



**North Pacific Research Board – Fall 2023 Board Meeting Summary**  
**NPRB Conference Room – 1007 W. 3rd Avenue Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501**  
**September 19-20, 2023**

The meeting was attended by Board members: Ragnar Alstrom, Matt Alward (Vice Chair), Forrest Bowers, Shannon Carroll, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Katrina Hoffman, Tyler Janowski, Jamal Moss, Andy Mezirow (Chair), Bradley Moran, Tara Riemer, David Kennedy, Annika Saltman, Emily Shroyer, Brad Smith, Conor Sullivan, Dee Williams, and Krystyna Wolniakowski. Board member Rex Rock, Jr. was absent. The meeting was also attended by Brad Harris (Science Panel Chair) and Caitlin Yeager (Advisory Panel Chair) and was staffed by: Matthew Baker, Danielle Dickson, Lily Frey, Lynn Palensky (Executive Director), and Brendan Smith. Jennifer Williams accompanied Ragnar Alstrom for sessions open to the public.

**Call to Order/Approve Agenda**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. He welcomed new members David Kennedy (U.S. Arctic Research Commission seat) and Jamal Moss (Department of Commerce seat) and initiated a round of introductions.

Staff provided a safety briefing.

The Executive Director (ED) introduced the agenda for the meeting.

**MOTION: Approve the fall 2023 meeting agenda.**

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

**MOTION: Approve the fall 2023 meeting summary.**

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

The Science Panel (SP) Chair introduced the role and responsibilities of the SP for the benefit of new Board members and summarized the activities of the Panel at their Fall meeting.

The Advisory Panel (AP) Chair summarized the role and responsibilities of the AP and the work of the Panel at their Fall meeting.

**Executive Director Report**

After introducing new board members Jamal Moss (NOAA) and David Kennedy (USARC), Executive Director Lynn Palensky provided a report on the following:

- Decisions made by the Executive Committee since the spring 2023 Board meeting:
  - a. Adjusting the implementation timeline for the Integrated Ecosystem Research Program to allow flexibility for field work to begin in 2026,
  - b. Language for the tribal seat that the Board proposed for Congressional consideration,
  - c. Endorsement for NPRB staff to be appointed to NOAA's Ocean Research Advisory Panel,
  - d. Agreement to discuss with the Board the potential of NPRB assistance in reviewing research projects proposed under outside programs and funding sources and to seek

direction from the full Board on how best to respond, should NPRB be officially asked to assist in these types of efforts in the timeframe between Board meetings.

- Update on news related to Board member terms and staff accomplishments and participation.
- Major accomplishments, including a successful staff trip to DC to meet with our Alaska delegation, and recent signing of a MOU with the Anchorage Museum to work on a 2025 Arctic science exhibit.
- Outside engagement by staff.
- Outside meeting support requests (no new requests since the spring 2023 Board meeting).
- Budget Report:
  - a. Open grants,
  - b. Administrative funding and grant projections,
  - c. Audit results (clean audit, thanks to the work of Alaska Sea Life Center staff).

Members asked questions about the budget report, including when administrative funding will be on an upward trajectory and how the level of sequestration is determined. ED Palensky responded that FY2024 is the lowest funding year on record, but FY2025 will show a significant increase in funding (based on projections) that will help improve the funding available for administration. She also noted that sequestration is set at 5.7% and we have no control over the level or when it is applied.

### **Science Director Report**

Science Director Matt Baker provided an overview of science priorities and approaches noting a Board directive to further explore Cooperative Research with Industry, including leveraging industry insight and infrastructure to address pressing fishery management needs and to improve shared understanding. The 2019 Wakefield Symposium led by NPRB staff focused on that has led to the development of several manuscripts on [science-industry research collaboration](#) and [mechanisms for industry engagement](#), published in a [Special Issue in Frontiers in Marine Science](#) on co-creating knowledge with fishers. These manuscripts include contributions from NPRB staff, Science Panel, Advisory Panel and Board members. The update also included information on ongoing collaboration with the Council to identify research priorities and track progress in those areas.

### **Core Program**

Science Director Matt Baker provided metrics of funding in the Core Program to date and reviewed the Board's process for new Board members. The Board heard summaries of proposals ranked one Tier E (1) and six Tier 1 by the Science Panel and heard summaries of four proposals ranked Tier 2 by request.

