

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2  
3 ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE

4  
5 Hyatt Centric New Orleans, Louisiana

6  
7 January 29, 2024

8  
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi  
11 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana  
12 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi  
13 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
14 Bob Gill.....Florida  
15 Anthony Overton.....Alabama  
16 Troy Williamson.....Texas

17  
18 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

19 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama  
20 Kesley Banks.....Texas  
21 Susan Boggs.....Alabama  
22 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana  
23 Tom Frazer.....Florida  
24 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas  
25 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi  
26 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana  
27 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
28 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida  
29 Ed Walker.....Florida

30  
31 **STAFF**

32 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
33 Matt Freeman.....Economist  
34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director  
35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer  
36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist  
37 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
38 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist  
39 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer  
40 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
42 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director  
43 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant  
44 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

45  
46 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

47 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC  
48 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
49 John Walter.....SEFSC

1 Ed Swindell.....LA  
2  
3 - - -  
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1  
2  
3 Table of Contents.....3  
4  
5 Table of Motions.....4  
6  
7 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes and Action Guide and  
8 Next Steps.....5  
9  
10 Discussion of Proposed Standing and Special Scientific and  
11 Statistical (SSC) Reorganization for June 2024 Appointments.....5  
12  
13 Review and Discuss Ad Hoc and Standing Advisory Panels.....21  
14  
15 Review and Discuss Proposed 2024 Activities and Budget.....22  
16  
17 Review Update to 2020-2024 Administrative Award Anticipated  
18 Carryover.....28  
19  
20 Review and Approve Proposal Activities for Phase II Inflation  
21 Reduction Act (IRA) Funding for the Regional Management Councils.30  
22  
23 Review and Finalize the Steering Committee Makeup for the  
24 Recreational Initiative.....42  
25  
26 Adjournment.....53  
27  
28 - - -  
29

TABLE OF MOTIONS

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
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14  
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PAGE 7: Motion that the council accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs in Section 2.5 related to the SSC. The motion carried on page 10.

PAGE 20: Motion that the council accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs. The motion carried on page 20.

PAGE 41: Motion that the council approve the proposed activities for Phase II of the Inflation Reduction Act. The motion carried on page 41.

PAGE 49: Motion that the council approve the number of recreational council members be increased from two to three (two private recreational and one charter-for-hire). The motion carried on page 51.

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1 The Administrative/Budget Committee of the Gulf of Mexico  
2 Fishery Management Council convened at The Hyatt Centric, French  
3 Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday morning, January 29,  
4 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Joe Spraggins.

5  
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**  
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN JOE SPRAGGINS:** We would like to call the  
11 Administrative/Budget Committee to order, and it's myself as  
12 chair, Mr. Dugas as vice chair, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Donaldson, Mr.  
13 Gill, Mr. Overton, and Mr. Williamson as the committee members.  
14 At this time, I would like to have an adoption for the agenda.

15  
16 **MR. BOG GILL:** So moved, Mr. Chairman.

17  
18 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Second.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any discussion? All right. All in  
21 favor, aye. Now approval of the October 2023 minutes, and I  
22 would like it if we could get approval.

23  
24 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Move approval.

25  
26 **MR. GILL:** Second.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any discussion? Anybody opposed? All  
29 right. Then we'll move right along and turn it over to Dr.  
30 Simmons.

31  
32 **DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED STANDING AND SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC &**  
33 **STATISTICAL (SSC) REORGANIZATION FOR JUNE 2024 APPOINTMENTS**  
34

35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Okay. Good morning. Thank  
36 you, Mr. Chair. We have a pretty full agenda, and so I'm going  
37 to suggest that we just go through the action schedule before  
38 each agenda item, if that's okay, and so the first item that  
39 staff has put together is a discussion on the proposed  
40 reorganization of the Standing and Special SSCs.

41  
42 The SSCs are due for reappointment, all of them, in June of  
43 2024, and we have a couple of special SSCs that we did not  
44 populate last time, and I believe that was Spiny Lobster and  
45 Mackerel, Migratory Species, and so we would like that to be  
46 considered to be populated, but, before we get there, we want to  
47 consider going through this potential reorganization of the  
48 Standing SSCs.

1  
2 If you like this, if you like this proposed restructure, then  
3 you also need to consider changes to the Ecosystem Technical  
4 Committee, because you have certain SSC members that are  
5 involved in the Ecosystem Special on that particular committee,  
6 plus other Standing SSC members that are involved, and so, if  
7 you like this idea, or some iteration, the council staff is  
8 looking for a motion, and so if we could look at that agenda  
9 item, please, Bernie, and it's Tab G, Number 4.

10  
11 What we were proposing is a more multidisciplinary approach to  
12 the restructuring of the SSC, and so we would integrate the Reef  
13 Fish, the Ecosystem, and the Socioeconomic SSC into the Standing  
14 SSC, and we're suggesting that would -- You would change the  
15 SOPPs to no more than twenty-one individuals, and then the  
16 Standing SSC would include eight stock assessment or  
17 quantitative biologists/ecologists. The remaining thirteen  
18 appointees shall include at least four economists and at least  
19 four anthropologists/social scientists and five other  
20 scientists.

21  
22 Then we would have that form that we send out that folks can  
23 denote their expertise, and how they recognize themselves, and  
24 what they would like to be considered for when we populate the  
25 group.

26  
27 There are some other changes in the SOPPs that we're proposing  
28 as well, but I think this is really the meat-and-potatoes of it.  
29 We are suggesting to keep those other Special SSCs, and those  
30 are Coral, Spiny, Mackerel, Red Drum, and Shrimp.

31  
32 **MS. BETH HAGER:** There are a few other editorial things.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Mr. Diaz.

35  
36 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** For Dr. Simmons, based on the applicants that  
37 we've had in the past, do you foresee us having any problem  
38 filling four economists and four social/anthropologist folks for  
39 those slots, if we put a minimum on it?

40  
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We have had some issues like that  
42 in the past, but, when we had the one open slot for the  
43 economist last time, the way we went about it, and how staff was  
44 involved, and I think we had a much greater number to choose  
45 from, and so I think we should try that process again. We could  
46 have an issue, but hopefully not, based on our recent  
47 interaction with populating that economist seat.

48

1 **MR. DIAZ:** So it says "at least". If it said "up to", and if we  
2 don't meet that minimum number we're still within our SOPPs, and  
3 so I don't know if that's -- I know what you all are trying to  
4 do, and "up to" might actually not accomplish what you all are  
5 trying to do here, but I'm just trying to figure out, if we  
6 don't have enough of one category, if that would be a problem  
7 for us.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** So are you suggesting that we have a  
10 minimum number?

11  
12 **MR. DIAZ:** Well, right now, it says "at least", and so, I mean,  
13 if we was to follow our SOPPs to the letter of the words that's  
14 down here now, I mean, we have to have, no matter what, four  
15 economists, and four social scientists/anthropologists, and, if  
16 we don't have that many to pick from, or that many that we feel  
17 is qualified, then I don't think we're following our SOPPs, and  
18 I don't know what we do at that time.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

21  
22 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and there's another aspect  
23 to that, and that is numbers. You know, at these suggested, we  
24 could have more than eight, and say that we do have a lot of  
25 applications, and so then we would have nine or ten, and they  
26 would presumably come from the five others, but do we want that  
27 kind of ratio, and I think the answer is no. We want that  
28 input, but we don't want it to be overwhelming, because most of  
29 the questions that the addresses are of a biological nature, and  
30 not social in nature, and so I think Dale's suggestion of either  
31 "up to" or "no more than", and either one, would be preferable  
32 to express what we really want to accomplish. Thank you.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, sir.

35  
36 **MR. DIAZ:** If we would make those changes, and I know you all  
37 are probably looking for a motion, and I read through it, and I  
38 would be willing to make a motion that we move this forward to  
39 Full Council for approval.

40  
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and that would be  
42 great.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. We have a motion to move it to  
45 Full Council.

46  
47 **MR. GILL:** Second.

48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think Mr. Diaz had some suggested  
2 edits though to the text.  
3  
4 **MR. GILL:** That was with the suggested edits.  
5  
6 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. The motion is with the edits, as Mr.  
7 Gill --  
8  
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Can we get that motion up, so  
10 everyone is clear?  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Does this look like what we're  
13 looking for for the motion? Mr. Gill, and Mr. Diaz, are you all  
14 good with that? Dr. Simmons.  
15  
16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I thought we were -- Okay. I see  
17 it. "Up to", and so that reflects the changes. I don't think  
18 we need "which" in front of "will". The Standing SSC will  
19 include. Can we do that? I think -- I guess, committee, is it  
20 your intent that it will include eight stock assessment or  
21 quantitative biologists/ecologists? I think that was the  
22 intent, correct?  
23  
24 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think you're right. Mr. Gill.  
25  
26 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so the point I'm going  
27 to raise is not what I'm concerned about, but I wanted to get it  
28 on the table, and that is, is there any concern around the  
29 table, in terms of the relativity of the socioeconomic side to  
30 the biological side, in terms of numbers? Now, clearly we want  
31 input from both, and so the question is how much of each, right,  
32 and I have had expressed to me some concern that they're  
33 concerned that the balance is not correct, because the bulk of  
34 what the SSC does falls into the scientific realm of biology and  
35 assessments, and so I just wanted to raise that, before we  
36 locked in, to see what the sentiment of the committee is. Thank  
37 you.  
38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.  
40  
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just so  
42 everyone understands, I think we have been convening  
43 consistently with the Standing SSC, your fifteen members, plus  
44 the current Socioeconomic Special, plus the Reef Fish, plus the  
45 Ecosystem, and so twenty-four people, and, of those individuals  
46 that are on those different specials, with the Standing and your  
47 economists and social scientists that are on the Standing  
48 currently, different members participate differently, depending



1 on the topics, and so I feel like that's perhaps a different  
2 discussion, Mr. Gill, but maybe I'm misunderstanding your  
3 question.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Mr. Gill.

6

7 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so it's not different in  
8 the sense that we're setting the structure of the SSC, and,  
9 however those proportions are desired, that's what we're voting  
10 on, and so I think that's an important discussion, and, if  
11 everybody is comfortable with the current proportions, I'm good,  
12 but we ought not pass this motion without considering that and  
13 finding out whether the committee agrees with it.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think we'll go ahead and get the motion  
16 out, and then we'll get a second to it, if that's okay, and did  
17 we have another question?

18

19 **MR. GILL:** I have another comment to make, but --

20

21 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Go ahead.

22

23 **MR. GILL:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so the thing that  
24 I don't understand, Dr. Simmons, is are we going to eliminate  
25 the special SSCs that apply here? For example, if we're talking  
26 Socioeconomic, and we're talking Ecosystem, and we're  
27 potentially talking Reef Fish, and will they exist after this is  
28 done, or will they not?

29

30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So we're proposing that you would  
31 do away with those, and they would be integrated into the  
32 Standing SSC, because, right now, you're convening them almost  
33 every single time we have an issue, or, at least for half of the  
34 day, you might have a Special Shrimp SSC involved, but, for  
35 every other agenda item, those three specials have been convened  
36 with the Standing SSC.

37

38 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? So we have a  
41 motion on the floor here, and it's to accept the proposed  
42 changes to the SOPPs related to the SSC, as written. Do I have  
43 a -- The motion is there, and do I have a second?

44

45 **MR. DIAZ:** Bob seconded it.

46

47 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Bob seconded it?

