

COMMUNIQUÉ

MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING #85: Thursday, 18 April 2019

The 85th MNF Steering Committee (SC) meeting was held in Hobart on 18 April 2019. The SC reviewed MNF operations and considered the interim findings from the Review of the MNF access framework.

Update on the independent review of Access Framework

The SC received a briefing from Dr Bruce Mapstone on his work reviewing the MNF Access Framework.

The review largely arose because of the 2018 increase in government funding of the MNF that allows *Investigator* to support merit research for full year operation rather than the previous arrangements by which only ~180 days per year were funded for merit research, with the remaining days of annual operating time available for User-funded Voyages. This change raised some questions about the suitability of existing allocation principles, proposal assessment criteria, and some aspects of voyage scheduling when all available sea time is committed to Granted Voyages.

The process thus far has included consultation with a broad range of stakeholders in the operation, use, and outputs from the MNF. Two vehicles of consultation were used as follows: invitation of written or verbal submissions from all recipients of the MNF SC updates and e-mailed newsletter and; direct discussions with a sample of stakeholders with interests in the MNF and *Investigator*. Dr Mapstone reported that the overwhelming sentiment from stakeholders was positive and constructive.

The SC provided feedback to assist Dr Mapstone in completing the review and agreed that the review process was consistent with the Terms of Reference.

The final report from the review will be submitted on 15 May 2019. The SC will reconvene in June to consider the report and advise MNF on a response, thereafter enabling the MNF to prepare a roadmap for implementation for recommendations that are adopted. Outcomes of the review and an agreed response will be made publically available in due course.

2021-22 Application process

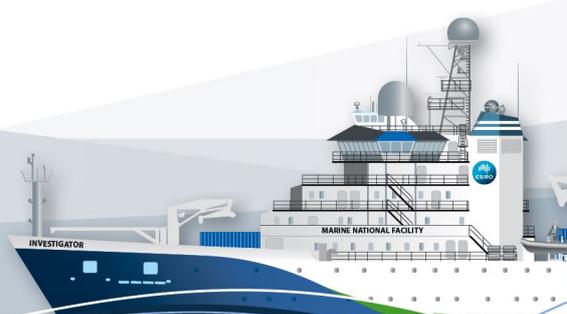
Pre-proposals are now being sought for granted voyages on the 2021-22 voyage season. Pre-proposals must be submitted by Monday, 3 June 2019.

The SC noted that any agreed changes in response to the review will be not be applied until the next application process, for the 2022-23 round.

Voyage-specific integrated risk management system

The SC recognised the substantial effort that the MNF is taking to develop a voyage-specific integrated risk management system in recognition of the potential for increased risks given the tighter operation schedule.

The Voyage Specific Risk Assessment (VSRA) process was trialled on IN2019_V02 and further refinement is being done based on feedback from those involved. In conjunction, work is also progressing on a fatigue management plan, a voyage lab custodian system, and a review of the HSE governance and committee terms of reference.



Membership changes

The MNF Governance Committees have seen a number of membership changes as follows:

Steering Committee

Mr Tim Moltmann recently vacated the position of Chair of the National Marine Science Committee, and with this, the respective ex-officio position on the SC. SC greatly appreciate Mr Moltmann's contribution and significant commitment to the SC, and more broadly to the MNF. There is no question the Facility has benefited from his expertise and sound counsel. Replacement of Mr Moltmann is currently being considered.

Mr Gary Prosser has accepted a further term on the SC. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Mr Prosser for his continued service and greatly appreciate the opportunity to draw upon his considerable knowledge and expertise in his respective discipline.

National Benefit Assessment Panel (NBAP)

Mr John Gunn's term of appointment as the inaugural Chair of NBAP has ended and the SC would like to thank Mr Gunn for his substantial contribution, in particular, for his role in establishing the processes for assessing the national benefit of applications for science on-board *Investigator*.

Prof Brigid Heywood has served a term as a member of the NBAP, and has now accepted to Chair the Panel for the next three years. Prof Heywood's considerable knowledge and expertise in the university and policy sector has played an important role in complementing the NBAP's advice to SC on the national benefit component of applications for sea time, and we look forward to her continued contribution.

As the NBAP has been in place for three years, the first appointment terms have ended and the following re-appointments or new appointments have been made.

Ms Miranda Taylor, Ms Jo Mummery, Mr Peter Cochrane and Dr Clinton Foster have all accepted an additional term on the NBAP. The SC are appreciative of the enormous depth of experience they bring to the panel.

Mr Martin Exel is unable to accept a further term on the NBAP due to competing demands. The SC would like to thank Mr Exel for his substantial contribution and professionalism on this critical MNF advisory panel.

The SC would like to welcome on board Dr April Abbott, who has accepted the offer of Early Career Researcher position on the NBAP and will be mentored by Dr Clinton Foster. Dr Abbott is a Geochemical Oceanographer/Sediment Geochemist based at Macquarie University in Sydney and is Director of the Collaborative Australian Postgraduate Sea Training Alliance (CAPSTAN) Network.

In conclusion

This will be my last Communique, as I will be retiring from the SC at the end of June 2019. Reflecting on my term as chair since November 2013, I am proud to acknowledge what we have achieved. This exciting period for the MNF has included the founding of the NBAP subcommittee, the establishment of the Collaborative Australian Postgraduate Sea Training Alliance Network (CAPSTAN) to deliver post graduate student training, a number of successful and exciting multidisciplinary scientific voyages and more recently, the scale-up to full-year operation for *Investigator*.

Whilst the move to year round operations will enable *Investigator* to meet its full potential, the transition brings with it a number of new and exciting challenges. With this in mind, please join me in welcoming Dr Sue Barrell as she formally takes on the role as Chair of the SC on 1 July 2019. Dr Barrell has already applied her extensive science leadership and advocacy experience towards supporting the SC during her transition into her new role and I am in no doubt that I am leaving the SC in highly capable hands.

I wish to thank CSIRO and the MNF team, particularly Toni Moate, Barbara Musso and their staff for their drive, professionalism and tireless commitment to the cause of managing the MNF as a world class Facility for science.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chairs and members of the MNF Scientific Advisory Committee and the NBAP for the sound council they have provided on the assessment of MNF Granted Voyage applications.

Finally, I would like to thank the SC for their support; it has been an honour to engage with such a capable, well-informed, pragmatic and thoughtful group. I am proud of what we have achieved, and I look forward to hearing about their ongoing efforts in supporting the MNF and its contribution to national marine knowledge, putting Australia at the forefront of ocean research globally.

Dr Ian Poiner Chair, MNF Steering Committee



Photo – Dr Ian Poiner receiving a gift, in appreciation for his substantial contribution to the MNF Steering Committee (photo courtesy of Prof Martina Doblin).