



**North Pacific Research Board
Spring Meeting Summary
April 26 - 28, 2022**

The North Pacific Research Board meeting was held in person at the Hotel Captain Cook, in Anchorage, AK, with three members participating remotely. The members in attendance were Kristie Balovich (Doug Mecum’s designee w/voting rights), Shannon Carroll, Ragnar Alstrom, Tyler Janowski, Forrest Bowers, Katrina Hoffman, Matt Alward, Andy Mezirow, Krystyna Wolniakowski, Annika Saltman, Brad Smith, Becca Gisclair, Cheryl Rosa, Conor Sullivan, and Dee Williams. Rex Rock, Jr. joined the meeting intermittently on the second and third days. The members who attended via zoom were Tara Riemer, Emily Shroyer, and Jennifer Reynolds (Brad Moran’s non-voting alternate). Science Panel Chair Brad Harris and Advisory Panel Chair Ruth Christiansen (via zoom) participated to share comments from their respective panels. The meeting was also attended by Kristin Cieciel (NOAA program manager) and Jennifer Williams (member of Ragnar’s office).

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

Call to Order/Approve Agenda

Andy Mezirow called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. Andy and Lynn Palensky, Executive Director welcomed everyone, both online and in person. The Chair acknowledged that this was the first time many members have attended an in-person Board meeting, and many were meeting for the first time. A round of introductions was made.

The Board Chair opened the meeting with introductory comments about the mission of NPRB and the process for making funding decisions.

The Board held elections for the Chair and Vice Chair positions.

MOTION: Elect Matt Alward as vice-chair.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Elect Andy Mezirow as chair.
Action: Motion passed with no objections.

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and approved.

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

The minutes of the fall 2021 Board meeting were reviewed and approved by the Board.

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

All staff, Board members, panel members, and guests in attendance signed the Conflict of Interest Policy. Conflict of interest declarations were also received and acknowledged.

The Science Director provided an overview of the NPRB process for proposal review by the Science (SP) and Advisory (AP) Panels. He then invited the SP Chair to comment (the AP Chair was absent at the start of the meeting).

The SP Chair summarized the outcomes of the spring 2022 SP meeting. He spoke briefly about how nominations for seats on the SP are solicited.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Lynn Palensky provided an Executive Director Report. The Board includes 20 seats (19 of which have been filled), and Board membership in nine of these seats has turned over in the past two years. Emily Shroyer was recently appointed to the seat for the Office of Naval Research that has been vacant for many years.

NPRB provided partnership support for the International Year of the Salmon expedition and more details were shared during the Partnerships agenda item later in the meeting.

NPRB staff member Jo-Ann Mellish has participated in the Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team for the past five years and recently she stepped down from the Team. NPRB staff member Danielle Dickson was appointed as Jo-Ann's replacement and recently joined the Team as a marine mammals expert.

Senator Sullivan's staff invited NPRB to publicly support the Salmon Task Force Bill. The Board declined to voice direct support for the bill but explained how NPRB is supporting relevant research and stands ready to assist should the Bill pass.

The ED discussed her participation in various meetings and workshops over the winter, including the Arctic Encounter Symposium. Staff plan to give a presentation at the June meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The ED summarized outside meeting support requests including those from the American Fisheries Society and North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES). It was noted that requests have been lower in recent years because many meetings have been held in a virtual format.

The ED provided an update on plans to renew the lease for the NPRB offices in downtown Anchorage in fall 2022. Requests of the landlord include a larger conference room and improved ventilation.

The ED shared an overview of the NPRB budget, noting that funds available to NPRB in FY22 are the lowest in NPRB's history, and NPRB has hit the 15% cap on administrative costs. The Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) manages the EIRF and reported that the principal of the fund has grown to \$1.59 billion. NPRB will be subject to sequestration on the annual interest payments (grants) for the foreseeable future.

The Executive Committee approved an increase in the micro-purchase threshold from \$10,000 to \$50,000. This will streamline the process for amending contracts.

