The North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) met in the NPRB offices September 20-22, 2022 in Anchorage, AK. The meeting was attended by Board members: Andy Mezirow (Chair), Matthew Alward (Vice Chair), Tara Riemer, Shannon Carroll, Cheryl Rosa, Kristie Balovich (attending for Doug Mecum), Brad Moran, Becca Robbins Gisclair, Annika Saltman, Katrina Hoffman, Dee Williams, Conor Sullivan, Forrest Bowers, Krystyna Wolniakowski, and Emily Shroyer. Tyler Janowski joined the meeting remotely on September 20 and in person on September 22. Ragnar Alstrom and Brad Smith were excused for the entire meeting. Rex Rock, Jr. was absent.

The Advisory Panel (AP) Chair Ruth Christiansen and Vice Chair Caitlin Yeager joined the meeting remotely. The Science Panel chair was excused from the meeting.

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

Call to Order/Approve Agenda
Chair Andy Mezirow called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM and welcomed everyone. Lynn Palensky, Executive Director, provided an overview of the flow and format of the three-day agenda. The Chair initiated a round of introductions. Staff provided an overview of the safety and meeting protocols for the meeting.

MOTION: Approve the fall 2022 meeting agenda.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Approve the spring 2022 meeting summary.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The Science Director provided a summary of the fall 2022 SP meeting. The SP Chair was unable to participate in the Board meeting. The AP Chair and Vice Chair provided a summary of the fall 2022 AP meeting.

Executive Director’s Report
Lynn Palensky reported that the language of the MOU for the North Pacific Marine Research Institute (NPMRI) has been updated and will be routed through the Department of Commerce for signature.

NPRB staff participated in meetings with a variety of entities in recent months, including: the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC); Senator Sullivan’s office; Sitka Sound Science Center; 75th Anniversary of the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory; and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Board Chair noted that it was useful for NPRB staff to give a presentation to the NPFMC and suggested that occur on an annual basis, perhaps at one of the spring meetings typically hosted in Sitka and Anchorage.
Staff participated in training with the First Alaskans Institute in June and the Board participated in the same training on September 21.

The Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS) will be hosted in Anchorage January 23-27, 2023 and will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the symposium. A Founders Group was established this year that includes representatives of NPRB, BOEM, NOAA, AOOS, and EVOSTC.

A budget overview was provided. The NPRB budget is at the lowest point in the history of the organization and rising interest rates are projected to result in budget increases in the future. NPRB is spending at a maximum level for administration and may need to consider asking Congress for an increase to the cap on administrative spending.

A new five-year lease was signed for the NPRB office space and the rates will remain level. The NOAA Office of Coast Management will have one office for staff in Suite 100. AOOS and Alaska Sea Grant will continue to share space with NPRB.

Science Director’s Report
Matt Baker pointed board members to the Foundational Years document that states the mission of NPRB and further states:

“The work of the NPRB will be conducted through science planning, prioritization of pressing fishery management and ecosystem information needs, coordination and cooperation among research programs, competitive selection of research projects, enhanced information availability, cooperation with other entities conducting research and management in the North Pacific, and public involvement. The Science Plan update published in 2018 also serves as a useful reference and describes NPRB’s programs and their implementation.”

The Board requested clarification on how NPRB staff builds connections among funded projects. Staff explained that this is done and occurs often with respect to identifying synergies among Core Program projects and the Integrated Ecosystem Research Program and Long-Term Monitoring Program. In-person conferences like AMSS and the Ocean Sciences meeting, for example, provide useful venues for informally introducing PIs and suggesting that they might identify synergies among their respective work.

The approaches to research that NPRB encourages were highlighted, including cooperative research with industry and community involvement.

Core Program
Jo-Ann Mellish noted that the focus of the discussion would be on funding decisions for the proposals under consideration for the second and final installment of the 2022 RFP. A brief history of the shift from a deadline-driven Request for Proposals (RFP) to a rolling submissions process was provided as well as a summary of the review process. Discussion included the increased amount of time now available for discussion of each proposal, and how no hard deadline and a lower RFP amount may impact proposal submission rates. The Board expressed interest in having Staff continue to monitor metrics, including potential shifts in proposal quality and institution type. Staff noted that the program will drop out for
one year to accommodate the startup of the next IERP which would be an ideal time to consider any modifications to the current process.

The Board considered proposals ranked Tier 1 (4) and Tier 2 (5) by the SP. Five of the proposals were awarded stars by the AP. The Board heard summaries of all proposals ranked Tier 1 during the fall meeting cycle and heard summaries of the two Tier 1 proposals held during the spring meeting cycle. The Board also heard summaries of three Tier 2 proposals (2105, 2108, 2073) by request.