48

1 **MR. DIAZ:** Yes.  
2  
3 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Did you second it?  
4  
5 **MR. GILL:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.  
6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Is there any discussion? **Is there**  
8 **any opposition to the motion? If not, the motion carries.**  
9 Okay, Dr. Simmons.  
10  
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so  
12 could we go back to the SOPPs, Bernie? Okay, and so I just  
13 wanted to go through -- We're proposing, for the other sections,  
14 that we add a "with", in that first sentence, if we go down to  
15 Objectives and Duties. Then a couple other just suggested edits  
16 here. For the second paragraph, "For each managed stock or  
17 assemblage of stocks, the SSC shall recommend an acceptable  
18 biological catch and overfishing limit that accounts for  
19 scientific uncertainty", because it was "level" before, and it's  
20 "limit". Then "The SSC may also comment on scientific  
21 appropriateness and social and economic consequences of various  
22 alternatives or accountability measures to be implemented if  
23 annual catch limits are exceeded." We'll keep going, if there's  
24 no questions about those suggestions.  
25  
26 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Does anybody have any comments on those  
27 suggestions?  
28  
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Let's keep going, Bernie,  
30 please. Okay. For this paragraph, staff is suggesting that we  
31 add in "as requested", because it is the council's prerogative  
32 to do that. Then "including any environmental statement", and  
33 "any" in front of "environmental impact statement".  
34  
35 Then "The SSC will also provide a determination of whether these  
36 are consistent with the best scientific information available  
37 and may provide advice as to the effectiveness of the measures  
38 in achieving the objectives of the FMP or amendment." We'll  
39 keep going down.  
40  
41 "The emphasis of the SSC will be on evaluating scientific data  
42 and rationale on which the management measures are based, rather  
43 than selecting management measures." Then, in the following  
44 paragraph, "The SSC will also advise the council on the adequacy  
45 of scientific information, the supporting analyses, and the  
46 stock assessment, whether these are consistent with the best  
47 scientific information available related to scientific documents  
48 and the content of stock assessment reports."

1  
2 Then the last change is just, since we've identified the  
3 abbreviations, "The OFL and ABC advice from the SSC will be the  
4 basis for the council to set ACLs and AMs. The council may also  
5 set annual catch targets below the ACL to further account for  
6 management uncertainty."

7  
8 Some of these suggested changes were based on the national  
9 guidelines that we received on best scientific information  
10 available, and also our regional guidelines, and so I will stop  
11 there, Mr. Chair, and see if there's any questions.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Is there any discussion on these  
14 changes? Mr. Anson.

15  
16 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your  
17 committee, but I guess, Carrie, not being familiar with that  
18 document you just said you gleaned to get this information, but  
19 there's been discussion, you know, in previous council meetings,  
20 about the best scientific information available, and I thought  
21 that was -- I thought that was the agency's direct purview, and  
22 does this kind of add another layer, or circumvent it, or  
23 somehow, you know, muddy the waters, so to speak, with the  
24 agency's role in identifying, or defining, what the best  
25 scientific information is available, because, if you leave it  
26 with the previous version, it doesn't quite do that, to the  
27 level that adding the "consistent with" language.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

30  
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I may  
32 need some help from John or Ryan, but we've had numerous SSC  
33 meetings, and a discussion of these various policies, both the  
34 national policy and then, most recently, the regional policy,  
35 and my understanding is that everything that the agency bases  
36 the best scientific information available on is from either the  
37 stock assessment, and it's building the record, and it's the  
38 SSC's recommendations, and it's the council's and the public's  
39 feedback, and it's the whole shebang, and so I think that's what  
40 we were trying to reflect here, and I believe "consistent with"  
41 is the terminology that is in those policies, but I'm going to  
42 look at Ryan and John to make sure that I am correct in saying  
43 that.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir.

46  
47 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Just one other thing is the ultimate  
48 determination of BSIA remains with the agency, and the SSC would

1 just continue to make their recommendation, but we don't intend  
2 for that to ultimately change anything else.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any further discussion? Tom.

5

6 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I just want to  
7 follow-up on Kevin's comments, and so what are the implications,  
8 potentially, if the SSC doesn't determine, right, that it's  
9 consistent with the best scientific information available?

10

11 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead.

12

13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I will start, but I think the  
14 regional framework for that suggests that the SSC, as a body, is  
15 supposed to document that, provide the rationale why, and  
16 perhaps lay out next steps for the council to consider with its  
17 staff and partners, but I'm going to look at Dr. Walter and  
18 Andy, Mr. Strelcheck, to see if that's right.

19

20 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Well, I don't have it in front of me, but  
21 the best scientific information available document that we would  
22 be in the SSC I believe addressed this matter, and, at that  
23 point, if the SSC determined that it was inconsistent with BSIA,  
24 then the agency would have to make the determination,  
25 regardless, and, I mean, that's our authority, and we could  
26 agree, obviously, with the SSC that it isn't, or we could,  
27 obviously, proceed and say it is, and then, obviously, there is  
28 ramifications, in terms of differences in terms of the SSC  
29 advice to the council, versus the agency's guidance and advice  
30 based on the science available.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

33

34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So I believe this has happened in  
35 the South Atlantic with Spanish mackerel, but, on our side of  
36 the house, the document says that our SSC will document their  
37 rationale for why they're not considering it consistent with  
38 BSIA, provide that information, ask for more information,  
39 provide some type of next steps, I believe, and whether that is  
40 forwarded to the agency at that time, and I believe it would be  
41 up to the council.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir.

44

45 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Good morning, everyone. John Walter,  
46 Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and I think the document  
47 that has been discussed has all of this spelled out, and I know  
48 that some of it has not always met with everyone's approval, but

1 I think, in this, it does spell out what would happen if there  
2 is disagreement between the agency and the SSC, that we would  
3 work together to try to reconcile that, that the SSC would put  
4 together some language as to why they don't believe the package  
5 is consistent with BSIA, and then the agency would work with  
6 them to try to address those issues.

7  
8 In the case of the South Atlantic, the request coming from the  
9 SSC was for additional analyses that the Science Center could  
10 not undertake in that time, and so I do not believe there was a  
11 determination by their SSC that the existing analysis was not  
12 BSIA, and it was simply that they wanted additional analyses  
13 that could not be completed in time. Thanks.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any other discussion? Dr. Simmons.

16  
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I  
18 guess that regional framework -- I think it's close to being  
19 done, and maybe we could cite it, or put a hyperlink or  
20 something, here, and so I'm not sure it's going to live when  
21 we're done with it, and I assume the councils, and it's for the  
22 South Atlantic and the Gulf Council, and we would put it  
23 somewhere on our website, and so, if that would be helpful for  
24 this section, we could also add that here, when that's  
25 completed.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? Go ahead,  
28 sir, Mr. Diaz.

29  
30 **MR. DIAZ:** Can we go back to the top of page 2 for just a  
31 second? Dr. Simmons, I know you said the very first sentence,  
32 where it says, "The SSC will advise the council, as requested,  
33 on the adequacy of scientific information and supporting  
34 analyses of the proposed management measures and alternatives in  
35 the FMPs and amendments", and I'm not reading the rest of it,  
36 and it seems like that adds a request that doesn't need to be  
37 there.

38  
39 I know it's the council's prerogative, but I would always want  
40 to know if the SSC doesn't think that the information we have is  
41 adequate, and so, I mean, in lieu of that -- If that's got to be  
42 there, I would always want the staff to request them to let us  
43 know if the information is inadequate, right, and so I think we  
44 should -- My opinion is to strike that and note to the staff  
45 that the council is always concerned with the adequacy of the  
46 information.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I  
3 think this is in reference to the agenda items the council wants  
4 the SSC to review and put on their agenda. It's up to the  
5 council's discretion, right, what those agenda items are. For  
6 the SSC, they can bring up ideas of things they want to consider  
7 at a future meeting, but it's still the council's discretion to  
8 decide what's on that agenda, and so there was some discussions  
9 about things, historically, that did not appear on the SSC's  
10 agenda, but people were not happy with that, because of that,  
11 and so we just want to make it clear, to members that serve,  
12 that it's as requested.

13  
14 There may be things you think we should be discussing and  
15 provide recommendations on, but it's really the council's  
16 discretion, and that's what we were suggesting here, but, if you  
17 think we could try to make that more clear, or if Mr. Rindone  
18 has a suggestion.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? Are you okay  
21 with that?

22  
23 **MR. DIAZ:** Yes.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right, and so do we have any objections  
26 to the changes that we have proposed? I don't think we have to  
27 have a motion on this, do we? Mr. Anson, we don't have to have  
28 a motion, right?

29  
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, at the end, it might be good.  
31 I'm still going through, and there is a couple other  
32 suggestions.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay.

35  
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and so, if there's no other  
37 questions on this section, we could go to Members and Chair  
38 under 2.5.2. There we go. Members appointed by the council to  
39 the SSCs shall be federal employees, state employees,  
40 academicians, or independent experts and shall strong scientific  
41 or technical credentials and relevant professional experience."  
42 We're suggesting to add "relevant professional experience"  
43 there.

44  
45 Then, in the paragraph below, we refer to it as "meetings",  
46 instead of "sessions", and so just being consistent with that  
47 terminology, and so "meeting" there. Then, the next paragraph  
48 down, "The Chair or Vice Chair shall preside when the SSC is

1 convened and will be responsible for summarizing its  
2 recommendations when advice is requested by the council." Our  
3 SSC doesn't operate by consensus.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

6

7 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Referring to Paragraph  
8 Number 2, and the next-to-last sentence, where it says, "SSC  
9 members serve at the pleasure of the council and may be removed  
10 at any time without cause." So I'm not sure if that second  
11 clause really needs to even be there, and I'm not sure, even  
12 more strongly, that "without cause" is meaningful.

13

14 You know, if we say "and may be removed at any time.", good  
15 enough, and the reason I say that is, if I was a prospective SSC  
16 member looking at this, I would say, man, I can be thrown off  
17 without even looking at it, with no reason at all, and I'm not  
18 sure that I want to apply, but we accomplish, in my view, the  
19 same thing if we put the period after "time", and I would  
20 recommend that.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

23

24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think that was probably in here  
25 before my time, but I'm going to look at Ms. Levy, to see if  
26 that has any potential legal ramifications for the council, when  
27 they're making these appointments or removing committee members.  
28 Beth is suggesting this might have been in our template for our  
29 regional management council SOPPs, but we can look into that and  
30 bring it back to Full Council, if that's okay.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I don't think it has ever the intention  
33 here to say that, just because I don't like you, we'll remove  
34 you. You know, I think it has -- You know, when it says,  
35 "without cause", I don't think I've ever seen this council not  
36 do something that didn't have a cause behind it. Dr. Porch.

37

38 **DR. WALTER:** I see that the first part of this action was going  
39 to be recruiting a whole lot of new scientists for the council,  
40 and so that is going to mean a lot more people. The problem is  
41 that a statement like this kind of works against that, because  
42 independent academic scientists value that academic freedom, and  
43 the ability to make their best scientific contributions, and I  
44 think the statement that they can be removed without cause is  
45 kind of chilling to that, and so I would caution the council  
46 about that, if they're trying to recruit from independent, top-  
47 level academics. They may want to temper that and provide some  
48 rationale as to how that process would be reviewed, and I think

1 it's usually been in a more thorough process of reappointing  
2 people, and sometimes that means a refresh on the reappointment  
3 process, and it's not that somebody has been removed, and it's  
4 just that other people have been appointed, and that there is a  
5 process for that. Thank you.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Ms. Levy.

8

9 **MS. MARA LEVY:** So I'm not sure you need the "without cause",  
10 but I think it needs to be clear that, just because you're  
11 appointed for a three-year term, it does not mean that you're  
12 guaranteed a three-year term, meaning there could be  
13 circumstances, whatever they are, in which the council decides  
14 to remove you, and the problem with articulating a process is  
15 that all of this is done in closed session, and so there's not -  
16 - I mean, because we don't want to -- You know, we discuss these  
17 appointments, qualifications, all that in closed session, and so  
18 I think, whatever we do here, you know, has to walk that line of  
19 making it clear that the council can choose to appoint or  
20 remove, you know, at their pleasure.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Ryan.

23

24 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to build on what  
25 Ms. Levy was saying about all of this happening in closed  
26 session, that's also part of the reason why the council doesn't  
27 have any sort of written explanation to anyone who was not  
28 reappointed, and, though it is very rare, there have been  
29 instances, in the past, where an SSC member was removed by the  
30 council mid-term, for reasons that the council discussed during  
31 closed session, and so this situation that's being discussed is  
32 not without precedent. I will leave it to you guys to decide on  
33 the "without cause" part, but an SSC member being removed by the  
34 council mid-term has happened before.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Anson, did you have -- All right. Dr.  
37 Porch, I don't think, at any one time, that anybody on this  
38 council wants anybody on the SSC not to be able to express their  
39 opinion of what they think is the best scientific -- I think  
40 that's what we need out of the SSC, is we need the people to be  
41 able to speak freely and tell, and so I don't think it's a word  
42 that I'm going to remove you just because, without cause, and I  
43 would hope that -- I have never seen anything, in my years here,  
44 that would change that, and you would have to be -- Just like  
45 Ryan said, and it would have to be something, definitely, that  
46 would cause you to have to have someone removed. Does that make  
47 sense? Okay. All right. Dr. Simmons, anything else on this?

