

**Administrative / Budget Committee Report
October 25, 2023
Mr. Rick Burris – Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab G, No. 1**) and the minutes (**Tab G, No. 2**) of the August 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Draft Activities for Proposed Use of Administrative Award Carryover Funds (Tab G, No. 4)

Staff presented a proposed process document (**Tab G, No. 4a**) outlining a plan to fulfill the Recreational Initiative that was passed during the January and April 2023 Council meetings. The proposal details the composition of a Steering Committee, role of a hired consultant, and a Working Group composed of recreational stakeholders. It also outlines a timeline and budget for the initiative. The initiative aims to engage recreational anglers and associated industry members to review and evaluate past and current management strategies and explore potential innovative management strategies that could be applied in the future. Lessons and recommendations resulting from this exercise should inform future Council recreational management measures.

The Committee discussed whether the two Council members on the Steering Committee would be private recreational or for-hire Council representatives. Staff responded that since the recreational sector includes both, it was assumed one of each sub-sector would serve. Staff also reiterated that the Council would be responsible for appointing Steering Committee members and is scheduled to do so during its January 2024 Council meeting. The Committee discussed whether it was more appropriate for this initiative to be focused solely on the private recreational component. It was agreed to continue discussion on this topic at a future meeting. In support of moving this effort forward the Committee made the following motion:

The Committee recommends, and I so move; **that the Council move forward with the process proposed regarding the recreational initiative.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

During discussion of the list of potential projects and priorities for the Council to consider funding with unspent 2020-2024 administrative funds (**Tab G, No. 4b**) a Committee member asked about how the project for estimating recruitment in stock assessments might overlap with the work being done in the science center. It was confirmed that this is a priority for the agency, and they are moving toward empirical based estimates rather than model derived recruitment.

A Committee member asked how the project for estimating recreational discards might interface with the Recreational Initiative projects as this is also a goal for this initiative. Staff responded that the project as proposed in this is would be a high-level view of how discard levels change with different management techniques and how this may affect overall management goals. The project was envisioned as an academic review and synthesis.

A Committee member suggested a project idea to consider developing a feedback mechanism that could be implemented to assess the efficacy of past management measures to inform future

actions. This could look at factors such as season lengths or bag limits and analyze potential biases and determine if these are effective tools. A Committee member also suggested that a review of the Spiny Lobster Closed Areas may be better addressed with funding from another agency or program.

The Committee directed staff to confer with NOAA staff on the final project priorities list and bring it back for the Council to review in January 2024.

Information on Inflation Reduction Act Funding for the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Tab G, No. 5)

Staff presented the proposed budget and project plan for Phase 1 of the Inflation Reduction Act funding for the Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMC) in **Tab G, No. 5a**. NOAA has authorized \$375,000 to fund the core support for this initiative for each Council. This funding is anticipated to support one staff person for two years with the primary task to develop and implement Phase 2 of the plan.

The Committee recommends, and I so move: **that the Council implement the proposal to hire a staffer for 2 years as use of Phase I IRA funding as outlined in Tab G, 5(a) of the briefing book.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

The remaining \$17 million in Phase 2 funding will be awarded to the Councils on a competitive basis after review and evaluation of the project proposals by NMFS. The proposals must be based on specific priorities and designed to support Council-identified top climate-related management projects and link these to NOAA Fisheries climate ready priorities. Staff plans to bring a multi-year draft proposal to the Council in January; however, it must be submitted before that meeting concludes.

Other Business

Mr. Strelcheck, the Regional Administrator of the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) provided an update on the plans for \$20 Million in Inflation Reduction Act funding that has been directed through NOAA to address the impacts of climate change on red snapper and other reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated \$2 million is being directed to develop and implement Gulf of Mexico video and acoustic camera surveys to improve reef fish data timeliness and generation of density estimates. Mr. Strelcheck noted \$7.35 million is going to be provided to collaborate with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and state partners to increase accessibility of state survey data. The remaining \$10.65 million is going to be used to improve recreational discards and effort estimates.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.