**MOTION: Approve funding all proposals ranked Tier E and Tier 1 by the SP including proposal numbers: 2135, 2178, 2180, 2183, 2184, 2185, and 2186.**

**Action: The amended motion passed with no objections.**

**Amendment: Add proposal 2128 that OSRI is interested in co-funding.**

**Action: Amendment failed.**

The amendment failed by consensus after a discussion relating to the inability of the PIs to estimate population size in Russian territory. The SP Chair stated that this would have been a Tier 1 proposal had it discussed the potential biases that could skew the results due to lack of sampling in Russian waters. The Board members agreed.

**Amendment: Add proposal 2181 that OSRI is interested in co-funding.**

**Action: The amendment passed with no objections.**

**Amendment: Add proposal 2177.**

**Action: The amendment passed with no objections.**

A Board member noted that NPRB received no proposals in the Human Dimensions category this year. Other board members suggested that NPRB look for ways to expand its outreach to reach more people who may be interested in human dimensions research. Staff have detailed information on the number of past proposals in the Human Dimensions category and funding decisions across the past several funding cycles should the Board choose to review this in greater detail.

The Board reviewed the plan for allocating funds among the various programs the NPRB supports and a plan for decreasing funding for the Core Program in 2025 and 2026 to allow investment in the NBS IERP. Staff projects the 2027 RFP will advertise \$4.5 million. The information is included in the 2024 RFP and will be shared on the NPRB website.

The Board reviewed the draft Core Program RFP developed by staff and the Panels. Staff presented input about research priorities shared by partner institutions and individual members of the community.

One member questioned the rationale for communicating the funding targets by research category and another noted that the targets hold less meaning since the shift to rolling submissions because NPRB receives far fewer proposals. Members decided that the RFP should point to the website for past funding information and success rates.

The Board reviewed the issues of particular interest under each research category in the draft RFP and discussed:

- highlighting 'western Alaska salmon' to deter proposals on impacts of foreign hatchery salmon;
- community interest in salmon as compared to other resources (e.g., crab, walrus);
- interest in research to address the effects of marine heat waves, particularly on fishes;
- behavioral changes in killer whales and strategies to mitigate interactions with fishing vessels and their activities; OR interactions between fishing vessels and killer whales (e.g., behavioral changes) and strategies for mitigation;
- impacts of underwater noise on marine mammals, including behavior and distribution; and
- development and incorporation of long-term community-based research and/or monitoring programs for inclusion in research approaches and plans.

**MOTION: Remove funding targets for research categories in the 2024 Core RFP.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

There was much discussion by Board members on the use of funding targets in the Core RFP. They are used generally to convey a sense of the Board's priorities for that year. However, members noted that the funding decisions are not always reflective of the priorities or funding targets, but rather reflect the science and advisory panel reviews. After much discussion the Board opted to remove the targets for this RFP, and added language that states that funding strong science is the Board's priority in any category and that the Board would prioritize research that addresses the NPRB mission.

A Board member pointed out that since the shift to rolling submissions, the proposal cap has been more relevant than the funding targets. Other Board members agreed that targets should be removed if not

used in funding decisions. The Board considered omitting the funding targets in the 2024 RFP. The omission of the funding targets would be of greatest concern if the Board received a very high number of proposals, in which case they would struggle with balance among categories. The historical context for funding in categories was reviewed, with longstanding Board members noting that there was an intent to ensure funding decisions were made across all categories. There was a consensus that there is value in continued NPRB efforts to categorize research to allow NPRB to evaluate where funding is allocated and how allocations change over time.

Staff were also asked to draft language to include in the RFP that states that *the Board intends to balance supporting research across categories, will emphasize funding those proposals that are strongest scientifically and address the NPRB mission.*

**MOTION: Remove proposal caps in all research categories except flex grants in the 2024 Core RFP.**

**Action: The motion was withdrawn.**

After much discussion, the motion was withdrawn. The Board agreed that removing proposal caps would not be a good idea. The primary reason for not removing caps was that the Board felt it was more important to support funding in all categories. With no funding caps, proposers could easily apply for amounts large enough to limit funding decision for other categories. Secondly, removing caps would require additional work, time and expense in altering the proposal submission system.

Proposal caps were recommended at the following levels:

|                                        |                  |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Oceanography &amp; Productivity</b> | <b>\$750,000</b> |
| <b>Fishes &amp; Invertebrates</b>      | <b>\$750,000</b> |
| <b>Marine Birds &amp; Mammals</b>      | <b>\$750,000</b> |
| <b>Human Dimensions</b>                | <b>\$350,000</b> |
| <b>Interdisciplinary Studies</b>       | <b>\$350,000</b> |
| <b>Flex grants</b>                     | <b>\$150,000</b> |

The Board agreed unanimously.

