The Advisory Panel (AP) held a virtual meeting September 14-15, 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 travel restrictions and health concerns, the meeting was held over Zoom. The meeting was attended by panel members: Ruth Christiansen (Chair), Caitlin Yeager (Vice Chair), Reid Brewer, Gary Freitag, Dave Gaudet, Melissa Good, Nicole Kanayurak, Mitch Kilborn, and Harley Sundown. Melissa Good was absent on September 15.

Excused: Vera Metcalf

Attending staff: Matthew Baker, Danielle Dickson, Jo-Ann Mellish, Lynn Palensky (Executive Director), Brendan Smith and Kayla Wagenfehr.

Call to Order/Approve Agenda

The AP Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Staff welcomed panelists, thanked them for their continued patience with the virtual format, and invited all meeting participants to introduce themselves.

An overview of the meeting agenda was provided. Staff noted that the Spring 2021 meeting is likely to require a third day because an increased workload is expected, including the review of proposals for the Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (IERP) in addition to the Core Program, Outreach Program, and Graduate Student Research Awards.

**MOTION: Approve the spring 2021 meeting summary.**
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

**MOTION: Approve the fall 2021 meeting agenda.**
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Core Program

Jo-Ann Mellish, the Senior Program Manager, indicated that the focus of this agenda item was to review the new proposals received in response to the 2021 RFP and to review the draft 2022 RFP.

Staff provided a description of the proposal review process, including the peer and Science Panel (SP) review process that occurs prior to review by the AP.

The AP reviewed 12 proposals, ranked by the SP as follows: Tier E (1), Tier 1 (6), and Tier 2 (5). Tier 3 (2) proposals are not eligible for funding and were not discussed. AP members championed five proposals for discussion. Final AP endorsement was decided by consensus and five proposals (2022, 2029, 1977, 2026, and 2024) were awarded one AP star and zero were awarded two stars.

Matthew Baker presented a review of approaches used to solicit annual research priorities for the Core Program. Approaches included individual online submissions, outreach through the AP, and direct solicitation of research priorities from partner institutions. A summary of research priorities from 10 partner institutions was provided with highlights including impacts of climate change on system production and species life history and distribution, development and application of new technologies,
indicators for ecosystems and stock assessment, and methods for integrating Indigenous, local, and scientific researchers.

The AP reviewed the draft 2022 Core Program RFP, paying close attention to the Issues of Particular Interest under each research category that were revised by the SP. The AP also reviewed the General Interest topics under the Fishes and Invertebrates category that were up for revision this year and amended slightly by the SP. The AP recommended edits that will be carried forward to the Board for consideration.

Communications & Outreach
Brendan Smith, Communications and Outreach Director (COD), presented an overview of the new outreach proposals and reminded the AP of the review criteria. The AP reviewed the seven outreach proposals and flagged 7 of 7 proposals for funding consideration by consensus.

The panel members were asked to evaluate several processes surrounding the Outreach RFP in advance of the 2022 release. For example, the panel was asked if additional fields or language should be included to foster greater co-production or Indigenous knowledge. The consensus of the Panel was that the current language in the RFP is sufficient, and proposals are not lacking as far as inclusivity. The AP also discussed whether the RFP should limit the number of proposals that can be submitted, either in association with a Core Program project, or by an institution. The AP voiced the preference that the RFP not impose limits on how many proposals may be submitted by any one entity or organization, and allow the review process to determine the outcome.

The Arctic Marine Science Exhibit was described for the panel. The recreation of the R/V Sikuliaq as a museum exhibit at the Anchorage Museum is in development. It will include mobile-ready extensions, co-production with an Alaska Native partner, and distance-capable K-12 curriculum.

Integrated Ecosystem Research Program
Senior Program Manager Danielle Dickson and Science Director Matthew Baker provided an update on the Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program which will be wrapping up at the end of September. A Special Issue of Deep-Sea Research II including 14 manuscripts was published in 2020 and manuscripts are being accepted for the second volume through January 31, 2022. Final reports are expected by the end of November and outlines have been provided to NPRB that include abstracts of each science chapter.

The Board has committed to a future IERP that will continue integrated research in the Bering and Chukchi Seas with a focus on the Northern Bering Sea (NBS). The AP reviewed a draft RFP presented by staff that will provide an opportunity for funding a synthesis for the Arctic IERP (backward looking) and an assessment for the NBS IERP (forward looking), neither of which will include new data collection. Staff anticipate releasing the RFP in early October pending Board approval, with a deadline of December 15, 2021. Staff intend to hold an informational teleconference after the release of the RFP.

The RFP will include five research categories:
- Synthesis – General
- Synthesis - Modeling
- Assessment – Science to synthesize existing knowledge/articulate important research questions
Assessment – identification of research needs (commercial fisheries)
Assessment – identification of research needs (marine species of subsistence importance)

An individual or team of collaborators may submit multiple proposals under any, or all, of the five categories.

The AP reviewed the draft RFP for the IERP Synthesis/Assessment, paying close attention to the revised AP review criteria and engagement strategy language. The AP supported the RFP as presented by staff and endorsed the revision to the AP review criteria that states:

“The Advisory Panel will review Tier E, 1 and 2 proposals for special stakeholder, public interest, or community and other societal relevance. Proposals will be endorsed by the Advisory Panel to highlight those that present a strong engagement strategy, demonstrate excellence in addressing stakeholder needs relevant to the NPRB mission (i.e., fisheries management or ecosystem information needs), and/or were developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders, Alaska Native Tribes, or Tribal Organizations.”