The Alaska Sea Life Center completed the 2021 audit with contractor KPMG and the audit was clean. ASLC staff were thanked for their work on the audit and recordkeeping.

Science Director Report

Science Director Matthew Baker provided a report that included an overview of the NPRB mission, science program, and foundational documents, including the Science Plan and Foundation Years. He also explained how NPRB seeks and receives input about research priorities to inform the development of requests for proposals and detailed coordination with other entities related to informing fishery management and marine ecosystem understanding.

Integrated Ecosystem Research Program

Senior Program Manager Danielle Dickson and Science Director Matt Baker provided an update on the Arctic Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (IERP). Final reports resulting from this program will be available soon on the NPRB website and results are also published in two Special Issue volumes of *Deep-Sea Research II*.

Most of the discussion focused on the review of proposals received in response to the IERP Synthesis/Assessment RFP that was released in fall 2021. The Board considered two proposals received under the Synthesis category of the RFP that were ranked Tier 1 by the Science Panel and one proposal received under the Assessment category that was ranked Tier 2 by the Science Panel. One synthesis proposal (proposal 1.2) was awarded a star by the AP to highlight it as having particular community, stakeholder or other societal relevance and a strong engagement strategy. The SP and AP Chairs were invited to share comments from their respective panels prior to the Board discussion of the proposals.

Staff provided an update on IERP partnerships, which now include the North Slope Borough/Shell Baseline Studies program and the NOAA Oceanic & Atmospheric Research Arctic Research Program. The perspectives of these funding partners and commitments of partnership to fund specific proposals were shared with the Board prior to the Board's funding decisions.

Given the lack of assessment proposals to address research needs with respect to commercial fisheries or marine species of subsistence importance in the Northern Bering Sea region, staff are developing a strategy to solicit input directly from partners, regional organizations, and Arctic and Bering Sea communities to inform the development of the request for proposals for the next IERP. Staff encouraged Board members to share their suggestions for seeking input as NPRB prepares to develop the next IERP.

MOTION: Recommend funding IERP Synthesis proposals 1.1 and 1.2 and Assessment proposal 3.1.
Action: A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff presented highlights of the significant results of the Arctic IERP. These highlights were pulled from the IERP final reports, and the full reports will be available on the website soon.

Communications & Outreach

The Communications & Outreach Director presented a summary of the funding allocated to outreach for Core Program projects and described the process for the submission and review of outreach proposals. The Board considered five outreach proposals and heard the evaluations of the Communications & Outreach Director (COD), SP, and AP.

MOTION: Recommend to fund Outreach proposals 2062, 2064, and 2065

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Recommend 2066 for funding

Action: Motion withdrawn

Staff presented the draft 2022 Outreach RFP.

MOTION: Approve the 2022 Outreach RFP as presented.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Staff described challenges facing the continued administration of the NPRB photo contest and described some options for continuing it in a revised form. The Board expressed support for continuing the photo contest as well as the acknowledged the creativity of the staff and encouraged the staff to move forward without future involvement of the Board in the decision.

Information was provided about other ongoing outreach initiatives, including a rebranding of the NPRB website and the development of outreach products associated with the Arctic IERP. A demo of the new website design was provided. Staff have been working on a series of videos about the Arctic IERP and have had positive conversations with the Anchorage Museum about developing an exhibit.

Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRA)

Jo-Ann Mellish, the Senior Program Manager, presented a brief review of the 2022 GSRA applicants and the evaluation process for the meeting. There were 35 applications received for the 2022 GSRA RFP. Five applicants were disqualified due to eligibility issues. The remaining 30 (10 MS and 20 PhD) applications were considered by the Board. The Board heard summaries of the applications recommended for funding by the SP and AP and summaries of select applications in which Board members expressed interest.

MOTION: Fund GSRA proposals 2068, 2070, 2071, 2077, 2094, and 2099.

Amendment: Add 2076.

Action: Amendment passed with no objections.

Amendment: Add 2088.

Action: Amendment passed with no objections.

MOTION: Fund applications 2068, 2070, 2071, 2076, 2077, 2088, 2094 and 2099.