48



1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Let's keep going. I think we're to  
2 Administrative Provisions, I believe, 2.5.3.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** C.J.  
5  
6 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your  
7 committee, but just clarification. Are we removing the "without  
8 cause" part of that sentence there, or are we just keeping it  
9 as-is?  
10  
11 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I don't think we are at this time. I mean,  
12 the "without cause", I don't think it's been removed. It is?  
13 Okay. Yes, Mr. Gill.  
14  
15 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so my question is why  
16 not? The sentiment discussed at this table, by most everybody,  
17 is that it's probably not appropriate, and we would be better  
18 served if it weren't there, and so, if I caught the sentiment of  
19 the table correctly, most folks in the committee favor removing  
20 it.  
21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** It reminds me of an old football coach,  
23 and, you know, I got it in there without cause, and you can  
24 remove me with cause, and you can't remove me, and, you know,  
25 what's the deal here. You know, you can with, or you can't  
26 without, and I don't know. I don't have a problem, and it's up  
27 to you all. You know, I'm open to discussion. Dr. Simmons,  
28 your thoughts on it?  
29  
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I think that staff is  
31 probably looking for another motion, after we get through all of  
32 this, and, at that time, if we want to suggest making that  
33 change, in addition to these other changes, that's probably the  
34 right time to do that, and, if you want to wait until Full  
35 Council, we can do that as well.  
36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Yes.  
38  
39 **MR. DIAZ:** I don't have strong feelings about whether it stays  
40 in or not. The council needs the flexibility that it has now.  
41 If there's an issue with an SSC member, we can remove them, and  
42 I think, if we change this language, we should have strong input  
43 from Ms. Levy, and have something here that's legally  
44 defensible, and so I don't think we should make it at the table,  
45 and we should get some legal advice on what the proper language  
46 is, to where we stand on good legal ground.  
47  
48 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? Dr. Simmons.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so  
3 if we could go to 2.5.3, please. We're suggesting to remove  
4 "the". Then, all the way down to 2.7.3, Ecosystem Technical  
5 Committee.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons, real quick, I think Mr. Gill  
8 has a question.

9  
10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to draw our  
11 attention to 2.5.3, the last sentence of the first paragraph,  
12 and that reads: "(The SSC should attend and meet with the  
13 council to the extent practicable.)"

14  
15 First of all, I don't understand why it would be in parentheses,  
16 and I don't understand what that does. Secondly, there is two  
17 ways to interpret this, and I think there is the right  
18 interpretation, and this suggests that we're recommending,  
19 although we control that, that the entire SSC meet with the  
20 council, and, in my view, that's probably not appropriate, but  
21 it's not clear exactly what the intent of this sentence is, and  
22 my sense is that it's something that, to my knowledge, we've  
23 never done, and the reason I have problems with it is because  
24 folks sometimes want to attend SSC meetings, and they sometimes  
25 want to attend council meetings, and doing them together makes  
26 it very difficult, and so I would recommend that at least we  
27 remove the parentheses, and, secondly, we clarify whether in  
28 fact we mean the entire SSC, and, thirdly, we control that, and  
29 so it's not whether they should or not, and it's whether we  
30 request that they do, and so I think that sentence needs some  
31 work.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

34  
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I  
36 believe this is in Magnuson, or the National Standards, and the  
37 reason it's in parentheses is this is what other regional  
38 management councils do, and this was what I believe we were  
39 advised to do from Headquarters staff, when we were working on  
40 our SOPPs, is, even though we don't maybe practice this, this is  
41 what other regions do, and it is still part of the standards,  
42 the law, and I believe it's where it came from, but I am going  
43 to -- This might be something we definitely would bring back,  
44 and dig into some more, but I'm pretty sure it's in the  
45 standards that it says that.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any further discussion on this? All  
48 right. Dr. Simmons.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Let's go to 2.7.3. Okay,  
3 and so we've, preliminarily, in committee, reorganized the  
4 structure of the SSC, and so, because the Ecosystem Technical  
5 Committee was made up of our Special Ecosystem SSC members, and  
6 then some other, two other, Standing SSC members, we would need  
7 to consider making modifications to this technical committee,  
8 based on those changes, and so what staff is proposing here is  
9 that the Ecosystem Technical Committee consists of no more than  
10 twelve people. Membership includes three staff from NMFS, one  
11 of which is from the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Division,  
12 five members from the SSC, with economic, social, or  
13 biological/ecological expertise, and up to four other  
14 stakeholder representatives. Members are appointed jointly by  
15 the Executive Director and the council chair.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any discussion on this? Yes, Mr.  
18 Gill.

19  
20 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Shouldn't the parentheses  
21 section be moved to after "members", because that's what it is  
22 addressing. It's not addressing the SSC in general, and it's  
23 addressing the five members.

24  
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think Bernie can do that, right,  
26 and so you're just saying cut "with economic, social, or  
27 biological/ecological expertise", right after -- Between  
28 "members" and "from"?

29  
30 **MR. GILL:** Correct.

31  
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you. I don't think we need a  
33 motion, Mr. Chair, for that. Are you okay with just moving that  
34 section, between "members" and "from" in the blue text? There  
35 we go, Mr. Chair.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. All right. With those changes, any  
38 discussion on that?

39  
40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We would remove the parentheses  
41 then, or remove the "with", either one.

42  
43 **MR. GILL:** Well, I waffled on that one, but I think leaving them  
44 in is appropriate.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? Do we need a  
47 motion on this?

48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think on all the changes, and  
2 then, if we want to circle back on the other sticking point, we  
3 could do that at Full Council, if you would like.  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Could -- We would entertain a  
6 motion for all the changes that have been made, and then we'll  
7 come back to Full Council. I'm going to get duct tape on you in  
8 a minute.  
9  
10 **MR. GILL:** You've told me that before, Mr. Chairman.  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Can I get a motion? I would entertain a  
13 motion to accept. We have a motion. Do I have a second?  
14  
15 **MR. DIAZ:** Yes.  
16  
17 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** We have a second. Okay. Any discussion?  
18 **Any opposition?** Go ahead, Mr. Gill. Your duct tape is coming.  
19  
20 **MR. GILL:** I oppose that motion.  
21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** We've got one opposed. Any others? Okay.  
23 **The motion carries.** Ms. Levy. I'm sorry.  
24  
25 **MS. LEVY:** Just so that we're -- So we don't have to come back  
26 to this point at Full Council, but so the part about the SSC  
27 holding its meetings in conjunction with the council, to the  
28 extent practicable, that language is straight out of the  
29 Magnuson Act, and so it's directing that, if practicable, and I  
30 think the Gulf Council has determined that's not practicable,  
31 but other councils, particularly Alaska and the West Coast, do  
32 that, I believe.  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Dugas.  
35  
36 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a clarification,  
37 maybe for Bernie, and there was one opposition.  
38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes. Okay. Sorry. Thank you. Anything  
40 else, Dr. Simmons?  
41  
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Not on this agenda item.  
43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Mr. Frazer.  
45  
46 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I'm not on the  
47 committee, but I just wanted to, you know, given the discussion  
48 that we had on BSIA, and that Section 2.5.1, and there was a

1 reference to some internal document on BSIA, and I'm just asking  
2 if we could get that in the background materials, prior to Full  
3 Council.

4  
5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, we could provide the draft  
6 from the SSC meeting, when it was discussed. I don't know -- I  
7 will look at Andy and John, and I don't know if there's an  
8 updated version of it to provide to the council, but we could  
9 certainly provide a link to what was discussed during that SSC  
10 meeting on the regional BSIA framework.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

13  
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We will provide a final version, and it's  
15 publicly available, so you have that link.

16  
17 **DR. FRAZER:** Prior to Full Council? Okay. Great.

18  
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion on this? We're  
22 moving right along.

23  
24 **REVIEW AND DISCUSS AD HOC AND STANDING ADVISORY PANELS**

25  
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and so Item Number V is  
27 Review and Discuss the Ad Hoc and Standing Advisory Panels. At  
28 the beginning of each year, the council reviews any ad hoc  
29 advisory panels and assesses if their charge has been met and if  
30 these advisory panels are expected to meet that year, which  
31 we'll talk about in a little bit.

32  
33 The council currently has two ad hoc advisory panels, the Ad Hoc  
34 Charter-for-Hire Data Collection AP that was just formed, and  
35 they met in January of 2024, and so an additional fall meeting  
36 is planned for that committee, and so they're still working on  
37 their charge, and the other ad hoc is the Ad Hoc Red  
38 Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ that was formed in January of 2018  
39 and has met three times, and we envision also convening this AP  
40 later this year.

41  
42 We do need to consider updating the charge of that group, and  
43 we're suggesting that we add that to Other Business in the Reef  
44 Fish Committee. We do have a draft amended charge for the  
45 committee, and the council, to consider in the Reef Fish  
46 Committee.

47  
48 The three-year term cycles for your Reef Fish and Shrimp APs are

1 currently up for review, and so staff is planning to readvertise  
2 for those two, unless directed otherwise by the committee and  
3 council, and so you will review applicants, and make preliminary  
4 selections, at the April 2024 council meeting. Then, at the  
5 June 2024 meeting, the council will review any final members of  
6 those two APs. Bernie, if there's no questions on what we need  
7 to do, can we pull up Tab G, Number 5, please?  
8

9 This just kind of shows you the information that I just ran  
10 through. The Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ, there is  
11 the current charge that we want to discuss with you all during  
12 Reef Fish. Again, this group was created in January of 2018,  
13 and they met in -- They've met three times. They met two times  
14 in 2018 and then in June of 2021, and then we had all the focus  
15 group meetings, you recall, and then now we're at the current  
16 stage, and so we're planning on convening this group later in  
17 the year, at least once or twice.  
18

19 We know that your For-Hire Data Collection AP -- They still have  
20 work to do, and so we're going to keep them there, and so keep  
21 going down, and so the two standing APs you have that are due  
22 for repopulation are Reef Fish and Shrimp, and this lists the  
23 number of meetings we've had since they were populated. Mr.  
24 Chair.  
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any discussion on this? All right.  
27 I don't think we need a motion for that one. Are we good?  
28

29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** No, and so we'll just proceed with  
30 readvertising for those APs, and we'll talk about the charge  
31 tomorrow for the ad hoc. Okay. All right. Now we're to you.  
32

33 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Which one are we on now? Number VI.  
34

#### 35 **REVIEW AND DISCUSS PROPOSED 2024 ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET**

36

37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and so we have some draft of  
38 activities for 2024, and that's in Tab G, Number 6(a), and then  
39 Ms. Hager is going to go through a proposed budget, and so what  
40 I'm looking for is just any feedback that you all have on Tab G,  
41 Number 6(a), and then we'll bring the -- When we have our final  
42 funded budget back, we'll bring that back later in the year, and  
43 so you don't need a motion or anything for this, and this is  
44 really for your information and feedback at this time.  
45

46 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Is there any feedback on the budget?  
47 Mr. Gill.  
48

1 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I presume, based on  
2 our prior discussion, that the inclusions of the Special SSCs  
3 will be removed, upon approval of the reorganization of the SSC,  
4 correct?

5  
6 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Correct. Can we please pull up Tab  
7 G, Number 6(a)? We have meetings of the council, Council  
8 Coordinating Committee meetings, with the anticipated month  
9 held, or the months that are already slated for those meetings  
10 to be held, and, as Mr. Gill pointed out, if you go forward with  
11 the changes to the SOPPs, we will update this as well.