**MOTION: Recommend the release of the 2024 Core Program RFP as amended by the Board.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

### **Communications and Outreach**

Since the outreach program has now moved to an annual deadline process, there were no proposals for review at the current meeting. A summary of the current outreach initiatives was provided, including web improvements and developments, data visualization tools, the upcoming Arctic marine science exhibit with the Anchorage Museum, brochures for the congressional delegation, and the development of strategic communications for AMSS and NPRB.

### **Graduate Student Research Awards**

- A ten-minute spotlight video from 2018 GSRA recipient Lauren Bell was shown.
- The 2024 Graduate Student RFP was included in the Board materials. No changes to the program have been proposed from the 2023 RFP. The 2024 RFP will be released in October 2024.

## **Governance**

The ED described proposed revisions to the Standard Operating Policies & Procedures (SOPPS), including:

1. Updates to NPMRI section
2. Clarifying travel reimbursement
3. Adding micro-purchase threshold requirements
4. Updated grievance procedures
5. Updated subaward compliance policy

**MOTION: Approve the revisions to the SOPPS as recommended by staff.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

The ED summarized conversations staff had with the Alaska Congressional delegation in May and presented draft changes to the NPRB enabling legislation proposed by Senator Sullivan's staff. The Chair explained that the Vice Chair, Matt Alward, will visit Washington, D.C. later this fall and could talk with the senators about this. The Chair also suggested NPRB could ask the Department of Commerce to approve the renewal of the term of the special fishing industry seat in case this would accomplish this goal without the need to wait for legislation to pass. Matt Baker noted that Denby Lloyd, former NPRB ED, made this request of the Department of Commerce (DOC) several years ago and while the request was rejected, it was determined that it was within the power of the DOC to make this decision.

**MOTION: NPRB to write a letter to the Department of Commerce to request that the special fishing industry seat be allowed to serve two consecutive terms.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

## **Nominations**

Science Director Matt Baker noted that three new Advisory Panel members had been appointed, received an orientation and been active contributors in the September meeting. Staff asked the Board to consider the re-appointment of two Science Panel members for a second term and the extension of one Science Panel member by one meeting. Staff also noted that in May 2024, four Science Panel would reach the conclusion of their second term and requested approval to recruit four new Science Panel members. Staff and the Nominations Committee also recommended that NPRB recruit two new At-large members for the AP.

**MOTION: Approve staff to advertise for two AP members to serve in At-large seats.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

Staff reminded the Board of the information that is included in the solicitation for Panel members.

**MOTION: Approve the renewal of SP members Suresh Sethi and William Sydeman for a second term.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

Matt Alward asked if NPRB could consider amending the SOPPs to allow the renewal of Panel members beyond two terms. The Board decided not to take action on this idea at this time and directed the Nominations Committee to consider it.

**MOTION: Approve the extension of the term of SP member Doug DeMaster for one year to May 2024.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

**MOTION: Approve staff to work with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to replace a representative on the SP.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

**MOTION: Approve staff to advertise for three new SP members to fill open seats for those SP members who have served two terms, incorporating the recommendations from the SP about desired areas of expertise.**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

### **Integrated Ecosystem Research Program**

Danielle Dickson introduced the Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (IERP) for new Board members and reviewed the Board's decisions to date with respect to implementing the new program that will focus on the Northern Bering Sea (NBS IERP). In the spring 2023 meeting, the Board decided the timeline for accepting and reviewing proposals, the research categories under which proposals will be solicited, and the proposal caps. The Board also committed to offering awards of up to \$10,000 to those applicants who are invited to submit a full proposal to allow them to further develop the proposal with Indigenous Co-Investigators. The Board directed staff to begin communicating this information and it was shared on the NPRB website in July 2023.

Staff provided an update on communications to welcome input and to explore opportunities for partnership/coordination with other organizations. Staff shared an internal document entitled "Efforts to Gather Input" that detailed such engagement. Staff also explained that mailers were sent to every tribe in the Bering Strait region and the Aleut Communities of St. Paul and St. George that included a letter about the NBS IERP welcoming input and five copies of USB thumb drives that contained: Arctic IERP videos; an Arctic IERP brochure summarizing significant results; and Arctic IERP final reports. Staff worked with Jennifer Hooper, Natural Resources Manager for the Association of Village Council Presidents, to share information via email with the 56 tribes in the AVCP region. Staff provided two presentations to the Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area Federal Task Force and members of the Tribal Advisory Committee in July 2023. Staff also initiated conversations with several potential partner organizations, both in Alaska and in Washington, D.C., including NOAA, NASA, USFWS, NSF, ONR, AOOS, and the Pew Lenfest Ocean Program.