**MOTION:** Fund all Tier 1 proposals (2054, 2055, 2059, 2060, 2104, and 2107).

**Amendment:** Add proposal 2105 to the slate.

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

**MOTION:** Fund proposals 2054, 2055, 2059, 2060, 2104, 2105, and 2107.

**Action:** Motion passed, as amended with no objections, by roll call vote.

The Board reviewed the draft 2023 Core Program Request for Proposals (RFP). Staff presented the input NPRB received about the research priorities of institutional partners. Staff recommended retaining the small flex grants category and noted the Science Panel will resume drafting of Focus Sections in the spring of 2023 for consideration in the 2024 RFP. The Board discussed the funding level of the RFP and whether a higher published amount might attract more proposals. Staff indicated that the published RFP total is based on the strategic plan and often additional funds are available at the time of funding decisions. Future RFPs could be adjusted if the interest rates continue to increase.

**MOTION:** Approve the issues of particular interest in the 2023 Core Program RFP.

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

The Board discussed the pros and cons of removing category targets and individual proposal caps. Information on the average proposal funded under each category is available on the NPRB website for proposers who are interested. The Board decided to lift the individual proposal cap to be the same as the category target, except for Flex Grants (cap raised from $100,000 to $150,000).

**MOTION:** Set 2023 Core Program RFP category targets as follows: Oceanography & Productivity $750,000; Fishes & Invertebrates $1,000,000; Marine Birds and Mammals $750,000; Human Dimensions $350,000; Interdisciplinary Studies $350,000; Flex grants $300,000. The proposal cap is the category target except for Flex Grants which will be capped at $150,000 each.

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

**Long-Term Monitoring**

Danielle Dickson provided an update on the three projects currently funded under the Long-Term Monitoring (LTM) program: the Continuous Plankton Recorder (CPR), Chukchi Ecosystem Observatory (CEO), and Seward Line. These projects were initially funded in 2014 and funding was renewed for a second five-year cycle in 2019. Each project provided a pre-recorded summary and a written interim
report that the Board reviewed. The Board considered renewal of these projects for a third five-year cycle.

A board member asked staff to explain how the related Core program proposal for the CPR was different from the LTM CPR project and if the weaknesses of the Core proposal review from the SP apply here. Staff explained that the Core proposal included additional elements beyond the scope of the existing LTM project and the criticisms of the reviewers do not apply to the LTM project. Board members also asked about the extent of the geography, the anthropogenic contaminants collaborators are finding, and the fraction of funding provided by NPRB.

It was noted that the CEO project is oceanography work and that this project essentially increases NPRB’s work in the Core oceanography category. A board member asked how the cost of inflation has been accounted for during a five-year cycle? Staff responded that there have been no cost-of-living allowances. The only increase in funding that has been approved for the LTM projects was a one-time supplement of up to 10% of the annual project cost during the COVID pandemic.

Under the current structure, projects that perform well are eligible for continued support. Recognizing that the NPRB budget is constrained, the Board discussed how to consider support for new long-term monitoring projects.

**MOTION:** Renew funding for the three current projects for another five-year cycle with a 10% budget increase.

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

**MOTION:** Task the staff to prepare a plan with options for the next cycle that might allow for new proposals for an additional project. Staff should present these options during the Fall 2023 meeting.

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

**Integrated Ecosystem Research Program**

**Arctic IERP Update**

Staff provided an update on several outreach products under development related to the Arctic IERP that are outlined in the meeting materials, including a brochure, videos, fact sheets, Arctic lesson plans and a museum exhibit. The final data and metadata are archived in DataONE and are accessible via a dedicated portal developed by Axiom Data Science. The second special issue in *Deep-Sea Research II* is in production and papers have been published in several other journals as well. A board member asked when the second special issue will be released, and staff explained that articles are published online individually as they are accepted, and the complete volume is expected in early 2023.

Staff shared a report prepared for BOEM, a funding partner on the Arctic IERP, that describes the active role NPRB played in administering the Arctic IERP. The document could serve as a resource for other potential funding partners on future IERPs. It details, for example, hosting logistics meetings prior to each field season, hosting annual in-person Principal Investigator meetings and monthly virtual meetings, coordinating communications and outreach including hub meetings in the Bering Strait, Northwest Arctic, and North Slope regions of Alaska, and establishing a contingency fund. A board
member asked to be reminded about how contingency funds were applied. Staff explained that the contingency fund for the Arctic IERP was used to: fund gap projects to fill in critical areas of the science following the kickoff meeting; pay 50% of the cost to retrofit the vessel chartered by NOAA for the Arctic IES surveys; pay 50% of the cost of recovering a mooring for the ASGARD project; and pay 50% of the cost of untangling the propeller of the NOAA charter vessel.