12  
13 We tried to anticipate when you would convene your APs, and  
14 tried to put them -- Make them more aware of when they might be  
15 convened, and so we have some draft months there for the  
16 advisory panels. You will also notice that the SSC -- We're  
17 suggesting removing the January SSC meeting and convening them  
18 in February, May, July, and October. Technical committees, you  
19 can see when we're planning to convene them, and then summits  
20 and other meetings.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

23  
24 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so, noting the SSC  
25 change to four meetings a year, instead of five, right, which I  
26 think is probably in the right direction, did you consider three  
27 meetings, instead of four? The reason I ask that is that we  
28 have five currently, and that seems more than we really need.  
29 The South Atlantic does two, and I think, for us, that would not  
30 work, which says that three or four makes sense for  
31 consideration, and I'm not in the mode of recommending three,  
32 but I just wanted to know what the discussion was and why that  
33 was not proffered as a possible alternative.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

36  
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I will start, and I will get staff  
38 to help me, but, well, January is just very difficult,  
39 historically, for the Science Center, for the Regional Office  
40 staff, and for our staff, to get everything together during the  
41 holidays, and missed deadlines and everything else, and  
42 sometimes we had to discuss those agenda items again later in  
43 the year, because things weren't ready, and so January just  
44 really wasn't a good month, and so we're starting in February,  
45 May, and then October for sure, and in-person meetings is what  
46 we would like to see.

47  
48 There's a potential that July is virtual, and, right now, we are

1 thinking we aren't going to need four meetings. We don't like  
2 to make them longer than three days, and it starts getting  
3 really hard for people, I think, in their positions, to have  
4 more than three days at a meeting, plus travel, but it's  
5 possible that we may not need one, or we may decide that July  
6 doesn't happen, but we're just budgeting that way right now.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

9

10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so that makes sense to  
11 me, and the thought of potentially one of them being a Zoom, if  
12 needed, and that also makes sense, and so it's consistent with  
13 my original question. Thank you very much.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Diaz.

16

17 **MR. DIAZ:** I think the way you have it right now is about right.  
18 I would not want to see less SSC meetings. Our process is so  
19 slow, and I would hate for us to have to wait for an extra SSC  
20 meeting to change an annual catch limit or something like that,  
21 and it could make the difference from even opening up something  
22 in one year to all of a complete other year, and so, anyway, I  
23 think the way you've got it right now, and I agree with the  
24 three-day limit. Those meetings exhaust me. I mean, they just  
25 -- It's like running a marathon going to those meetings.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. So I guess what I'm hearing here is,  
28 basically, if we want to go back to four, instead of five, and  
29 then that's what you're expecting, and then maybe one virtual,  
30 and then four, and is that right?

31

32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Chair, we do have -- Bernie, if  
33 you could go back to the SSC, and we do have four meetings  
34 proposed and budgeted for, with one of those four being virtual,  
35 in July, is what we're thinking right now.

36

37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** It would have the option of being  
38 either/or, and it could be virtual or in-person?

39

40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and we're strongly  
41 recommending that our SSC members come in-person, unless there's  
42 a circumstance, but normally we have pretty good attendance in-  
43 person.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Does anybody have any other  
46 comments or discussion on this? All right, Dr. Simmons.

47

48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right, and so then, for the



1 remaining proposed activities, we have SEDAR meetings, public  
2 hearings, and outreach efforts will be discussed during the  
3 Education and Outreach Committee at this meeting, and I  
4 apologize for the highlighting. Bernie, if we could go down,  
5 and I'm not sure why Reef Fish Amendment 49 is highlighted. I  
6 think that's a typo. Those are the public hearings we're  
7 anticipating that could be completed before the end of the year.  
8 Mr. Chair, any feedback?

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any discussion on this? Seeing none, Dr.  
11 Simmons. We have no discussion on it, and so I think we can  
12 probably --

13  
14 **MS. BETH HAGER:** They're virtual meetings, and so they have very  
15 minimal impact to cost, and I don't know why it was highlighted.

16  
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and so --

18  
19 **MR. GILL:** Mr. Chairman?

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

22  
23 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I apologize, and it just  
24 caught my eye, and so, on the SEDAR meetings, we have red  
25 snapper, SEDAR 97, and we have six meetings scheduled there, and  
26 is that actually going to happen, given what happened with the  
27 red snapper assessment review? I am looking at Dr. Walter.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Dr. Walter.

30  
31 **DR. WALTER:** I didn't know that red snapper was on the agenda  
32 for this meeting, but I think we probably will have to have that  
33 conversation, about what that process looks like. I don't know  
34 that we can do it right here on that calendar planning, and  
35 clearly we can't not assess red snapper, but, in terms of what  
36 that's going to look like, I think we're going to have to have  
37 some further discussion, and I think it's going to have to work  
38 its way through the SSC, because the SSC is going to get that  
39 report, I think, at their meeting, and then we probably will  
40 take it from there, in terms of whether it goes and becomes a  
41 research track or whether we can address a number of the  
42 concerns from the reviewers in an operational. Thanks.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, Ryan.

45  
46 **MR. RINDONE:** Just as a reminder, this is for planning purposes.  
47 You know, these are proposed, and so the intention of the  
48 council, at the moment, is to try to proceed with a benchmark

1 assessment that would begin later on this year, since we're  
2 going to have to revisit some things from the previous attempt  
3 in SEDAR 74, and, when we say "meetings", "meetings" doesn't  
4 mean that we're going to have six in-person meetings of some  
5 period of length, and it can also mean webinars and things like  
6 that as well, because those are timed events, where we're going  
7 to have some bringing together of SSC members, people from the  
8 Science Center, academia, et cetera, to discuss whatever topics  
9 it is that might need to be discussed, and so "meetings" is --  
10 At least for SEDAR purposes, it doesn't necessarily mean in-  
11 person in a hotel or something.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Does that clarify it? All right, Dr.  
14 Simmons.

15  
16 **MS. HAGER:** Okay. Could we get up on the next tab, Bernie, Tab  
17 6(b)? We have -- Staff have put together a budget, a proposed  
18 budget, for 2024. At this point, we don't have our funding at  
19 all for 2024, and we're still working with 2023 and carryover,  
20 and so we have proposed a level-funded budget, and that's what  
21 we were told to expect anyway, and some of the other councils  
22 have received at their funding at that level.

23  
24 With this, we're -- In travel expenses, I have drawn it as well  
25 as we could, based on the current activities schedule, and you  
26 can see the reduction to the SSC travel that we're expecting,  
27 hopefully, but we will see. Travel costs are increasing, and so  
28 I'm not sure that we will hit this target. Things may be more  
29 expensive this year, and so, as we proceed through this, please  
30 be aware that I've adjusted where we can, where we have known  
31 increases, such as COLAs, insurance of various types, and all  
32 the insurance has gone up, you know, and so throughout, but to  
33 try and keep level-funded as well, and it's a balancing act.

34  
35 This is strictly proposed, and this will change, for sure, when  
36 we get our actual funding, and as we go through the year and  
37 find out what line items are being pushed to the limits, and,  
38 you know, where we can draw in other places, and so, if you will  
39 scroll down, and, if anybody has any questions throughout, about  
40 anything in particular that is different, and we included the  
41 COLAs, like I said, in the salaries, in the current staff  
42 projections. Fringe benefits are based on the current census  
43 and the current costs.

44  
45 Our rent goes up this year. Meeting room costs, I have a small  
46 margin right now, and I expect that to actually need to increase  
47 throughout the year, because those costs are becoming higher and  
48 higher, and that's pretty much it. This is just our standard

1 operating stuff. Any questions?

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

4  
5 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Beth, for  
6 this. On the personnel side, the SSC reduction of some \$13,000,  
7 is that predicated on the reorganization that we talked about,  
8 and that's being accomplished already, and so there is no  
9 further likelihood, given that we approve the reorganization,  
10 and so this one has that incorporated, and is that correct?

11  
12 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, and, really, that was to get to the correct  
13 number at the bottom, and we needed to draw in every place that  
14 we could, and the SSC's costs, in 2023, didn't exceed that line  
15 item, and so I could draw it in some anyway, and then, proposing  
16 that July might be virtual, then we also have, you know, a bit  
17 of wiggle room on that, and so, again, this is strictly a number  
18 so that you guys can see, if we're level-funded, these are some  
19 of the lines that are going to have to come in, probably, and  
20 these are lines that we can't move, and that's what we have  
21 here, and this is nothing that is written in stone.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Gill.

24  
25 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One final for Dr. Simmons,  
26 and so, given the rent numbers, it suggests that we're staying  
27 where we are for now? I'm sorry, and so there was some  
28 consideration of whether we could stay where we are, and my  
29 read, from this, is, okay, rent is going up, and we're not  
30 moving, and is that a fair assumption or no?

31  
32 **MS. HAGER:** Rent, with the current lease that we have, and we  
33 have a small increase built into it. At this point, the current  
34 owners, the new owners, have until March to pull the trigger on  
35 their option to get us out, basically to buy us out of the  
36 lease. We haven't been told that, and, after March, there's  
37 going to have to be another renegotiation if they want us to  
38 move, and so it's going to cost them more, and so likely we  
39 aren't moving at this point, but we really don't know, and,  
40 unfortunately, the cost of real estate in Tampa right now is a  
41 lot higher than what we're paying, and so, if we were to have to  
42 move, that number could depend on the negotiation, and it could  
43 depend on what funds we have available, which is the next slide  
44 that we're going to talk about.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Any other discussion?  
47 Obviously, we realize that this is fluid, and it will go up. Go  
48 ahead.

1  
2 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Beth, you indicated  
3 that you guys haven't got your money yet. Do you have any  
4 indication when that might happen?  
5

6 **MS. HAGER:** Well, before the end of March. It's a mechanical  
7 situation, is my understanding, and some of the councils, like I  
8 said, have received their funding, but there are a couple that  
9 they just can't make the pieces work with the new system and  
10 ASAP, and so, rather than break it further, they're kind of  
11 holding off until we get -- Either they get it worked out or we  
12 get to a point where they're going to have to do something.  
13

14 **MR. DONALDSON:** We're fighting the same issue at the commission,  
15 and so I was curious if you had any clear date, which we don't.  
16

17 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion on the budget  
18 item? I think, if you go into Tab 7 there, which is going to  
19 explain a little bit more here.  
20

#### 21 **REVIEW UPDATE TO 2020-2024 ADMINISTRATIVE AWARD CARRYOVER**

22

23 **MS. HAGER:** If we want to bring up Tab Number 7, Bernie. This  
24 is the discussion of -- This is an informational tab, just to  
25 give you all of a snapshot of where we're sitting right now with  
26 our carryover funds, and I realize this isn't in total, and that  
27 was intentional, because I wanted to be able to see by year  
28 where we're sitting, and notice our line for 2023, and we spent  
29 almost everything we were allocated in 2023. Hard costs have  
30 gone up in 2024, and so that margin is even slimmer in 2024, as  
31 we're projecting.  
32

33 We have a recreational initiative that you all have already  
34 approved to be using these carryover funds, and so where we're  
35 sitting right now is about \$595,000 in unallocated carryover  
36 costs. However, because of the unknowns that we're facing in  
37 2024, level funding, potentially having to move, the changes  
38 that we might have to face with the IRA money, which might  
39 actually decrease our costs, if we wind up having to reprogram  
40 some activities to the IRA.  
41

42 I didn't even want to put an eye on this and have you guys  
43 starting to look at how to spend it, because it's not a solid  
44 number at this point. You know, it could be between \$300,000  
45 and \$600,000, and that's a pretty wide swing, and so this is  
46 where it sits. This is the snapshot. I will be happy to update  
47 you as we go further on in the year, and things progress, and we  
48 know more.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think, obviously, until you get your  
3 budget, until you know where you're at, and until you know  
4 what's going to happen with your rent coming up in March, and  
5 those are your two big factors right there, will it be level  
6 funding, or will they give you a little bit extra, and will  
7 there be an increase in your rent, and are you going to have to  
8 move? Luckily, we have a little money in the bank, so that we  
9 could be able to fall back on it, and be able to do what we need  
10 to do. Any questions on that, or any other discussion on it?

11  
12 I think, obviously, you know -- Well, they will know something  
13 by March, and so, you know, by the time we do our next meeting,  
14 we'll have a good idea. Mr. Diaz.

