Research Priority Proposal for 2018 Review

At the June 2017 Council meeting, a motion was passed that, in part, requested that the Executive Director, Council Chair, and SSC Chair explore methods to refine the review of Council research priorities. On March 6, 2018 a teleconference meeting was held to address the Council's research priority process. The meeting included Council Chair Dan Hull, Vice-Chair Bill Tweit, SSC Co-Chairs Anne Hollowed and Gordon Kruse, AKRO SF Administrator Glenn Merrill, Council Executive Director David Witherell, Deputy Director Diana Evans, and Jim Armstrong, Council staff lead on research priorities.

The group offers the following proposal for review of research priorities for 2018. The Council, SSC, and Plan Teams will continue to use the research priorities database that assigns research projects to five priority categories: Critical Ongoing Monitoring, Strategic, Urgent, Important, and Pending (the definitions for each of these categories are provided at the end of this document). In order to develop the annual research priority list for 2018, however, the Council will take the following approach:

1) Research categorized as "Critical Ongoing Monitoring" will not be part of the 2018 annual review. By definition, these projects or surveys, "(1) provide an essential management function; (2) cannot likely be acquired through other means; or (3) are required by regulation" (see attached). In other words, these projects are not up for debate as to their relevance to Council work. As part of the motion adopting research priorities for 2018, the Council will include a paragraph indicating that these critical ongoing monitoring projects continue to be of the highest priority to the Council.

2) The Council will develop a "top ten list[1]" of key research priorities for 2018. Projects highlighted for this list will be drawn from the "Urgent" and "Important" categories. Identifying a small subset of key priorities for 2018 will help research entities better understand what the key priorities are for the Council this year. In order to arrive at the top ten list, the Council will continue to rely on the expertise of the SSC, who also gets input from the Plan Teams. First, each Plan Team will review the database and be asked to identify their top 3-5 projects for 2018, with a rationale for why those projects rise to the top. The SSC will then review the submissions from all of the Plan Teams and conduct a balanced, overall prioritization of all projects, including those projects that do not get reviewed by plan teams (marine mammals, seabirds, etc.). In developing a comprehensive "top ten list" as part of their report to the Council, the SSC can also provide greater depth in consideration of the particular projects, and a rationale for including priorities on the list. The rationale should identify, for example, how the selected research priorities connect to Council actions and are relevant to management needs. This could include connecting projects to active areas within the Council's Groundfish Management Policy, which generally apply to all the Council's FMPs.

3) With respect to "strategic" research priorities, these, by definition, are less likely to be applicable to management in the near term, but are important in that they capture the value of research with long-term application to, for example, a transition to next generation stock assessments. For 2018, the group proposes not to review this category, so that the Council's focus this year can be directed toward projects with relevance to its near-term actions (noting that the MSA-mandated window of time for which research priorities are identified is five years). For the future, however, the group proposes that the Council works with the SSC to develop a vision statement for the Council's near-term and long-term activities, and the periodicity of reviewing longer-term research priorities. The vision statement would be developed at a later point in time after examples from a range of sources have been reviewed. Other outyear improvements include improving connections in the database to categorize research more in line with the categories of research identified by NPRB and AFSC, or perhaps developing our own categories in line with the vision statement.

[1] The number ten is not set in stone, but is indicative of the intent to come up with a short subset.