**IERP Synthesis/Assessment Update**

Staff shared with the Board that the two synthesis projects funded in Spring 2022 are interested in coordinating and NPRB has organized regular meetings to facilitate interaction among the PIs. Program Officers of the NOAA OAR Arctic Research Program, a funding partner on the synthesis, will participate in these meetings.

**Next Steps to Address Assessment for NBS IERP**

Staff described plans to reach out to a variety of tribes, tribal organizations, industry groups, agencies, and others to seek input about research priorities for the future IERP that will continue integrated research in the Bering and Chukchi Seas, centered in the Northern Bering Sea. Staff welcomed input from the Board and help in making initial contact with some entities with whom board members have relationships.

A board member asked about the anticipated timeline for hosting hub meetings to seek input for the Northern Bering Sea IERP. Staff explained that the earliest this would occur would be late fall 2022-winter 2023 and noted that this will depend on the interest and capacity of people in the region, especially given the recent storm that has damaged infrastructure. Staff will begin with individual conversations with groups like Kawerak, for example, in the interim. NPRB contracted with Kawerak to host hub meetings for the Arctic IERP, however, their staff have limited capacity and have declined to do this work again recently. A board member suggested that Alaska Sea Grant may be interested in contracting with NPRB to do this work.

A board member noted that the Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area has been reinvigorated under the Biden Administration with a federal task force paired with a tribal council. The federal task force is co-chaired by NOAA and DOI and will identify a method of interaction that is pre-arranged and more direct in getting community feedback on priorities in that area. Staff asked for help to get an invitation to those meetings or to contact members of the task force.

**Communication & Outreach**

The Board considered two outreach proposals for funding. One of the proposals did not receive endorsement by any of the three review bodies (Communications & Outreach Director, SP, AP).

**MOTION:** Fund outreach proposal 2115.

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

Staff explained that they are considering one decision point for Outreach Program proposals per year with a hard deadline for proposal submission in similar manner as the Graduate Student Research Awards Program.
During the AP meeting, it was noted that the process for reviewing Outreach proposals and the requirement that one of the three review bodies (COD, SP, AP) flags a proposal for funding puts the AP in an awkward position as the last body to review a proposal. Sometimes the AP discusses flagging a proposal that the Panel does not endorse in its current form because it would allow a resubmission. The AP suggested that staff and/or the Board should discuss an alternative review process that would allow the Panel(s) to communicate the desire to see a proposal rewritten and resubmitted.

The Board directed staff to develop recommendations for a revised review process for outreach proposals that would occur on an annual basis and provide a mechanism for the review bodies to encourage the opportunity for applicants to rewrite and resubmit a proposal without requiring endorsement by one of the review bodies.

The new NPRB website was previewed, and the Board was impressed. The Board Chair appreciated the inclusion of the lists of Science and Advisory Panel members and suggested the addition of photos of each Panel. A board member noted that the University must now provide all content (e.g., brochures) in a format that allows them to be accessible to visually impaired users. The flipping book version of the Arctic IERP brochure would not be allowed on the University website. Brendan was not sure how much it would cost to improve the accessibility of NPRB’s resources. Another Board member was impressed by the project search tool that includes the ability to download a spreadsheet of funded projects.

An update was provided on Arctic IERP outreach activities. NPRB contracted with the Arctic Research Consortium of the U.S. (ARCUS) to update Arctic science K-12 lesson plans and develop an Alaska/Arctic Science Education Network.

Staff previewed one of five Arctic IERP videos that are in production (the video focused on community engagement). The Board was impressed by the video and the message it conveyed. The Board Chair asked if the Communities video could be shown during a meeting of the NPFMC at their December meeting. Brendan explained that staff can share the video after NPRB receives feedback from interviewees Opik Ahkinga, Billy Adams, and Harmony Wayner. The Chair also noted that two members of each fishery management council nationally will participate in an ecosystem-based fishery management training in Colorado, and he felt it would be valuable to show the video there as well.

Staff provided an update on recent developments with the Anchorage Museum. The Museum has indicated it will verbally match funds provided by NPRB (estimated at $120K). Staff are in conversation with the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management about partnership to co-produce the exhibit. The exhibit is anticipated to be on display beginning in 2025.