15  
16 **MR. DIAZ:** I just wanted to throw this out there, and I know  
17 this will be extremely complicated, but Gulf States Marine  
18 Fisheries Commission decided to buy their building, years ago,  
19 and I'm sure, years ago, that was a big expense, and it probably  
20 looked insurmountable, but I don't know -- I mean, I personally  
21 think it might be worth the council exploring if there's a way  
22 to purchase a building, and I don't know if it's even feasible,  
23 but we're paying \$200,000 a year in rent, and so, I mean, what  
24 kind of a building could you buy for \$200,000, and pay your loan  
25 costs, plus the insurance and taxes and other things, and I'm  
26 sure it's very complicated for a quasi-governmental agency to  
27 own something, and so I know that, legally, it wouldn't be an  
28 easy thing to do, but I think it should at least be explored.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

31  
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Chair, I think we need to take  
33 a break. I'm not sure what happened to our --

34  
35 **MS. HAGER:** I think we have a breaker that's blown, and, Dale,  
36 we actually do a lease/purchase analysis for the market, when we  
37 start looking at places, and so, whether that's at the end of  
38 this year, in the middle of this year, or the end of next year,  
39 when our lease expires, that is a part of that discussion, and  
40 we have historically tried to at least consider that. We also  
41 do that if we have like capital, like the van, or the Barracuda  
42 Archiver, that were very expensive pieces of equipment, and we  
43 always have a lease/purchase analysis.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any questions? All right, Dr.  
46 Simmons, I think we are going close to a point to break. Mr.  
47 Anson, if that's what you would like to do at this time, and  
48 we're a couple of minutes over.

1  
2 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, let's go ahead and take a break. Before we do  
3 that though, I just want to recognize -- I saw him standing --  
4 There he is. Mr. Ed Swindell, a former council member, is here  
5 today. Ed, welcome. It's good to see you.  
6

7 **MR. ED SWINDELL:** I would like to say one thing. For all of you  
8 that I don't know, good luck with the council. I wish all of  
9 you the best, and I'm heading to North Carolina, to visit my  
10 sister and a cousin that's in a care facility, and so I will see  
11 all of you at another time, somewhere along the line, but it's  
12 good to -- Those of you that I haven't said hello to, hello, but  
13 it's good to see all of you, and the best of luck to you. Thank  
14 you, sir.  
15

16 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Ed. Safe travels. It's good to see you.  
17 All right. We'll break for fifteen minutes, hopefully, and  
18 we'll keep our fingers crossed. Let's just plan for fifteen.  
19 Thank you.  
20

21 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)  
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think, if I'm correct, we're at Item VIII  
24 on our agenda now, and we're going to review, and approve,  
25 proposed activities for the Phase II of the Inflation Reduction  
26 Act. I will turn it over to Dr. Simmons.  
27

28 **REVIEW AND APPROVE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR PHASE II INFLATION**  
29 **REDUCTION ACT (IRA) FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL MANAGEMENT COUNCILS**  
30

31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
32 For this item, we have a very abbreviated timeline, and this  
33 proposal is due actually at this meeting, on Wednesday, January  
34 31, and so I think we have time this morning, Mr. Chair, if you  
35 want to take any feedback, or suggestions, from the whole  
36 council on this, and we will try to integrate those as best we  
37 can before the due date, and before this is, you know, finalized  
38 at Full Council, and so I just wanted to mention that.  
39

40 Just to remind everybody, during our October 2023 council  
41 meeting, the process of applying for the Inflation Reduction Act  
42 funding for climate-ready initiatives is in two phases, and so  
43 we talked about Phase I during that October council meeting, and  
44 we applied, and you approved, that \$375,000 to support staff, a  
45 staff position for that, and so we have applied for that, and so  
46 this is to now discuss Phase II of that funding, and so we have  
47 a draft proposal for you all to look at.  
48

1 It's a framework of activities that we have to submit through  
2 this application process, and it is competitive amongst the  
3 other regional management councils. Again, the deadline is at  
4 this meeting, Wednesday, January 31, and so we don't have a  
5 whole lot of time, but we'll do our best to try to integrate any  
6 suggestions you have and get that uploaded by the deadline.

7  
8 Before we get that tab open, Bernie, or while you're doing that,  
9 and it's Tab G, Number 8, and just a reminder that we can't --  
10 Any funding we receive for these efforts can't be comingled with  
11 our current admin award. We have to keep that separate. Staff  
12 that work on these activities -- They can be divided amongst the  
13 awards, but we have to keep track of their time, and so there's  
14 going to be some additional administrative burden on our end, to  
15 kind of keep up with some of these things, and so I just wanted  
16 to remind everybody of that.

17  
18 This is the template, Bernie, that you have up that we were  
19 requested to use for all the regional management councils, but  
20 what I would like to pull up is Tab G, Number 8, which is what  
21 we put together for the committee.

22  
23 The other thing is this funding for the regional management  
24 councils cannot be used to collect data or to supplement the  
25 current monitoring surveys that may be ongoing, and so I also  
26 wanted to bring that up as well, because I think there's a lot  
27 of other funding that came from this effort that's being  
28 funneled through academia and the Gulf States and the Science  
29 Center and Regional Office and things like that, and so just to  
30 remind everybody that the funds can't be used for that.

31  
32 I will just start with our title, and, if anybody can think of a  
33 snazzier title, that would be great, you know, and it would make  
34 it a lot more exciting, but we have "Identification and  
35 Integration of Ecosystem Components into Flexible Management  
36 Measures for Climate-Ready Fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico".

37  
38 We were asked to identify those priorities that are in that  
39 template and how our main objectives, and deliverables, or sub-  
40 tasks, would meet those objectives in NOAA's template, and so  
41 we've tried to do that in Section 3.

42  
43 We've identified what we think the funding priorities are, those  
44 three there, and how we think this proposal will try to  
45 integrate those into our two main objectives, and so the first  
46 overarching objective for this proposal is to complete the Gulf  
47 of Mexico Fishery Ecosystem Plan and its components. This seems  
48 to be something that we just really can't accomplish with our

1 current resources, and so we think that moving this effort over  
2 to the climate-ready initiative will really help us get over  
3 that hump. We have some additional resources that we can ask  
4 for, and I think this is the right way to go about it.

5  
6 The second main objective is to develop procedures that will  
7 streamline management processes and regulatory actions to  
8 increase the council's responsiveness to climate change, and  
9 this is also something I think we've discussed in recent years,  
10 and we just also haven't really had the bandwidth to make  
11 adequate progress on that as well.

12  
13 This proposal covers a multiyear funding request, which  
14 integrates two objectives into the overall plan, and so, based  
15 on the annual amount of funding that we receive, portions of our  
16 admin activities that we're currently considering will probably  
17 have to be reprogrammed, based on that, and put over to this pot  
18 of funding, depending on what we get, because this is a request.  
19 We still don't know exactly what we're going to receive, and we  
20 have not received the \$375,000 yet either.

21  
22 We are going -- We are aiming to communicate, and to engage,  
23 with the Regional Office and the Southeast Fisheries Science  
24 Center, as appropriate, to ensure our products are developed and  
25 are compatible with other ongoing shared research and management  
26 objectives.

27  
28 What we've tried to do is, under those two main objectives,  
29 there's some sub-items, and so the tasks outlined in the  
30 proposal will be performed by the newly-hired Ecosystem Analyst  
31 and one fulltime administrative research assistant. We do have  
32 that announcement out, and we are hoping to do interviews after  
33 the council meeting for that position.

34  
35 For the first objective, the Ecosystem Analyst will develop the  
36 FMP, which will include separate modules that focus on the  
37 council-selected and stakeholder-driven fishery ecosystem  
38 issues, which we spent quite a bit of time talking about that  
39 during the October council meeting, and then, later on in the  
40 agenda this week, we're going to start talking about some of the  
41 engagement processes that our O&E has recommended since then for  
42 you to consider and how we might mesh that in as we move forward  
43 with this funding, and so a lot of different things going on,  
44 and hopefully it will all come together here at the end of the  
45 meeting.

46  
47 Let's keep going down, and so we have multiple components that  
48 include a management perspective for the FEP and the development



1 of a communication plan, those modules that I mentioned,  
2 summarizing the outcomes of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan process  
3 for each of the fishery ecosystem issues, and so the second  
4 objective is to hire a consultant to develop procedures that  
5 will streamline the council process and provide more flexibility  
6 to improve fishery management in response to climate change, and  
7 so that's kind of trying to look at our regulatory streamlining,  
8 but, before we start developing that amendment, or amendments,  
9 or generic amendment, we're suggesting that we hire a consultant  
10 to look at the whole process, to look at our process, to look at  
11 the regional -- The Southeast Regional Office's process,  
12 regulatory process, and tell us what other councils are doing,  
13 how we can improve our current process, and they will bring all  
14 that information to us.

15  
16 The council decides that, yes, we want to move forward with this  
17 for reef fish, or, yes, we want to try to move forward with this  
18 for CMP, or it can be a generic amendment, and so to try to  
19 integrate any other activities and processes that regional  
20 councils are doing, and that sets us up, hopefully, with a good  
21 starting point, so we can really get it moving through our  
22 regulatory process.

23  
24 Now we're going to go -- That's Objective 2 that I just  
25 discussed, and so can we go back to Objective 1, please, on page  
26 2, under the Ecosystem Analyst?

27  
28 The Ecosystem Analyst and the admin research assistant will  
29 assist a social scientist contractor, and so, within this, we're  
30 suggesting, or proposing, to hire a contractor that will help us  
31 in holding and staffing stakeholder engagement workshops,  
32 following the Outreach and Education Technical Committee's  
33 communication plan, which, like I said, we'll talk about later.  
34 This contractor will lead a process for assessing the council's  
35 standard audience, as well as identifying underserved  
36 communities and stakeholders with current and future -- To help  
37 us develop a process for current and future engagements that the  
38 council may want to consider, and so that's some of the main  
39 things that we're anticipating that consultant will help us  
40 with.

41  
42 If we keep going down to page 3, we're talking about leading to  
43 the development of the modules, and so I think, during the  
44 Ecosystem Committee in October, we talked about the fishery  
45 ecosystem issues, and so we're saying, in this, that we're still  
46 going to work through what those issues are, and what the  
47 priorities would be, but we're proposing that, on page 4, what  
48 those components would look like before we go through this

1 prioritization process, and then what they would finally look  
2 like after the prioritization process, and then what those  
3 anticipated deliverables would be.

4  
5 Each fishery ecosystem module would represent an important body  
6 of work that can be disseminated to stakeholders for feedback  
7 and provided to the council as part of the fishery ecosystem  
8 process. The results of the module could stand alone and may be  
9 deemed appropriate by the council, and its scientific advisors,  
10 for integration into the management process or not, depending on  
11 what is gathered through the stakeholder engagement efforts, and  
12 it would be used to update the goals of the council's  
13 communication plan, as part of the fishery management FEP, part  
14 of the fishery management plan document defined in there. Those  
15 reports would come to the council as well throughout this  
16 process.

17  
18 Let's see, and I'm kind of jumping around here, and we talked  
19 about the contractor for the stakeholder engagements. I will go  
20 back to -- We have a very draft list of the FEIs that we're  
21 anticipating, and that's on page 3, and this is not an  
22 exhaustive list. These are just items that have been discussed  
23 in the various Ecosystem Technical Committee meetings. They're  
24 issues that have come up from stakeholders, and they're issues  
25 that the council has brought up, and so this is a very draft  
26 list.

27  
28 This is something that we're going to have to work through with  
29 this process, but these are things we think directly could be  
30 considered are likely are being impacted by climate change in  
31 the Gulf of Mexico.

32  
33 Let's go to page 4 now and talk about the summit. Okay, and so,  
34 as part of the FEP process, the council is exploring avenues to  
35 involve partner agencies that play a role in the identified  
36 fishery ecosystem issues, and so what we're thinking is that we  
37 would host a large summit, at the end of this process.

38  
39 Something that the council selects is probably is going to  
40 involve a lot of other agencies, extra-jurisdictional agencies,  
41 and so one of those things might be red tide, and so we're  
42 thinking that the summit, or the symposium, would be very large,  
43 seventy-five participants, and it would necessitate contracting  
44 with a meeting facilitator to fully engage all participants.  
45 John, are you noticing anything, or Emily?