Action: Motion passed, as amended, with no objections.

Core Program

Jo-Ann Mellish, the Senior Program Manager, noted that the focus of the discussion would be funding decisions on the thirteen proposals under consideration for the first installment of the 2022 RFP. Staff directed the Board to the memo for a full listing of the projects funded under the 2021 RFP.

Staff provided the rationale for the rolling submissions process for accepting Core Program proposals for the benefit of new Board members and detailed the proposal review process. Staff also reminded the Board of the types of research solicited in the 2022 RFP.

MOTION: Approve funding for proposals: 2033, 2034, 2042, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, and 2061.

Amendment: Add proposal 2046 to the main motion for funding.

Action: Amendment passes with no objection.

Amendment: Remove proposal 2042 from the main motion and hold it over for consideration at the fall 2022 meeting.

Action: Amendment failed

Amendment: Hold over both 2055 and 2054 for final funding decision at the fall 2022 meeting.

Action: Amendment passes with three objections

MOTION: Approve funding for proposals 2033, 2034, 2042, 2046, 2056, 2057, and 2061, and hold over proposals 2054 and 2055 for final funding decision at the fall meeting.

Action: A roll call vote was taken and the motion, as amended, passed with no objections.

Nominations

Four SP members recently termed off the Panel and staff requested authorization from the Board to advertise for nominations to the SP. SP Chair Brad Harris shared the perspectives of the SP about needed areas of expertise and criteria the Board should consider when they evaluate potential new Panel members.

MOTION: Direct staff to advertise for SP nominations.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Staff asked the Board to approve the reappointment of Josep Planas to the SP.

MOTION: Reappoint Josep Planas for a second term on the SP.

Action: Motion passed with no objections.

Staff requested the second term for SP member Melissa Haltuch be extended for one year. Melissa is the only SP member whose term is scheduled to end next year, and staff suggested a preference for recruiting for her seat with three others the following year.

Staff discussed the status of the vacant Arctic seat on the AP and the options for filling the seat. NPRB advertised for nominations twice in 2021 and did not receive a nomination for a candidate who lives in the Arctic. In March 2022, the Executive Committee decided to ask the Board to fill the Arctic seat on the AP with one of the three qualified candidates without readvertising it and invited comments from the full Board. It was recommended that the recently vacated Bering Sea seat become an At-Large seat.

Motion: Change the vacant Bering Sea seat on the AP to an At-large seat.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

It was acknowledged with this change the candidates that had responded to the call for the Arctic could be eligible for the new At-large seat.

Motion: Appoint Dan Carney to the AP in an At-large seat. Advertise to fill the Arctic seat on the AP in fall 2022.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

Staff suggested the Board reappoint Caitlin Yeager (AP Vice Chair) and Dave Gaudet to the AP for a second term. AP Chair Ruth Christian spoke in strong support of these reappointments.

MOTION: The Board reappoints Caitlin Yeager and Dave Gaudet to the AP each for a three-year term.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

MOTION: Task the Nominations Committee to look at the composition of the AP and consider an alternative approach such as the matrix used by the NPFMC to seat members to their AP.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

Governance

North Pacific Marine Research Institute MOU

The ED provided a brief history of the North Pacific Marine Research Institute (NPMRI or “Institute”) and explained that a revised MOU for the NPMRI was submitted to the Department of Commerce (DOC) for legal review on March 4, 2022. NPRB recently received some suggested revisions from DOC and the Executive Committee (ExCom) is considering those comments and formulating a response with the intent of finalizing the MOU as soon as possible.

ExCom members acknowledged the effort dedicated to this in recent years and welcomed the conclusion of revising the Institute MOU.

Committee and Working Group Membership and Tasking

The current board and panel member representation for working groups (WG) and committees was reviewed. Board members were asked to make any new tasking assignments to committees or WGs as the Board moved through the agenda.

Human Dimensions Working Group

Staff and the Chair of the Human Dimensions WG Becca Gisclair noted that the expiration date for Mike Miller’s involvement on the HDWG has passed and asked for an approval on an extension.

