. The current rate is at the lowest point in NPRB history, but it is projected to increase steadily. Actual sequestration for 2021 came in lower than the projected 6.7%.

She discussed grant funding management: we are managing two or three grants from NOAA at any given time. The three current open grants total \$44 million. There is a 15% hard cap for administration costs. The most flexible area in the administrative category is travel for Board and staff. Most of the funding (85%) goes to our mission: funding research to outside entities. This results in less control over the spending rate and we almost always have some residual funds at the end of the granting period.

Lynn showed the operating budget and reviewed three open grants' spending. In 2021, we should be spending the second year of Grant 9 but current spending is in Grant 8 with some funds also on the final year of Grant 7. There is approximately \$1.5 million to balance to catch up to the proposed Grant 9 timeline.

Lynn introduced the budget balance plan for Board discussion and approval. It has three components:

1. COVID support funds
2. 2021 RFP Focus Section: Small Flex Grants
3. Partnerships

Jo-Ann talked about COVID-19 support funds. The total requested for this component would be \$350,000 – \$500,000. These would provide supplemental funds to existing projects. The amount would be less than 10% of the original award. There would be a one-page application and a fast turnaround. We would review requests in October, the funds would be added by December 2020, and spent by June 2022. NPRB would not have to go back to the Secretary of Commerce. This option would use funds from expiring grants.

The next proposal in the 2021 RFP Focus Section: Small Flex Grants – \$500,000. These would be new projects in any research category. These would be less than \$100,000 per project and be completed in less than 12 months. There would be a standard RFP review process.



Matt Baker introduced the concept of NPRB partnerships, not only in the context of soliciting other institutions for funding towards its mission, but also participating in cooperative funding to support initiatives developed by other institutions where the mission and objectives align. This was introduced related to a recent request from the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission request for a partnership in contributing funding towards a research cruise associated with the International Year of the Salmon. US, Canadian, and Russian research vessels have been secured to support this effort and the NPAFC is pursuing \$3M to support vessel time in the North Pacific. It was noted that areas of potential interest to NPRB were that the research focuses offshore areas of the North Pacific, within the area of NPRB research interest but where NPRB has had less investment in the past. It was noted that this type of request might compliment the NPRB approach to partnerships. The request is for \$300,000 – \$500,000.

Lynn noted that funding one or more partnerships to total \$500k would fit into the balance amount available over the next two years.

Becca Robbins-Gisclair mentioned ongoing requests from tribal groups to help fund positions, and she would like to see funds used to build relationships. Becca said there are real challenges getting coproduction into our RFP process, so she would like to see Partnership funds in this area.

MOTION: Fund COVID-19 support at \$350,000, the Focus Section on Small Flex Grants at \$500,000 (with a \$100,000 minimum), and Partnerships at \$350,000 for the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission, and \$150,000 to support co-production. There would be a \$75,000 minimum per institution.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

A new working group would be established to review COVID-19 support funds applications, including members from the Board, AP and SP. Tara, Forrest and Andy volunteered from the Board. Board members suggested that when they revisit the budget balancing this spring, they direct any unallocated funds in COVID to go to the small flex grants.

11. COVID Impacts

Jo-Ann reported that staff sent out a survey to all P.I.s with open projects. Out of 42 contacted, 27 wrote back and 96% said COVID was having a negative impact on their project.

They did a follow-up survey. Out of 42 contacted they received 26 responses. Most said they needed salary support, etc. Only three said they did not need more money to finish their project. If everyone asks for support at the upper level allowable, it will total \$600,000. All said they could spend funds by 2022.

12. Core Program

Staff introduced the process for developing the 2021 Core Program RFP. Matt introduced the process for soliciting research priorities from partner institutions and the research community at large. He



introduced several of the common themes related to understanding ecosystem processes, biological interactions, technological needs, and the stated interests of fisheries and communities, as articulated by the 11 institutions that provided detailed letters or lists of identified priorities for research. Jo-Ann introduced the five categories in the Core Program and the process for reviewing the draft RFP and Science Panel and Advisory Panel recommendations. The five categories are:

- oceanography & productivity
- fishes & invertebrates
- marine birds & mammals
- human dimensions
- interdisciplinary studies

Jo-Ann reviewed edits to the Oceanography general topics of interest and read the issues of particular interest. The new bullets are:

- Forecasting of marine ecosystem responses to changes in climate forcing on interannual to decadal timescales.
- Physical-biological coupling and transfer of energy in high flow areas or in straits, passes, shelf breaks and canyons.
- Impact of changes in grazer populations on kelp forests.
- Remote sensing of nearshore habitats and coastal hazards.

Jo-Ann then read issues of particular interest for the other categories. There were no questions or requested changes by the Board.

Jo-Ann said the Board needs to decide how much money for each category and showed a spreadsheet. They have \$4 million for next year's RFP.

MOTION: Approve the targets and caps as presented.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion failed.

MOTION: Approve proposal caps as written for 2021 and bump up oceanography by \$300,000 to \$900,000.

Action: A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was taken and the motion passed.

MOTION: Accept the RFP as drafted and release it.

Action: Motion approved without objection.

MOTION: Adjourn the NPRB Board Meeting.

Action: Motion approved without objection.

Andy adjourned the meeting at 4:14 p.m.