46  
47 We do have a table of proposed activities and expected  
48 timeframes, and it starts on page 6 and 7, and then I will have

1 Ms. Hager walk through the budget. Maybe you can start there,  
2 and see if there's some feedback, or questions, and I apologize  
3 for jumping around, and I didn't have a PowerPoint. I didn't  
4 know if that would be more confusing.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any discussion on this? Yes, Mr.  
7 Gill.

8  
9 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know it will probably  
10 shock you, but I have no questions, but I do think the staff is  
11 due congratulations for developing a very comprehensive, well-  
12 thought-out, and detailed proposal, and I think it all looks  
13 good. Thank you.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion? Yes, Dr.  
16 Walter.

17  
18 **DR. WALTER:** Thank you, and we, at the Science Center, reviewed  
19 the proposals and found that they matched very well with a  
20 number of the things that we've got going on, and I think it's  
21 going to be good to be able to work together on these, and so  
22 thanks for letting us review them and provide comments. Good  
23 luck.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Anson, you know, I'm not sure about the  
26 protocol, but, you know, I would like to open this up to the  
27 full council for any discussion, on any of these, because, since  
28 we do have such a short timeframe to be able to do something,  
29 and so, if you're not on the committee, but, if you have  
30 comments, please feel free to -- Mr. Strelcheck.

31  
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm not on the committee, and I first wanted to  
33 thank the council staff for meeting with NMFS staff and the  
34 opportunity to provide comments and input. I think that was a  
35 great discussion, and we met with the South Atlantic Council,  
36 and we offered a number of suggestions.

37  
38 I spoke to Kelly Denit, at the Office of Sustainable Fisheries,  
39 late last week, before she provided comments I think on Friday,  
40 and I guess a couple of things that I just want to emphasize,  
41 because I think it's really important. This is a competitive  
42 funding process, right, and so your proposals will be competing  
43 with other councils for IRA funding.

44  
45 The IRA is intended to be transformational, and really our  
46 effort, as an agency, is to improve the climate readiness of our  
47 fisheries, and so, with these projects, we're supportive of  
48 them, but there were points made by Kelly, and our team, in

1 terms of making sure that there is those direct connections, in  
2 terms of how does this improve the climate readiness of our  
3 fisheries, how do these relate strictly to the priorities that  
4 are being identified in the request for proposals, and then I  
5 think, most importantly, going forward, what are the outcomes  
6 that can be tangible, and used by this council, in the future,  
7 right, and so there's a three-year time horizon for these funds,  
8 but what we want to see, at the end of the process, is what's  
9 the impact, what's the outcome, and how are we going to  
10 ultimately be better off, having gone down this path of  
11 utilizing these funds, to improve our climate readiness.

12  
13 All of that I think is important, and I think you have a lot of  
14 aspects that are already in the proposals, but, the more you can  
15 emphasize that, and make sure that the tie-into the climate is  
16 clear, please do so.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

19  
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you,  
21 Mr. Strelcheck, for mentioning that. We do still need to  
22 address some of Ms. Denit's suggestions, that we did receive at  
23 like five o'clock on Friday, and so we're doing our best, and we  
24 have some staff back at the office trying to address those right  
25 now, but point taken, you know, having that outside perspective  
26 and just making sure that we're providing a clear understanding  
27 of how the council can use the deliverables and that they circle  
28 back to being climate ready, and so we're on it, as best we can,  
29 but I appreciate any other feedback.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** It looks like we have a technical issue.

32  
33 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, and that breaker went again, and so we're going  
34 to have to do some rejiggering. I think we could move forward,  
35 at this point, or at least through this section. I could go  
36 over the budget. You all have your screens up, and there's  
37 nothing spectacular in here that's new information. It's up to  
38 the council if you would like to proceed for the next five or  
39 ten minutes, and then we can solve this.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think we can. Dr. Simmons, do you have a  
42 problem with that?

43  
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** No, as long as you guys are okay  
45 with it. We do have some numbers to go through, as far as --

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** We can bring them up last there, maybe, if  
48 we need to, but, yes, let's just move forward with it, unless

1 somebody has an issue, while we're working on this. Dr.  
2 Simmons.

3  
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** If there's no other feedback for us  
5 right now on this to try to consider, or tweak, we do have some  
6 anticipated budgeting numbers that Ms. Hager was going to go  
7 through.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay.

10  
11 **MS. HAGER:** Okay, and so, as Dr. Simmons mentioned, our first  
12 application of this process was for a definitive \$375,000, and  
13 that was to support the primary staff person that we are  
14 expecting to hire for the first year-and-a-half, about, of the  
15 project. We have included this position in the second request  
16 for the last nine months of the project, and we've also included  
17 an administrative position for research, and to support this  
18 whole project, because of the administrative burden.

19  
20 Then we also have, in the budget, several different meetings  
21 where we will have SSC members, and/or council members,  
22 attending, and so the costs for those folks to attend, and those  
23 are budgeted in personnel costs as well, and we have some  
24 benefits in here. We have a lot of travel for these Ecosystem  
25 Technical Committee meetings, the SSC reviewing, and these are  
26 for just meetings to do the IRA activities, and these are not  
27 comingled with any other sort of regular SSC meetings.

28  
29 We have the O&E Technical Committee meeting, we have the  
30 stakeholder engagement things that we're working on, and we have  
31 this big summit. Overall, the bottom-line figure is \$1,826,606  
32 for the second phase, which brings the grand total of our  
33 request up to \$2.2 million. This also includes the social  
34 scientist contractor that we discussed, the facilitator, and the  
35 regulatory streamlining consultant, and so that's it, basically,  
36 and so we're coming in under two-and-a-half million, which is --  
37 You know, if they were take all of the funding and divide it  
38 evenly among the councils, that's what it would be, and so we're  
39 under that, but it's, I think, enough to complete the activities  
40 that we're projecting to do, and that's what we needed to do.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any discussion on the budget side of  
43 it? Yes, Mr. Diaz.

44  
45 **MR. DIAZ:** I guess this is for Ms. Hager, and so, earlier in the  
46 presentation, Dr. Simmons said something about we would have to  
47 go back and adjust the administrative award, and I wasn't sure  
48 what she was talking about there, and so that would be one

1 question, and my other question would be, the second part, is  
2 are there indirect costs built into this? Like some of our  
3 staff is going to have to supervise some of these people, and  
4 we've got to house them, and we've got electricity, phones, and  
5 I see you have some phone stuff in there, and other indirect  
6 type of costs, and, if not, why not?  
7

8 **MS. HAGER:** Because we don't have a federally-negotiated  
9 indirect rate, and we don't charge one. All of our costs are  
10 direct billed. That's the answer to the second-half of the  
11 question. The first-half is any activities that we have  
12 currently planned in our regular administrative award have to be  
13 reprogrammed over, and any of the ones that would fall in this  
14 funding, and so it would be like the amendment that we were  
15 talking about in here that we're looking at doing.  
16

17 We would have to move it over to the Inflation Reduction Act and  
18 then not charge it under the administrative award, and so the up  
19 side is that helps our administrative award budget, if that's  
20 activity that we already had planned in this year.  
21

22 Also, this administrative position may be a position that could  
23 be moved over from our existing award, and so that could be  
24 something that could also help our budget in the administrative  
25 -- Because there is going to be administrative work that needs  
26 to be done, and that's also why we don't have an indirect rate,  
27 and we charge staff time as it is to each activity. We keep  
28 very strict work processes as to which -- When we have like the  
29 coral award, and the people that are working on the coral award  
30 only charge to that, and so then, if you submit staff time, you  
31 have to do time sheets and things to track people's time, and  
32 that's doable, but it's just more complicated, and it just seems  
33 a lot easier to make it straightforward, and it's better to be  
34 able to stand behind what your numbers are.  
35

36 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion on this? Yes.  
37

38 **MR. GEESLIN:** Beth and Carrie, I appreciate that you all are  
39 continually asked to do more with less, and, just for those  
40 keeping score at home, the positions -- I tried to forward these  
41 around to my network, academic institutions and universities, as  
42 they come out. For this specific, and I think we had -- Just a  
43 rundown, and you had a social scientist, and not necessarily  
44 associated with the IRA, and you've got two positions here, the  
45 ecosystem analyst and an administrative support role, just so  
46 I'm keeping track of those, Carrie?  
47

48 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, ma'am.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So we requested two fulltime  
3 employees, essentially. One would be a new hire, and then one  
4 potentially would be moved from our administrative award  
5 currently over to this funding, for the research assistant,  
6 which would be an administrative with technical training  
7 position.

8  
9 Then we're looking at hiring a social scientist contractor, as  
10 you mentioned, and a facilitator for the summit, to help us with  
11 that, which would also be a contract position, and then have a  
12 contractor do the regulatory review process, and so that would  
13 be a competitive process too, where we try to get a contractor  
14 to do that process, to review what's going on and give us a  
15 report on ways that we can take that, and what other regions are  
16 doing, and put it into our amendments, to streamline and be more  
17 prepared for climate readiness.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Geeslin.

20  
21 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you. Just so I can tell people, these are  
22 two-year terms, and I hear a facilitator, and that's probably  
23 something a little different, but those other are year-and-a-  
24 half terms, or two-year terms?

25  
26 **MS. HAGER:** It's going to depend on the length of the funding.  
27 At this point, we are budgeting through the end of the year  
28 2026, and that's what the feedback we've gotten -- It will be  
29 whatever the limit is to this funding, because it's a project.

30  
31 **MR. GEESLIN:** Understood. Thank you.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Is it not a three-year? Did I not  
34 understand that we have three? Yes, sir.

35  
36 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that was some of my  
37 question too, Dakus, is this is just a temporary job, and then  
38 we say thank you?

39  
40 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, and that's the thing about grant-funded  
41 positions. We are clear, in what we're advertising, that this  
42 is based on this funding. You know, that's the world we live  
43 in.

44  
45 **MR. ANSON:** Carrie, where does the person that's identified in  
46 the Phase I budget fit into this? Are they doing something kind  
47 of distinct, I guess, separate? I'm just looking at if the  
48 Phase II is not funded, and they would be doing other work,

1 correct?

2  
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, we are proposing, in the  
4 Phase II, that, when we get this person hired, they would  
5 execute these activities in Phase II. We have not received the  
6 money yet to onboard that person. We do have the application  
7 out that says it's a three-year position, and, after funding  
8 runs out, there's a possibility that the council could hire you  
9 fulltime or not, and it depends on our funding position, but it  
10 is time-limited right now, and we were hoping to get the money  
11 on January 1, but we have not gotten that money yet, and some  
12 councils have already hired staff and onboarded them.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I would think this is similar to a lot of  
15 your federal contracts that are coming out. You know, when we  
16 get things in our states and all, that's time-limited, and you  
17 just hope, from year-to-year, the funding, or something else,  
18 will happen, but I think -- Go ahead.

19  
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** So, I guess, back to Mr. Anson's  
21 question, if we get the \$375,000, or some of that, to hire this  
22 person, and they don't like what we have in Phase II, I suspect  
23 that person is going to rewrite this and bring it back to you,  
24 because they're going to need funding to support themselves by  
25 the third year of this process.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other discussion on this? Once  
28 again, the full council, everybody, you know, because we want to  
29 get the information out as quick as possible, so that they can  
30 work on this.

31  
32 **MR. ANSON:** So they have to get it submitted -- Wednesday is the  
33 drop-dead date, and so, yes, if we have any comments here that  
34 modify what's been proposed by Carrie here, or written, then we  
35 need to say those now, so to give staff some time to try to make  
36 those edits and get it submitted by the deadline, and so, if  
37 anybody has any of those concerns, or requests, or changes, they  
38 need to be said now. Otherwise, Carrie is going to direct staff  
39 to proceed with what we have in front of us.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Our goal is to have a motion on this today,  
42 to be able to move forward so they can do this. Go ahead, Ms.  
43 Boggs.

44  
45 **MS. BOGGS:** So, to that point, do we have to call -- To go into  
46 Full Council, to have the Full Council vote, or can the  
47 committee vote this to move forward?

48



1 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I will leave that up to the chairman, but I  
2 do think what we're trying to do is make sure that we have this  
3 full council here in agreement that we want to do it this way,  
4 and be able to bring it up, and so, Mr. Gill.