The draft RFP for pre-proposals for the NBS IERP was reviewed by the Board. Staff asked the Board to discuss:

- the SP and AP recommendation to delay accepting letters of support for pre-proposals until the full proposal stage;
- the omission of the SP Tier E rank for pre-proposals;
- the AP's desire to comment on all pre-proposals;
- the language about awards to support full proposal development with Indigenous Co-Investigators;
- how much a full proposal budget will be allowed to deviate from the pre-proposal budget; and
- the Board's review criteria.

The Board confirmed that letters of support should not be allowed at the pre-proposal stage for the reasons identified by the Panels. The Board acknowledged that tribes and Alaska Native Organizations struggle with capacity and NPRB does not want to encourage scientists to inundate communities with requests for collaboration. During the Arctic IERP process, 80 pre-proposals were received, 23 were invited to submit full proposals, and five proposals were funded. It makes sense to delay letters of support until the full proposal stage when NPRB will make funds available for engagement to be done in a more meaningful way.

The Board confirmed their interest in seeing the AP comment on all pre-proposals and endorsed the SP omission of the Tier E rank for pre-proposals.

The Board reviewed and endorsed the language about awards to support full proposal development with Indigenous Co-Investigators and clarified that the funds “must” (instead of “should”) be spent by the full proposal deadline.

**MOTION: The RFP should state: “Full proposal budgets will be allowed to increase by up to 20% from the pre-proposal budget or \$250K, whichever is less.”**

**Action: The motion passed with no objections.**

The Board discussed whether it wished to stand up a separate review panel in addition to the SP and AP that would include tribal members from the NBS region to review proposals at either the pre- or full proposal stage and decided not to signal any intent to do so in the pre-proposal RFP.

**MOTION: Release the NBS IERP pre-proposal RFP.**

**Action: The motion passed.**

One objection was raised after the motion passed. No further motions or amendments were offered on this matter.

## **Partnerships**

Updates on partnerships were provided. OSRI, BSFRF, and PCCRC have expressed interest and actively participated in coordination and contribution in identifying Research Priorities in the NPRB RFP and collaborative funding in the Core Program. Both BSFRF and PCCRC have also expressed interest in coordination and collaborative funding in the Northern Bering Sea IERP. OSRI committed \$100K to collaborative funding in the Core Program in 2023. Potential new partnerships are being explored with NASA and AOOS. The 2022 [Winter High Seas Cruise Reports](https://yearofthesalmon.org/2022expedition/) and [Data Portal](https://yearofthesalmon.org/2022expedition/) are available online. More is available at <https://yearofthesalmon.org/2022expedition/>. Updates were also provided on the staff delegation to Washington DC, the Alaska Museum, the Indigenous Sentinels Network and potential NPRB service and review of priorities and proposed research related to potential emergency funds and disaster relief funds.

The discussion of NPRB assisting with disaster relief funds focused on staff capacity and the opportunity to offset the limitations of the administrative cap on EIRF funds. While there has been no formal request made to NPRB at the time of the Board meeting, the ADFG representative noted that PSMFC or ADFG handled previous reviews of proposals for disaster relief funds dedicated to research. ADFG is still developing the spend plan for salmon and crab, but staff thought it would be worthwhile to develop a process, should NPRB be asked to assist. Board members generally agreed that this was appropriate, so

long as it can pay for itself, and be of some financial benefit for NPRB, especially in the administrative funding area.

The Board and panel members also agreed that if we provide assistance, we should not stray far from our traditional review process or overburden our science and advisory panels. The panel chairs noted that 3 key areas where they could contribute: 1) frequency – disasters are likely to come more frequently; 2) timeliness – there is a need for research that is timely when responding to disasters; and 3) rigor, providing feedback to scientists awarded funds. One board member asked about providing compensation to the SP members for the extra workload. Staff noted that if it was necessary to compensate members (based on workload), a process would be developed to allow for that and would distinguish the process as different and separate than review of proposals funded under the EIRF.

Board members agreed that Board and staff should assess if NPRB is the right institution to assist case by case based on the program focus and geography.

**MOTION: If NPRB has the capacity, the ExCom should be tasked with making the decision.**

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

Caitlin (AP Chair) said some AP members are willing to volunteer to serve in this capacity but suggested that this be optional for AP members. She expressed the hope that money that may come to NPRB in the form of indirect for administration not only covers costs of administration but increases funds available to the NPRB.

#### **Other Matters**

Meeting schedule for 2024:

- AMSS Jan. 29-Feb. 2
- April 23-25, 2024
- September 17-19, 2024

**MOTION: Approve the 2024 meeting dates proposed by staff.**

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

Motion to adjourn 3:02 pm.

Motion passed with no objections.