Nominations
Matt Baker explained that the Board will review the nominations for five open seats on the SP during this meeting. The Board will also need to announce a call for nominations for two open seats on the AP representing the Arctic and Bering Sea regions.

The announcement of a call for nominations for the SP communicated the need for expertise in the following areas: marine fish and/or invertebrate ecology; stock assessment and fisheries management;
salmon life history and ecology; quantitative ecology; climate and earth system models; genetics; and physiology. Following the announcement of the call for nominations, an oceanographer stepped down from the SP. The SP emphasized the desire for panelists to originate from outside the region to reduce recusals, have broad expertise, and have experience in co-production of science with Indigenous communities.

The Nominations Committee recommended the Board should fill all five open seats on the SP from the current pool of applicants. The Committee also recommended the Board consider the range of expertise when selecting Panel members.

**MOTION:** Appoint Brian Beckman, Richard Brodeur, Wesley Larson, Richard Merrick, and Chris Siddon to the SP.

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

The maker of the motion explained that he selected individuals with expertise in the widest range of disciplines.

The Board directed staff to announce a call for nominations for AP seats representing the Arctic and Bering Sea. The call for AP nominations should include the preference for nominees who live in the region. The Board encouraged NPRB to reach out to groups that represent the region for guidance on how to spread the solicitation.

Staff noted that both Nicole Kanayurak (Wojciechowski) and Vera Metcalf term out at the end of September and were interested in reappointment for another term on the AP.

**MOTION:** Reappoint Nicole Kanayurak (Wojciechowski) and Vera Metcalf to another term on the AP.

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

**Partnerships**

Matthew Baker provided an overview of our current MOU partners, including the Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI), Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF), and Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center (PCCRC). The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) is also considering partnership with NPRB. The panel was also informed of BSFRF interest in collaborative funding on proposals 2105 and 2106 and PCCRC interest collaborative funding on proposal 2059.

A brief update was also provided on NPRB’s engagement with the Indigenous Sentinels Network and participation in the International Year of the Salmon efforts and contributions to informing the developing Basin-scale to Coastal Impacts initiative in partnership with the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission and PICES.

**Human Dimensions**

Becca Robbins Gisclair, Chair of the Human Dimensions Working Group, provided an update on the conversations of the working group and related staff activities. Staff participated in governance training by the First Alaskans Institute this summer, the same training the Board received on September 21.
The Indigenous Sentinels Network was awarded $150,000 to facilitate conversations with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to discuss expansion into the northern Bering Sea region in preparation for the next IERP. Staff shared an update on the progress of that project.

There is continued discussion of a separate RFP development, but the working group recognizes that this is a larger endeavor that will take significant effort and funding.

The Board discussed means of implementing ideas that arose from conversations initiated during the training with the First Alaskans Institute. The Board Chair asked the Board if there is consensus to direct the ED to begin the discussion about creating a Board seat that would be insulated from the politics of the day.

The Board directed staff to provide a mechanism to collect individual Board input on strategic goals, and outreach approaches related to co-production, and engagement of Alaska Native communities to achieve those goals. A board member developed an initial diagram that emphasized these broad categories. Input received will be reviewed by the HDWG and will be discussed at the Spring 2023 Board meeting.

Other Matters
Staff provided a reminder that the Alaska Marine Science Symposium will be hosted in person in Anchorage January 23-27, 2023, and that Board members are encouraged to attend. Abstract submission is open through October 21.

The Board wishes to honor outgoing Board member Doug Mecum. Doug is retiring on December 31, 2022. It was noted that Doug Mecum has been a long time, valuable member of the NPRB Board.

The spring board meeting will be held during the week of April 24-28, 2023, in Anchorage. Board members should plan for at least three full days.
The fall Board meeting will be held during the week of September 18-22, 2023, in Anchorage.

Staff provided instructions for completing travel claims.

The Board discussed implementing a policy in the Standard Operating Procedures and Policies to state that board members must notify the ED and Board Chair if they do not plan to attend a meeting. Unexcused absences are unacceptable for everyone (Panel and Board). The Board directed the ED to develop language for:

1) a letter that would be signed by the Board Chair in such instances where there are unexcused absences and the letter should be copied to the appointing official (Governor and Department of Commerce Designee), and

2) Revised language in the SOPPs regarding procedures for unexcused absences (or multiple missed meetings) that should also include that board members are expected to prioritize attendance of NPRB meetings.
MOTION: Direct the ED to begin the discussion about creating a board seat that would be insulated from the politics of the day.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The Chair thanked everyone for the time, preparation, and collegiality for this meeting.

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting was entered at 2:55 PM.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.