5

6 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you would like, I would  
7 make such a motion.

8

9 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Hang on one second.

10

11 **MR. ANSON:** The way that Carrie recommends, or says, we can do  
12 this is to go ahead and make that basically one of the first  
13 items when we get to Full Council on Wednesday, and so we'll be  
14 officially in business in Full Council, and then that gives us  
15 another couple of days to maybe think about some things, and  
16 changes, and hopefully they're not too big, because they do have  
17 to submit it by that time, and so, if you could think of them --  
18 If you think of any of those changes, kind of talk it over with  
19 staff, and make sure it's somewhat reasonable, and doable,  
20 relative to the timeline they're facing, and then be prepared to  
21 bring it to Full Council, if they can complete the change, and  
22 so that's, I think, how we're going to operate.

23

24 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** You know, obviously, if you've got  
25 heartburn, that's the problem, if there's something we need to  
26 change that's going to be big-time, that's going to be -- Then  
27 we need the time to work on that. Obviously, I agree with you  
28 that Full Council is going to need to vote on it, and I don't  
29 know if we can recommend bringing this to Full Council, and we  
30 can have a motion to do that, but, other than that, I'm not sure  
31 if we want to make a full vote. Go ahead, Mr. Gill.

32

33 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I would like to move  
34 that we recommend the council approve the draft Gulf of Mexico  
35 Fishery Management Council proposal for Phase II Inflation  
36 Reduction Act funding, as outlined in Tab G, Number 8.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Do I have a second?

39

40 **MR. DUGAS:** Second.

41

42 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any discussion on this? **Any opposed? If**  
43 **not, then the motion carries.** You know, if you wake up in the  
44 middle of the night, and happen to think about something, and  
45 it's nothing major, you can always bring it up to us, you know,  
46 and we can sit down with it and try to do something, but the big  
47 deal is to try to get everything for the paperwork, to where  
48 they can have it in on Wednesday. All right. Where are we at

1 now? Are we still trying to bring this up? Did you want to go  
2 ahead and try to do the -- I think she has a slide presentation  
3 for us.

4  
5 **REVIEW AND FINALIZE THE STEERING COMMITTEE MAKEUP FOR THE**  
6 **RECREATIONAL INITIATIVE**

7  
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, Mr. Chair, if we could. I  
9 will introduce it, if that's okay. The next item is to review  
10 and finalize the steering committee makeup for the recreational  
11 initiative, and so you approved this, moving forward with the  
12 recreational initiative, in October of 2023.

13  
14 We put together a presentation to try to show what we think the  
15 roles, and the responsibilities, of the steering committee is  
16 going to be for this effort, and we tried to think about, in  
17 some of the slides, what would the feedback loop be to the  
18 council, and when we anticipate you receiving that information,  
19 once we get this consultant onboarded, and so that's what we've  
20 tried to lay out in the presentation.

21  
22 If you would provide any changes to the makeup of this steering  
23 committee, via a motion, and then the chair should request  
24 council members that want to volunteer for those currently two  
25 proposed positions on the steering committee, and then, at the  
26 end of the meeting on Thursday, when we do the report, the chair  
27 will make an announcement on who those members are. Mr.  
28 Spraggins.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Go ahead with the presentation.

31  
32 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Bernie, if you can pull up Tab G,  
33 Number 9(a) for me. This presentation, I'm going to begin with  
34 a little bit of a review of the recreational initiative, just to  
35 remind the folks around the table, as well as sort of introduce  
36 this to the people in the back of the room, or listening online,  
37 that maybe have not been a part of this discussion yet, and then  
38 I'm going to move on and focus really on the roles, and the  
39 responsibilities, of the steering committee and sort of how we  
40 see that process working.

41  
42 If you remember, the recreational initiative itself is really an  
43 effort that the council is embarking on to engage recreational  
44 anglers and associated industry members. We really want to  
45 review and evaluate some of our past and current management  
46 strategies and see if we can come up with some potential  
47 innovative management strategies that could be applied in the  
48 future.

1  
2 We expect that any lessons, or recommendations, that result from  
3 this effort could be used to inform council recreational  
4 management measures. At its core, we recognize that the  
5 recreational sector, in many ways, is not satisfied with their  
6 fishing experience, and so we really want to take a moment to  
7 sort of step back and look at things holistically and figure out  
8 if there's a better way to do this, moving forward.

9  
10 This plan to deal with this recreational initiative sort of has  
11 three components. As I mentioned, this presentation, and what  
12 we're doing today, is we're going to try and focus on the  
13 steering committee, but I think it's helpful if I sort of let  
14 you know, or remind you, of the three components that are going  
15 to go into this whole plan.

16  
17 First, the steering committee is going to be made up of council  
18 and agency folks, sort of those interworking folks, and this  
19 steering committee is going to be tasked with overseeing and  
20 working very closely with the consultant, and that's the next  
21 part that I will talk to you about, planning meetings of the  
22 working group, and making sure that the right background  
23 materials, and reports, are produced through the consultant, and  
24 coordinating work on non-workgroup products with the consultant.

25  
26 I don't know if you remember, but there was that list of like  
27 six things that we aim to do through this initiative, and a  
28 couple of them were actually not going to be done through the  
29 working group, and so the steering committee is going to be kind  
30 of working in the backend, with the agency, in order to get work  
31 done on those parts, and we do expect there to be monthly  
32 meetings of this steering committee, as well as we expect  
33 attendance to the actual working group meetings, when that  
34 happens. As you can see, this graphic is supposed to kind of  
35 show you that these groups all sort of feed into the work of the  
36 working group.

37  
38 The next component is our consultant. That consultant is going  
39 to be providing us with professional assistance. They're the  
40 ones that are going to be scheduling the steering committee  
41 meetings and setting the agendas and making sure that that  
42 steering committee is sort of working alongside, to make sure  
43 that this initiative is successful.

44  
45 They're going to plan, and coordinate, our monthly meetings, and  
46 they're going to conduct, and facilitate, the workgroup  
47 meetings, and they're also going to develop the reports of the  
48 workgroup outcomes.

1  
2 This working group, which is our third component, is really the  
3 core of this initiative, and this working group is going to be  
4 comprised of industry members and fishermen, and they are the  
5 ones that are going to be sort of making -- Generating advice  
6 and doing the evaluating of our past, current, and potential  
7 future management strategies, and so they're going to be  
8 attending meetings. They're going to be doing all of the work  
9 at those meetings, and so hopefully that's a good overview of  
10 sort of the three components that we see.

11  
12 Then we'll focus mostly on the steering committee, and this  
13 steering committee is going to be a core group of individuals  
14 who are going to work closely with the consultant to direct work  
15 on this initiative, go through the working group, and then, as I  
16 mentioned, some of those initiatives that need to be done  
17 through coordination with the agencies.

18  
19 Here is just sort of the scope of work that we've laid out for  
20 the steering committee. We're going to ask them first to look  
21 at the consultant applications and help select a consultant to  
22 guide us through this recreational initiative. They are going  
23 to be developing agendas for the working group, also developing  
24 the objectives of that working group, and they're going to be  
25 reviewing, and synthesizing, the outputs of the working group,  
26 and so that's going to be done in concert with the consultant.

27  
28 They're also going to determine when outcomes, and the  
29 deliverables, are ready for council review, and they're going to  
30 work with the consultant to develop a stakeholder engagement  
31 plan, as well as coordinate all that work on the non-workgroup  
32 products.

33  
34 As we discussed sort of briefly at the last meeting, when we  
35 introduced this initiative to you guys, we envision that there's  
36 going to be no more than six people on this steering committee.  
37 You know, as I sort of briefly mentioned, the steering committee  
38 is going to have quite a load on them, and it's going to be  
39 actually like a working group, and so we're looking at the idea  
40 that we'll have two NOAA Fisheries staff members, and we suggest  
41 here that potentially the Southeast Regional, or the National  
42 Recreational Fisheries, Policy Coordinator might be an  
43 appropriate person for this role, and that the Regional, or  
44 Assistant Regional, Administrator would also be appropriate for  
45 this role.

46  
47 We are expecting to have one staff member from the Gulf States  
48 Marine Fisheries Commission and then two council members that

1 represent the recreational sector, and then, also, Carrie, the  
2 council's Executive Director, will be on the steering committee.

3  
4 **MR. DIAZ:** Did you want us to stop you if we had some comments,  
5 or did you want to wait until the end?

6  
7 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** That's at the discretion of our chair.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** It's totally up to you. You're giving the  
10 briefing, and I will let you decide.

11  
12 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I have three more slides, and so how about I  
13 roll through more of the expectations of the steering committee,  
14 and then we'll go for it? Okay. Thank you. All right. Next  
15 slide, please.

16  
17 If you are at the council table, and you're thinking that you  
18 are a perfect fit for this role, I just want to talk a little  
19 bit about what your responsibilities would be. In the time  
20 period that we have planned this initiative, it should be about  
21 a sixteen-month process, and we did commit to having monthly  
22 meetings, at the least, right, and so, if you are going to be  
23 the council member that is part of this, it's not a small  
24 commitment, right, and so you're going to be asked to be meeting  
25 monthly for about a year-and-a-half.

26  
27 We also expect that you will be able to attend our working group  
28 meetings in-person, and we anticipate that there is going to be  
29 three of those meetings. They could range anywhere from one-  
30 and-a-half to three days each, right, and so I just want you to  
31 sort of think about the type of commitment here that we're going  
32 for.

33  
34 The other things that I want to note that we're going to ask you  
35 guys to do, and we sort of already went over this, we review the  
36 consultant applications, coordinate development of background  
37 material, and so there is going to actually be a little bit of  
38 work that needs to be done through this body, and then you're  
39 going to be coordinating work on those non-workgroup products,  
40 synthesizing the discussions and recommendations, and so, after  
41 that workgroup has meetings, we're going to expect this steering  
42 committee to be helpful in sort of putting together the reports  
43 and then making sure that you're reviewing all of the  
44 deliverables and outcomes and basically overseeing the  
45 consultant.

46  
47 This is my last slide, and so I just wanted to give you a  
48 proposed timeline for this year. What you will notice is, at

1 the very top, we've got our calendar laid out. The little  
2 flowery thing is the council meetings, and so I just wanted to  
3 sort of talk a little bit about how we see the flow between the  
4 council and the steering committee and everybody going.

5  
6 As I mentioned, in January, it is the council's responsibility  
7 to appoint the steering committee. Once that steering committee  
8 is appointed, you will notice that, throughout the spring, the  
9 steering committee is going to select a consultant and begin  
10 working, and planning, on the workgroup meetings and really  
11 planning out the flow of this initiative.

12  
13 We expect the first update to come from the steering committee  
14 to the council in June. In June, it's going to review progress  
15 and actually initiate the application process for this working  
16 group. Then, over the summer, we're going to develop the  
17 working group agenda and background materials. In August, the  
18 council will appoint the working group, and then approve the  
19 agendas, and then we expect to have our first working group  
20 meeting in September, and then the steering committee will be  
21 synthesizing the outcomes and present those in our early  
22 November council meeting, and then we'll talk about trying to  
23 plan, and to execute, the second meeting between then and the  
24 end of the year.

25  
26 Hopefully that sort of lays out what we're looking for. I think  
27 our goal here today is to talk a little bit and make sure that  
28 we are all comfortable with this steering committee setup and  
29 figure out who is going to be the lucky winners of those seats.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Thank you very much for your presentation  
32 there, and I do think, that when we say "recreational", we're  
33 talking charter-for-hire also, and so just understand that, and  
34 then I think that that is included in that, and so, right now,  
35 I'll open it up, and I think you've got a question, Mr. Diaz?

36  
37 **MR. DIAZ:** I have a couple of comments. First, I like your last  
38 slide, because I think, a lot of times, we could have council  
39 members going in different directions a lot of times, and so, at  
40 the last meeting, when we discussed this, when I originally read  
41 through it, it said recreational council members, and, in my  
42 mind, I thought private recreational representatives.

