

**Administrative / Budget Committee Report
August 23, 2021
Mr. Phil Dyskow – Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab G, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab G, No. 2**) of the June 2021 meeting as written.

Modification of Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures (SOPPs)

Discussion of Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Membership Composition (Tab G, No. 4a)

In Tab G, number 4a, staff reviewed proposed changes to the verbiage in the SOPPs in section 2.5 that describe the make-up and required expertise of members appointed to the standing SSC and that individuals should not serve on multiple Special SSCs. The intent was to update and clarify the committee members field of expertise to have a broad range of disciplines without having too many members from any particular discipline on the Standing SSC. The Committee proposed additional revisions to the text to add further clarification, but to also allow the potential for flexibility in the future as necessary.

The Committee recommends, and I so move: **to revise the Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures (SOPPs) language to read as follows:**

The Council has established a Standing SSC and Special SSCs for individual fishery management plans or areas of expertise to provide expert scientific and technical advice to the Council. The SSC shall review and comment on the scientific adequacy of such statistical, biological, economic, social, and other scientific information as is relevant to the Council's development and amendment of any fishery management plan.

During the appointment process of the Standing SSC, the Council shall appoint no more than 17 individuals which will include 8 stock assessment or quantitative biologists/ecologists. The remaining appointees shall include at least 2 economists and at least 2 anthropologists/sociologists, and 5 other scientists. Each member will have demonstrable expertise in one of the above categories. Each Special SSC will be comprised of no more than 3 members, and none of those three shall be a member of the Standing SSC or another Special SSC. When a Special SSC meets with the Standing SSC, members of the combined committees will vote as a whole committee.

Council members or their designees may not simultaneously serve on the Council and an SSC.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Discussion of SSC Membership Appointment Process (Tab G, No. 4b)

The Committee reviewed sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 of the Gulf Council SOPPs. These sections outline the SSC appointment process, term guidelines, duty to report financial interests,

procedural guidelines, and administrative provisions relevant to SSCs specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Committee asked questions but no motions or requests were made directing staff to work on any changes at this time.

Discussion of the SSC's Best Practices and Voting Procedures (Tab G, No. 5)

Staff reviewed the updates to the draft document presented in June 2021 which now include input received from the SSC during its August 2021 meeting on its peer review responsibilities and voting practices. The intention is to place the finalized document on the Council website and use it as guidance during the conduct of meetings when the SSC is acting as the peer review body for a stock assessment or other study, and voting on the issue of BSIA. The Council could then consider if the policy should eventually be included in the SOPPs.

The Committee requested additional verbiage to address alternative action the SSC may take if a BSIA recommendation cannot be reached. Based on feedback from the Committee, staff proposed the following revisions to the proposed voting procedures:

“When the SSC is acting as the peer review body for a stock assessment or other study, an SSC member(s) should abstain from any motions and voting on the issue of BSIA if they have served as the analytical lead, or principal or co-principal investigator or had any direct participation as a member of the analytical team. During the BSIA deliberations the SSC member(s) is free to participate in the discussion, answer questions, and provide pertinent expertise and feedback to the SSC. If the SSC cannot reach a BSIA recommendation, it will provide rationale for this determination and provide recommendations for next steps to achieve a BSIA recommendation.

Once a BSIA recommendation has been reached, the SSC member(s) is at liberty to motion and vote on remaining management advice (e.g., catch limits, appropriateness of allocation calculations, decision tools developed to inform management action).”

Presentation of the 2019-2020 Audit Report (Tab G, No. 6)

This was an informational presentation of the results of the 2019-2020 biennial audit. The independent audit firm issued an unmodified opinion. There were no questioned costs, required adjustments, or material weaknesses noted in procedures. No further action is required.

Discussion on SSC Stipends (Tab G, No. 7)

In response to a request from Council, staff presented background information and estimated costs for 2021 based on potential changes to the SSC stipend rate. A survey of other Fishery Management Councils indicated that the average daily stipend rate for all Councils is \$308. Although the budget projection for 2021 is to expend most of the remaining budget at the current pay rate, the Council has historically underspent the SSC stipend budget. The projection for the next three years, based on the planned meeting activity from the original 5-year budget, indicates that the cost of each \$25 per-day increase in rate could require an annual budget increase of about \$5,400. Staff stated that an increase of up to \$350 per day could be adopted with minimal difficulty, if the Committee wished to pursue such an increase. If the Council approves a stipend

increase, the budget would be adjusted in future years and it should be with the caveat that it is based on annual funds availability.

The Committee recommends, and I so move: **to increase the SSC stipend from \$300/day to \$325/day.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.