

**Joint Protocol  
for  
North Pacific Research Board and Oil Spill Recovery Institute**

**Background**

The North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) was created by Congress in 1997 to support marine research activities on or relating to the fisheries or marine ecosystems in the North Pacific Ocean, Bering Sea, and Arctic Ocean (including any lesser related bodies of water), especially research designed to address pressing fishery management or marine ecosystem information needs. The mission of NPRB is to build a clear understanding of those ecosystems that enables effective management and sustainable use of marine resources, and its science plan envisions a broad range of integrated ecosystem research from basic oceanography and lower trophic level productivity studies up through fish and invertebrates, seabirds, marine mammals, and man, including their habitat. NPRB also may support research on contaminants, harmful algal blooms, invasive species, aquaculture, and climate change impacts on the marine environment.

The Oil Spill Recovery Institute (OSRI) was established by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The mission of OSRI is to better understand the effects of oil pollution on arctic and sub-arctic marine environments, and to seek new techniques and technologies that may prevent, mitigate or recover oil spills in those environments through research, education and demonstration and/or application. OSRI is supportive of marine research that will help develop ecological applications for its ocean observing system, for example, habitat distributions and the functional role of various habitat types on different life stages of important fish, invertebrate and plant species.

Both NPRB and OSRI have science plans that encourage research partnerships. Section 4.2.3 of NPRB's science plan directly responds to a strong recommendation of the National Research Council to seek partnerships with other entities to support joint research and funding of projects of mutual interest. Similarly, Section IV.A.5.b.i of OSRI's science plan identifies a potential partnership with NPRB to support ecological research projects in arctic and sub-arctic climates, generally within the NPRB geographic area of interest, but with particular emphasis on the Gulf of Alaska and Prince William Sound. While both organizations have a strong interest in ocean observing, habitat, and ecological studies, other research priorities of mutual interest may be identified during the life of this protocol which potentially could be supported under this partnership.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this joint protocol is to facilitate the NPRB-OSRI partnership. It describes the general approaches that will be used to develop and process joint requests for proposals (RFP) for biologically oriented projects in arctic and sub-arctic climates, but particularly in the Gulf of Alaska and Prince William Sound. It identifies the general steps that will be taken to review and approve proposals and strives to accommodate the procedural requirements of both organizations. The overriding goal is to provide a clearly stated, mutually-agreed foundation for a constructive partnership that will help to leverage funding for meritorious research projects on topics of mutual interest.

### **Identification of Joint Research Priorities**

NPRB and OSRI have science and implementation plans that provide the foundation for defining research priorities of mutual interest in any given year. As noted above, ecological studies in the Gulf of Alaska and Prince William Sound, particularly habitat studies related to the ocean observing system in Prince William Sound, provide the initial priorities for a potential joint RFP to be released in October 2005. In later years, however, other topics may be identified for incorporation into a joint RFP.

Mutual research priorities will be identified by a joint committee of three members from each organization. The committee will review current activities and research priorities of each organization and work with the respective science panels to develop potential priorities for consideration by each organization. This process will begin each spring and culminate with consideration by both organizations in September or early October prior to release of the annual RFP. A joint meeting of the OSRI STC and NPRB's Science Panel may be convened as appropriate to identify priorities of mutual interest, but in any case, the joint committee will be responsible for developing the final recommendation that is presented to the parent organizations.

### **Approval of Joint Request for Proposals**

Each organization will consider the joint committee recommendations and separately must approve those provisions of the annual RFP relevant to the partnership. The joint RFP likely will be a section of a larger RFP released by NPRB in early October. Those provisions that pertain to the partnership will be identified clearly in the RFP along with potential funding amounts that will be contributed by each organization.

### **Scientific Review of Proposals**

Each proposal received in response to the joint RFP will be provided with at least three anonymous technical reviews, using reviewers assigned by mutual agreement of the NPRB Executive Director and the OSRI Science Director. These anonymous reviews, using mutually agreed evaluation forms, will be provided to the respective science panels, or a joint committee of panel representatives, for joint evaluation and development of recommendations for consideration of the parent organizations. The goal is to identify proposals that are scientifically meritorious in accordance with the standards of each organization.

### **Approval of Proposals**

The recommendations of the joint science committee identified in the previous section will be forwarded to a joint committee of the parent organizations, which in turn will develop recommendations for the parent organizations. The parent organizations may meet separately (or together if appropriate) in March or April to consider approving proposals of mutual interest and their funding levels. All recommendations of NPRB are subject to final approval of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

### **Confidentiality Provisions**

The summary pages for each proposal will be disclosed to the public. The summary page includes title, project period, names of applicant and principal investigators, legislative criteria and research priorities addressed by proposed research, a summary of work (250 words or less), requested and matching funding by year for all entities, and the signature of an official authorized

to legally bind each submitting organization. The full text of proposals that are not funded will remain confidential and will only be disclosed to NPRB and OSRI board members, their respective science panels, and staff (as well as the selected technical reviewers during the anonymous reviews). Those proposals that are funded will be made available to the public in full (except for suggested peer reviewers and proprietary salary information).

**Conflict of Interest Procedures**

Each organization will adhere to its respective standard operating procedures for avoiding conflicts of interest in considering proposals for funding.

**Joint Funding Approaches**

Joint support of projects of mutual interest is the goal of this protocol. Either of two approaches may be used as appropriate to jointly support projects: (1) related but separate proposals may be funded by separate contracts with each organization, or (2) funds may be pooled by both organizations under one contract for a particular project. In the latter case, both organizations must agree on contract provisions and administration of funds, as well as program oversight.

**Prospective Annual Schedule**

June-August	Develop mutual research priorities through separate or joint meetings of science panels or committees as described above
September	Organizations approve joint RFP
Early October	Joint RFP released to public and posted on respective web sites
Early December	Proposals due
December-February	Proposal reviews
Early March*	Science panels/joint committees review and develop funding recommendations
Mid-March	NPRB and OSRI meet separately or jointly to consider proposals
April	NPRB recommendations forwarded to NMFS
April	Final notification of PIs
April-May	Grant and contract arrangements with successful PIs
May or June	Possible commence research

(\*Note: this schedule starting in March may be delayed one month if an excessive number of proposals are received and cannot be processed in time.)

**General Provisions**

1. Effective date. This protocol becomes effective upon the date of the signatures of both parties.
2. Withdrawal. Either party to this protocol may withdraw without obligation upon thirty days written notice to the other party.
3. Termination. This protocol shall remain in effect until it is terminated by agreement of the parties.
4. Authority. Nothing in this protocol shall be construed to limit or modify the authority or responsibility of either party.

5. Amendment. This protocol may be amended in writing by the unanimous written agreement of both parties.
6. Effect. This protocol is intended to express the good faith plans and general intentions of the parties, but does not create any legally enforceable obligations.
7. Notice. Any notice, request, order, or communication to the parties pursuant to this protocol shall be in writing to each party at the address that follows:

Clarence Pautzke, Executive Director  
North Pacific Research Board  
1007 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Suite 100  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Nancy Bird, Executive Director  
Oil Spill Recovery Institute  
P.O. Box 705  
Cordova, AK 99574

**Accepted as affirmed by the signatures below:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tylan Schrock, Chairman  
North Pacific Research Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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John Calder, Chairman  
Oil Spill Recovery Institute

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Date