43  
44 At the last meeting, we had discussion on it, and it was pointed  
45 out that it could be charter-for-hire or private, and, during  
46 the discussion, I agreed with that. I think there's room at the  
47 table for everybody, but I did talk to another council member  
48 this morning, and I would like to expand this steering

1 committee, or at least consider expanding the steering  
2 committee, to seven members and have an option for three council  
3 members, if we had three willing to step up.

4  
5 Those three, of those three, two of them would be private  
6 recreational representatives, and one of them would be a charter  
7 boat representative, and so that's just my two-cents, and kind  
8 of what I think. Like I said, when I originally read this, I  
9 was focused on private rec, and I thought that was the best way  
10 to go, but I could see where there's room around, and so I would  
11 like to see if we could have some discussion on this and see if  
12 other folks agree, disagree, or wherever people are at. Thank  
13 you.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Well, real quick, one thing that I would  
16 like to ask a question to the staff, and to Carrie, is do we  
17 have the funds to be able to afford someone, because I know,  
18 with our budget the way we are, and if we're talking three in-  
19 person meetings, that's another council person that's going to  
20 have to be paid for, and is that something that we want to talk  
21 about? Is there funding there for that?

22  
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we  
24 would have to revise the budget and consider that, and, yes, we  
25 have the funding if you want to do that. My concern more is  
26 like logistics, and we're already at that number of people, and  
27 trying to get together on a date. I mean, my thinking is we go  
28 ahead and establish -- Once we get the group, you know, this is  
29 a good week, and we want to try to meet every month in this  
30 week, or something like that, but we're agreeing that we're  
31 going to move forward and meet with whoever is available. I  
32 mean, if you start getting too many people, it gets very  
33 difficult to work around that many people's schedule, would be  
34 more my concern than budget, actually.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Go ahead, sir.

37  
38 **MR. DIAZ:** I agree with your concern, Dr. Simmons. I think  
39 that's valid, but I do think this is a very important  
40 initiative, and I think our recreational members on the council  
41 will have some really good input, and I think they're the most  
42 valuable people on this steering committee, and, because of  
43 that, I think it's worth trying to work through the concern  
44 about logistics.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Dugas.

47  
48 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with Dale, and I was

1 actually going to bring it up and ask the same question, adding  
2 a third council member. I have a couple of questions for Emily  
3 that doesn't pertain to that question, but one question that  
4 does is where are the meetings? Are they virtual, or are they  
5 in-person at the office, or what's the plan?  
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I think there's sixteen that are going to  
8 be virtual, and then there's up to three that will be in-person.  
9

10 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Yes, absolutely, and I don't think that we've  
11 determined the best place to have the -- There we go, and so two  
12 of the workgroups are in Tampa, and then one of them will be  
13 somewhere else, is what we have proposed. Those are the in-  
14 person ones that are one-and-a-half to three days.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Walker.  
17

18 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you. I agree with Mr. Diaz. As I'm  
19 considering raising my hand for this, it looks like a ton of  
20 work. I mean, on the chart here, the steering committee has  
21 more work than the actual working group does, that I can see,  
22 and so, if I were on such a committee, I think having another  
23 additional council member on there would be helpful, and then,  
24 on the sixteen meetings that we're talking about, there's going  
25 to be a chance that one of us can't make one of sixteen  
26 meetings, and so, if there were three, we would potentially have  
27 it covered.  
28

29 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Sweetman.  
30

31 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your committee,  
32 but just one other thought that I had, kind of operating along  
33 those lines, as I've been kind of trying to digest all this and  
34 what the steering committee makeup would be, and one that may be  
35 open for discussion would be an SSC representative on there, to  
36 see how this could all be operationalized from that perspective,  
37 and it's just a thought. I see the pain on your face, but --  
38

39 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** One question I have, and I guess, number  
40 one, is do we have three members on the committee here, the  
41 council, that would be willing? That's number one. You know,  
42 before we try to change this thing, to say that we want to  
43 change it from two to three, do we have at least three that are  
44 willing to do something with this? Ms. Boggs.  
45

46 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm not on your committee,  
47 and, I mean, I would certainly like to put my name in the hat,  
48 if we do decide to add a third for charter-for-hire. If we only



1 have the two, I would like to be considered for that charter-  
2 for-hire representative. I mean, that is our sole business, and  
3 that's what we do, and I also interact daily with the commercial  
4 -- Excuse me, not the commercial, but the private recreational  
5 fishermen, at our fuel dock, when they come and fuel. I talk to  
6 them on a daily basis about what they see, and so I would like  
7 to be considered, and so, if you're looking for two or three, I  
8 would like to be considered for one of those. Thank you.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Chris.

11  
12 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on the committee  
13 either, and I agree with this, to add another position, and I  
14 was going to suggest the same thing, to get the count up to  
15 seven, for the simple standpoint of, if the steering committee  
16 gets to a point where they need to make a decision, or a tough  
17 spot and they need to vote, instead of having an even number,  
18 you would have an odd number, where you could have a favor, as  
19 far as a vote goes. As far as the committee, that's their  
20 choice, whether they want to make it a recreational  
21 representative or an SSC member.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Dr. Simmons.

24  
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we were  
26 envisioning this, we weren't thinking that we would need an SSC  
27 member on the steering committee, but, once we get an idea of  
28 the various objectives that we're trying to tackle at each of  
29 those meetings, and after the council appoints the working  
30 group, and what we're trying to operationalize, those aspects of  
31 the larger initiative -- Once we get those agendas framed out,  
32 we're going to have to engage with the Science Center, and we're  
33 going to have to engage with the Regional Office, and we're  
34 going to have to figure out what materials and scope we're going  
35 to bring for those meetings, and so, at that time, to me, it  
36 might be more appropriate to engage with the SSC, was my  
37 thinking.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Mr. Williamson.

40  
41 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I totally agree  
42 with Dale's assessment of what needs to happen on this  
43 committee, and I don't want to gild the lily too much, but I  
44 think we're required to make a motion to change the composition  
45 of the members from six to seven. **I would make that motion,**  
46 **that the number of recreational council members on the steering**  
47 **committee be increased from two to three, and be composed of two**  
48 **recreational fishermen and one charter-for-hire.**

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** We have a motion on the board. Do we have  
3 a second? We've got a second. Is there any discussion on this?  
4 Mr. Gill.

5  
6 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a little out of my  
7 normal ballpark, but I agree, fundamentally, with what Dale had  
8 suggested, but I think the basis for this is that we don't want  
9 to exclude charter-for-hire representation on the steering  
10 committee.

11  
12 That says, to me, that it doesn't have to be three, and it could  
13 be two, but the point is that we don't want to exclude them from  
14 the process. After all, the steering committee doesn't give  
15 direction. They are overseeing, in effect, and having that  
16 viewpoint is important, but it doesn't necessitate going to  
17 three, and, as Dr. Simmons pointed out, there is logistics, and  
18 budgetary reasons, which suggests that, if we can do it with  
19 two, that might be better. Thank you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

22  
23 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks. I'm not on your committee, and the  
24 intent was never to exclude charter, right, and, when I made the  
25 motion for the initiative, the intent was always that this would  
26 be an initiative that is inclusive of both private recreational  
27 fishing and charter boat activities, simply because red snapper  
28 is the only fishery that we actually implement sector  
29 separation, and separate out those two sectors, and everyone  
30 else is managed collectively as a recreational sector, with  
31 catch limits and accountability measures, and so I'm supportive  
32 of, obviously, this recommendation, and I just wanted to say  
33 that, and I'm not on your committee.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Yes, go ahead.

36  
37 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm also not on your  
38 committee, but, before you vote, may I make a suggestion that --  
39 Maybe take a show of hands of who wants to be on this committee,  
40 to see if you have enough to go up to three, before we go down a  
41 rabbit hole that may or may not be fruitful?

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I have no problem with that, and that's  
44 what I was trying to get, and Ms. Boggs is the only one, so far,  
45 that I have heard, and so, you know, I would entertain that now,  
46 you know, if we can get a show of hands. Is there anybody on  
47 the recreational or charter-for-hire that is on the council now  
48 that would be willing to be on this? I am seeing four. Looking

1 at that, I'm seeing two private and two charter, basically, and  
2 is that right? Yes, Mr. Walker.

3  
4 **MR. WALKER:** So I suppose, by definition, I'm charter, but I  
5 kind of consider myself fifty-fifty recreational and charter,  
6 and so, you know, either one, however you want to decide it,  
7 and, you know, if you need me, I will take on the job, and, if  
8 you don't, that's okay.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Go ahead.

11  
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I mean, we'll make this work, but I  
13 guess, just back to Mr. Gill's point, and we're not going to  
14 operate in a vacuum. I mean, this information, and this framing  
15 of the meeting, and so the steering committee -- On the various  
16 materials we think we can gather for those meetings, it's going  
17 to come back to the council, and that's we tried to lay out in  
18 the presentation. We're not going to be operating in a vacuum,  
19 where the council doesn't have a say in what we're doing before  
20 we execute the meetings, and I just wanted to make that clear.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. I think that -- Go ahead, Mr. Anson.

23  
24 **MR. ANSON:** I didn't want to interrupt your thought, but, the  
25 way I was looking at this, just for transparency, is that I  
26 would be referring to basically the seat that you're filling  
27 now, and what your affiliation is now with the council, rather  
28 than self-identifying here with the group today, and so that's  
29 how I was looking at this.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. I guess that, if we're going to try  
32 to fill these positions today, or even make a motion to it, and  
33 do we have to take a vote on this, since we have four people?

34  
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think the plan, Mr. Chair, was to  
36 vote on the motion, if we're going to change the actual makeup,  
37 get any other names that want to volunteer for the position, and  
38 then, when we get to the Thursday at Full Council, when we're  
39 going through the report, I believe the announcement is going to  
40 be made for who is on the committee.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and so, right now, we have a motion  
43 and a second on what we have on the board, and I guess do we  
44 have any further discussion on this motion? No discussion. **Is**  
45 **anybody against this motion of increasing it from two to three,**  
46 **with two recreational and one for-hire? If not, the motion**  
47 **carries.** Mr. Dugas.

48

1 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One more, Emily. Pertaining  
2 to the working group, how are those people/fishermen going to be  
3 chosen? You mentioned maybe appointed?  
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.  
6

7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** When we hire the consultant, and we  
8 get the steering committee together, we're going to talk about  
9 the different type of expertise that they're going to recommend,  
10 and the different meetings, and what we're going to try to  
11 operationalize in those meetings, and the materials that we're  
12 going to put together, and then we're going to come up with an  
13 outline for the council to consider for appointing them, kind of  
14 like we did with the focus group, and then you're going to look  
15 at that, and provide feedback, and then we're going to  
16 advertise, and then you're going to appoint them in a closed  
17 session.  
18

19 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** I would caution, each and every one of that  
20 four that are looking at this, please make sure that you're  
21 willing to put the time in to do it, because this is not a  
22 committee that's going to be just an easy thing, and, if you're  
23 not willing to put the majority of your time, to make one-hour-  
24 plus, sixteen times in the next sixteen months, and at least  
25 travel to three different ones, understand that you will still  
26 have a part. You will still have a part in this, because it  
27 will be transparent, but I would just caution you, before we get  
28 to the final vote on that. Yes, Mr. Anson.  
29

30 **MR. ANSON:** Emily, the schedule kind of said the selection  
31 process, or the application process, would be in the height of  
32 summer, and does that create any issues, as far as folks getting  
33 -- You know, hearing that there's a request for this type of  
34 person to serve on this particular group, or should it be  
35 delayed, for just a month or two?  
36

37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think that would be up to your discretion. I  
38 have full confidence that we can advertise in a way that will  
39 make space for people to be able to apply to it. I mean, I  
40 think the application process will be very similar to our AP  
41 application, and it shouldn't take somebody too, too long in  
42 order to fill out that, and I have confidence that actually,  
43 while people are in the height of fishing, they might actually  
44 be in the height of thinking about fishing, and so maybe it's  
45 actually a strike-while-the-iron-is-hot situation, and it could  
46 go either way though.  
47

48 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Anything else on that? Thank you

1 for the presentation, and I think we're down to Other Business,  
2 right?

3

4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any other business to be brought up in the  
7 Administrative/Budget Committee? If not, Mr. Chairman, I'm  
8 going to give you back thirty-eight seconds.

9

10 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 29, 2024.)

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