Human Dimensions Working Group updates
Lynn Palensky, Executive Director, provided an update on the activities of the Human Dimensions Working Group. The group convened once over the summer to discuss IERP RFP draft language, the Arctic Marine Science Exhibit and training opportunities for Panels, Board and Staff. NPRB is considering offering training by the First Alaskans Institute to staff, Panel members, and the Board and clarified that participation by AP members would be optional.

It was also noted that the contract to work with the Indigenous Sentinels Network that staff discussed during the Spring meeting is almost in place. This contract is funded using $150,000 committed to co-production of knowledge efforts by the Board in the fall of 2020.

Internal Systems
Matthew Baker provided a summary of updates to the support systems provided by RDI (proposal submission and review) and Axiom Data Science (data archiving and Research Workspace).

Recent developments with RDI include work to better archive proposal and project information, including an automated annual output of past funding investments and enhanced capabilities to track research priorities and funded research. A Unified Proposal View (UPV) overlay portal has been in development by RDI to allow staff a more efficient avenue for accessing historical proposal and project information. This is linked to a database that will allow staff to query the information for retrospective analyses of funding effort. NPRB staff have also worked with RDI programmers to ensure a thorough systems review of the security and efficiencies of NPRB’s online presence This included revisions to service configuration, enhancements to database archival, increased monitoring and approaches to cost management. RDI is also working with staff to create a new proposal and review system to support the IERP program, including the Arctic Synthesis and Northern Bering Sea Assessment.

Axiom Data Science has been focused on the development of a data discovery portal for the Arctic IERP, as well as ongoing metadata review for the Core program. The data portal is intended to ensure that all applicants to the Arctic IERP synthesis and NBS assessment have access to the completed work and
associated program data and metadata. This information will also be archived in the national repository, DataOne.

Partnerships
Matthew Baker provided a summary of continued progress with partner institutions and discussions from the partnerships working group.

In general, NPRB may participate in partnerships through an individual institutional MOU or a consortium approach. NPRB has an ongoing partnership with the Oil Spill Recovery Institute and a potential new partnership with the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center (PCCRC). In their August 2021 Board Meeting, the PCCRC committed to an MOU for collaborative research and will initiate cooperative research with NPRB in January 2022. Also in August, BSFRF committed $10,000 to moving forward in partnership and expects to expand on this amount in future years. Additional conversations are underway with the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) and Kawerak.

Several new Board members have joined the partnerships working group. Recent discussions have focused on potential avenues for partnerships, reviewed developments in collaborative research opportunities, and considered recent Board investments in the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission International Year of the Salmon initiative and the Anchorage Museum exhibit project.

The AP acknowledged the impressive progress of staff and the Partnerships Working Group to secure new partnerships with BSFRF and PCCRC.

SOPPs Updates on Panels
Matthew Baker introduced the intent to review the NPRB’s standard operating procedures or Statement of Practices and Procedures on a regular basis to ensure written procedures reflect current practices and to ensure that practices and procedures remain relevant and instructive.

The AP reviewed and endorsed the following language that addresses the role of the AP:

4. Conduct, attendance, and expectations (September 2021)
   Panel members are expected to participate in the two primary proposal review meetings (spring and fall) unless extenuating circumstances arise. The Board will consider two or more missed Panel meetings when evaluating reappointments. Proposals reviewed by the panel in advance of a Board decision are confidential and members are expected to adhere to strict confidentiality until the Secretary of Commerce makes final funding decisions. Issues or conflicts that arise during meetings or between meetings should be voiced to the Advisory Panel Chair or to the NPRB Executive Director. All Advisory Panel members are encouraged to contribute to discussion and provide perspectives on proposals. The exception for this is where an Advisory Panel member has a stated (recusal-level) Conflict of Interest; where that occurs, no commentary or discussion is allowed. Following discussion and deliberation on the content of proposals and the designation of a ranking, Advisory Panel recommendations to the Board are final. Advisory Panel recommendations are communicated to the Board by the Panel Chair or Vice Chair. Discussions or opinions on the Advisory Panel reviews or other confidential work should be limited to the meeting and not discussed outside of the Panel or Board meeting.
Other Matters

Core Program AP Review Criteria
The AP discussed the revised review criteria that were proposed and endorsed during the IERP agenda item and recommended applying similar criteria to the Core Program in the future. Currently, the AP’s procedures dictate that when the AP reviews Core Program proposals, the initial review is focused on the Engagement Strategy section of the proposal. If a proposal’s engagement strategy merits AP recognition, the AP may then discuss if the proposal merits a second star based on relevance beyond engagement and community importance. The proposed change would focus initial AP review on the following: stakeholder or public interest, community and other societal relevance, timeliness, a strong engagement strategy, and added value. All proposals that are awarded one star during the first round of review by the AP would then be eligible to receive a second star to identify proposals with an outstanding engagement strategy. The AP agreed that this process would be better aligned with how the AP considers Core Program proposals in practice and would better draw on the extensive expertise of AP members. The AP Chair will present the suggested change to the Board for consideration.

Meeting Dates
The AP confirmed the dates of their Spring 2022 meeting as April 19-21, 2022 and the Fall 2022 meeting as September 13-15, 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 am.