MOTION: Approve Mike Miller’s continued service to the Human Dimensions Working Group for one year through Spring 2023.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

Strategic Planning Working Group

The Chair of the Strategic Planning WG Cheryl Rosa reviewed the history of the activities of the WG since 2015 to develop a strategic plan and implementation plan and decide on the “seamount” approach to balance funding among NPRB’s programs. The COVID pandemic has delayed some aspects of the implementation plan and other items have now been completed or are expected to be ongoing for some time. The current plan runs through 2024. With the understanding that the SPWG can be reactivated when needed it was voted on to disbanding the SPWG. It was also noted that Staff will continue to measure progress will report to the Board.

MOTION: Disband the Strategic Planning WG and direct staff to inform the Board of the need to reconstitute the WG when necessary.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

Partnerships Working Group

Staff reviewed the various forms of partnership that NPRB has employed in implementing its programs and discussed recent developments to welcome new partners. NPRB has signed new MOUs with the Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation (BSFRF) and the Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center (PCCRC) in the past year and NPRB looks forward to future opportunities to fund research in partnership with these institutions.

In 2021, the Board approved additional investments to support the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission and the International Year of the Salmon High Seas Expedition. Staff provided an update on the goals and achievements of the survey and the impacts related to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Human Dimensions Working Group

The Chair of the Human Dimensions WG Becca Gisclair provided an update on the progress of the WG since fall 2021 and plans for ongoing work. The HDWG has not met since fall 2021. Staff are investigating training opportunities with the First Alaskans Institute. A subaward to the Indigenous Sentinels Network is in process to apply \$150,000 allocated to co-production by the Board. The project will facilitate conversations with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to discuss expanding the ISN into the Northern Bering Sea region to build capacity for community-based observers to engage with NPRB's future IERP in the region.

Staff described participation in a variety of meetings relevant to human dimensions research and co-production of knowledge and urged Board members to communicate with staff about other upcoming opportunities to listen to conversations about research needs. Examples include meetings hosted by Kawerak, Inc., Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, Ice Sea Committee, Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, and others.

The WG suggests NPRB pursue in-person training by the First Alaskans Institute during the fall 2022 Board meeting. The Board Chair opened a discussion of the plans for training for Board members in association with the fall meeting. The Chair recently participated in the training and found it valuable. He feels it is critically important that staff have the training as soon as possible. Given financial constraints on the NPRB administrative budget, the Chair felt it important to consider if NPRB can support the costs associated with the two-day training in person, and to seek a firm commitment from Board members to participate fully before committing to it with the First Alaskans Institute. The Chair also asked the Board to consider how new Board members would be provided an equivalent training in the future.

Board members suggested staff explore the opportunity for grants from other organizations to offset the cost of the First Alaskans Institute training. Staff explained that the administrative budget for NPRB is extremely constrained during the next two years. Staff suggested the Board do the training in a virtual format because of the cost associated with travel.

The Board directed staff to explore options for funding the training and poll the Board to ensure that members are willing to participate. The members of the Human Dimensions WG expressed willingness to help staff explore options.

Alaska Marine Science Symposium

Staff provided an overview of statistics compiled by Brendan Smith on participation in the 2022 Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS), which was hosted in a virtual format due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. A description of the agenda was provided, including the broad range of keynote and panel discussion topics that were hosted in 2022.

Staff also shared a brief history of the AMSS and noted that 2023 will mark the 30-year anniversary of the AMSS.

Other Matters

The fall meeting will be September 20-22, 2022. Staff suggested the Board block out the full week September 19-23 to accommodate the potential for training with the First Alaskans Institute. The Board Chair suggested planning for an in-person meeting and revisiting those plans if COVID cases increase in Alaska following a busy tourism season.

The following spring meeting will be sometime during April 24-28, 2023.

MOTION: Approve the 2022-23 meeting dates as presented by staff.

Action: The motion passed with no objections.

Meeting adjourned at 11:42 AM.