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North Pacific Research Board  
Meeting Summary  
Fall Science Panel  
August 24-25, 2021

The Science Panel held a virtual meeting August 24-25, 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: Milo Adkison, Courtney Carothers, Doug DeMaster, Colleen Duncan, Brad Harris (Chair), David Hill, Liza Mack, Josep Planas, 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.

**Call to Order/Approve Agenda**

Chair Brad Harris called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Lynn Palensky, Executive Director, and Matthew Baker, Science Director, welcomed everyone followed by a brief round of introductions from all Panelists and Staff. There were no new members on the Panel. Vice Chair Diana Stram chaired the meeting on the second afternoon.

Kayla Wagenfehr reviewed the virtual meeting protocol.

**MOTION: Approve the spring 2021 meeting summary.**

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

Matthew Baker reviewed the agenda for the meeting. The meeting was scheduled to take place over two days in morning (9:00 – 12:00 pm) and afternoon time blocks (1:00 – 4:30 pm). The focus of the meeting included review of research priorities, proposal review, development of the Core, IERP, and Outreach RFPs, and review of revisions to the SOPPs and progress in partnerships.

**MOTION: Approve the fall 2021 meeting agenda.**

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

Conflict of interest declarations for proposal review were received from all the members prior to the meeting. The Panel was reminded of the process for discussing proposals and assigning a tier ranking by consensus. Staff reiterated that all panel members are welcome to speak to any proposal and the details of the conversation are to remain confidential.

**Core Program**

Jo-Ann Mellish, the Senior Program Manager, indicated that the focus of this time block was to review the fourteen new proposals for the 2021 RFP, discuss potential modifications to the proposal review process, and to edit the draft 2022 RFP.

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 with room for improvement. Tier 1 proposals are fundable and highly recommended to the Board. Tier E is the highest recommendation of the Panel, and proposals must meet additional requirements of timeliness,



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responsiveness and robustness to qualify. There was sufficient time allocated to discuss all 14 proposals under consideration. The Panel reviewed one Tier E candidate over the lunch break.

Following presentation by the assigned reviewers and discussion with the full panel, the final distribution of recommendations was Tier E (1), Tier 1 (6), Tier 2 (5) and Tier 3 (2).

The Panel revisited the spring discussion on potential options for updating the review package returned to proposers. After a robust discussion, recommendations were to:

- Include specific proposal weaknesses and strengths section to peer review templates
- Increase the word limit on the Science Panel Summary sections of reviewer summary, proposal weaknesses and proposal strengths from 100 words to 150 words each. This was intended to allow for more feedback on any disparity in reviews and provide space for recommendations to proposers on improvements.

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 Panel self-selected into four working groups to review and edit the 2022 RFP draft: Oceanography & Productivity, Fishes & Invertebrates, Marine Birds & Mammals and Human Dimensions. The groups were allocated 45 minutes to edit the Issues of Particular Interest section, as drafted by Staff from online suggestions, for their respective categories. The Fishes & Invertebrates group was also tasked with reviewing the General Interest topics. Marine Birds & Mammals General Interest topics will be updated with the 2023 RFP. The Panel requested assignments for RFP review be provided in advance of the meeting, a concise summary of outside institutional priorities, and more time for breakouts in future meetings.

#### 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. NRPB staff have also worked with RDI programmers to ensure a thorough systems review of the security and efficiencies of NRPB'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.



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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 Panel had interest in defining/understanding the criteria for partnerships. Staff provided an overview and directed interested panelists to the NPRB website partnerships page for more details. While not a requirement of our grants, the Panel noted that cost-sharing (in-kind and additional funding) may be considered as a partnership. They expressed interest in having the ability to query other support in proposals as metric for this type of partnership.

#### Communications & Outreach

Brendan Smith, Communications and Outreach Director (COD) presented an overview of the new proposals and upcoming outreach RFP. A subgroup of panel members was asked to provide reviews on the 7 Outreach proposals under consideration. After discussion with the entire panel, 5 of 7 proposals were flagged for funding consideration by the Board. The Science Panel and the COD noted that the two proposals not flagged for funding consideration would benefit from a resubmission.

**MOTION: Flag proposals 2035 (Core 2106), 2036 (Core 2102), 2037 (Core 2101), 2038 (Core 2011), 2040 (Core 2011) for funding consideration.**

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

The panel members were asked to evaluate several processes surrounding the Outreach RFP in advance of the 2022 release. The panel was asked if additional fields or language should be included to foster greater co-production or Indigenous knowledge. There was support for a field or specific space within the proposal for this information without making it a requirement. As an alternative, it was suggested



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that language in the RFP could emphasize an interest in proposals with this component. The Panel expressed mixed feedback on letters of support for proposals including coastal communities. A more specific letter of commitment could be requested, and it could be on a project specific basis. The Panel did not see the need to change the current proposal review process, although assignments in advance of the meeting would be appreciated.

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. The members expressed support for this endeavor and suggested some potential partners.

#### 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. The First Alaskans Institute was identified as a leader in the area and the panel gave very positive feedback on any training option provided by this entity as a worthwhile investment. It is possible that one or both trainings offered by FAI, and hosted by NPRB, could be available to interested panel members. A handful expressed interested in attending if that opportunity was offered.

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

#### SOPPs Updates on Panels

Matthew Baker and Lynn Palensky introduced the intent to review the NPRB's Standard Operating Procedures on a regular basis to ensure written procedures reflect current practices and to ensure that practices and procedures remain relevant and instructive. Language was added to the SOPPs, specific to the Science Panel as part of an overall effort to update the document.

This includes the following draft language:

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 Science Panel Chair or to the NPRB Executive Director. Panel members are selected based on scientific expertise and general knowledge relevant to the NPRB mission. While deference is given to the lead and secondary Science Panel member in any review, all Science Panel members are encouraged to contribute to discussion and provide perspectives on proposals. The exception to this is where a Science Panel member has a stated 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 Science Panel ranking, Science Panel recommendations to the Board are final. Science Panel recommendations are communicated to the Board by the Science Panel Chair



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and/or Science Panel Vice Chair/s. Discussions or opinions on the Science Panel reviews or other confidential work should be limited to the meeting and not discussed outside of the Panel or Board meeting.

There was general agreement from the panel that this language was appropriate and relevant as a reference document for both incoming members and staff/Chairs. It was suggested that the last sentence could be enhanced by adding information on what individual Panelists should do if contacted by PIs for information (e.g., redirect to NPRB staff).

#### 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 a review related to a second Special Issue with 24 anticipated manuscripts will be initiated in October 2021. Reporting is expected by the end of November. The next IERP will be centered in the northern Bering Sea. The synthesis of the Arctic IERP (backward looking) and the assessment for the NBS IERP (forward looking), will not include new data collection. Staff anticipate an RFP including the synthesis and assessment to be released 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 panel agreed that inclusion of the Science Panel evaluation criteria in the RFP was appropriate.

There are several confirmed and potential partners lined up for this program. The North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies Program has committed to partnership at the synthesis phase. The BOEM FY22 Studies Plan includes a \$250K profile for NPRB partnership on the Arctic IERP synthesis. Both the Office of Naval Research Marine Mammals & Biology Program and NOAA OAR Arctic Research Program may review proposals for direct support.

#### Other Matters

The spring meeting will be March 29-31, 2022. There has not yet been a final decision on whether the spring 2022 meeting will be in person, virtual or a hybrid. The fall meeting will be August 23-25, 2022.

#### **Motion: Adjourn meeting.**

**No objection.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.