

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Webinar
November 17, 2025**

Executive Committee

Trish Murphey, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
Dr. Carolyn Belcher

Kerry Marhefka
Amy W. Dukes

Council Staff

John Carmichael
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Julia Byrd

Kelly Klasnick
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Wiegand
Dr. Judd Curtis

Attendees and Invited Participants

Monica Smit-Brunello

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Executive Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at via webinar on Monday, November 17, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Good afternoon, everybody. We've got everybody over now, right? It looks like I see everybody, and so we have Kerry Marhefka, myself, Amy Dukes, Carolyn Belcher, and Jessica McCawley as members of the Executive Committee, and so I will go ahead, and is everybody good with the agenda as-is, or any objections to the agenda?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm not seeing any hands.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, we'll call the agenda approved, and then we need to approve the minutes from April 11th. Anybody have any comments, or edits, for those minutes, or objections to these minutes?

MR. KLASNICK: Seeing no hands.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, we will call the minutes approved as well, and so I will go ahead, and we've already finished our closed session, and so I'll go ahead and turn it over to John and Kelly to do the Item Number 2, the Budget Review.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and Kelly will walk through the open budget presentation.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. Thank you, John and Trish, and so we're going to be kind of working through Attachment 2a, and then you may also want to refer to Attachment 2b, which is the budget table, and, just to orient everyone to the budget table, down this left-hand column, we have the main budget categories that we allocate funding to, and charge expenses to, and, in the second column here, you've got the 2025 budget that was approved by the council.

Next to that, we have the 2026 draft budget that we'll be talking about today. The next column over, you're shown what has been expended through the time whenever the numbers were put together for the briefing materials, which was through 9/30 of 2025, and then you have the percentage of expense through that 9/30 date.

Starting off, we'll take a look at the 2025 recap, and so we had budgeted \$5.2 million. Our funding came in at \$4.1 million, which was a slight, 0.96 percent, decrease from the previous year. That higher budget number was because of the extension from the previous grant, and so the councils are permitted to carry over funds for work that was planned but unable to be completed in the prior grant timeframe. We were able to take advantage of that provision, and extend some work, and the corresponding funding, into the 2025 budget, which is why you're seeing that \$5.2 million number in 2025, which is higher than we would typically be putting through.

The spend trend for 2025 is very favorable for the council. We were at 59 percent total expended through that September timeframe. The October numbers, which weren't ready for this briefing materials, but I have been able to get those from Suzanna since then, and the trend, you know, continues very favorably, as far as the spend rate, and so we're expecting to have some carryover from 2025 into 2026.

I will point out that, the state liaison contracts, we haven't, you know, paid anything to our state partners on those contracts yet, because of the late timing of the funding award number for 2025. We held those up, as our state partners are aware, and we appreciate their patience and understanding with that, and so those will all be paid in that January timeframe, and so that will bump the number up for the total expenditures, but it will still keep us, you know, in a comfortable position overall, as far as being able to carry some funds into the 2026 budget year.

Then, as always, we do our best to budget based on the travel that we expect, and the meetings we expect to hold, and the number of attendees, but we know there's a lot of variability in how those actually occur throughout the years, compared to, you know, what was intended, and that is also reflected in the expenses, but, fortunately for 2025, those numbers continue to come in lower than what we had anticipated.

A few other items from the 2025 budget is we had expected up to a 10 percent increase in the healthcare costs, and originally that's what was proposed, but we were able to go back to the provider, and, through some negotiation, with the help of our broker, we were able to get that down to a 3 percent increase, and the actual spend rate is going to be very comparable to the year before, due to some demographic changes that we had within the healthcare, and so we are expecting that number to be -- Everything I'm reading, and we haven't gotten anything on our specific plan, and the council doesn't renew until that March timeframe, but we are expecting probably a larger increase, and so we budgeted, you know, for up to 10 percent in 2026, based on everything that seems to be out in the marketplace.

We did absorb an IRS mileage increase in 2025 of 4.5 percent, which is a fairly large expense for the council, given the amount of travel that is done. The IRS typically doesn't release that number for the next year until December, and so we don't know where that will come in, but I'm not expecting any increase, is what I'm expecting, and so we'll see how that plays out, and then I already mentioned the carryover.

The council also had several other grants that were going on in 2025, and we'll talk a little bit more about those as we go through. We also saw large per diem increases across all of the states where the council does the vast majority of its travel, and you'll see those numbers are listed down here, and so, you know, fortunately, we were able to absorb those into that budget, as we kind of expected it to flow.

Now that moves us over to the 2026 numbers, which, again, if you're looking at Attachment 2b, will be under this draft column here, and we've come in with a working budget, at this point, of \$4.5 million. Some of the key drivers to that are we're expecting a 1 percent across the board federal pay increase. That's what has been floated out there. That's pending final congressional approval.

The 2026 per diems did come out, and they were flat across the board for the states that the council operates in, and so we're not expecting anything significant there, other than the normal travel variations that we have from year to year. The main reduction in the 2026, compared to 2025 budget, is the reduction in subcontracted labor work. We had that carryover funds from the previous grant cycle, which allowed the council to undertake several initiatives and get some contractors assigned onboard to do additional work to help support the needs of the council.

Those have been carved out of the primary budget grant for 2026. However, there will be, you know, contracting activity continuing under some of the supplemental grants, and we'll talk about the primary one of those in just a few minutes here.

We're certainly expecting both in-person and virtual meetings, and, you know, the council making good use of virtual meetings, when appropriate, and when possible, definitely has helped with the budget numbers over the last several years.

I put the Federal Register notice trend on here, just to kind of see where things stand from meetings, and I pulled this together through early October, and you can see the trend there over the years, and this is just really reflecting meetings that were noticed by the council, and that were held on the council's behalf, and, as we work through 2026, you know, we'll ask the council to finalize this budget at its December meeting. Then, should there be a substantial change, or unexpected information come out related to the 2026 funding, we would come back to the council as needed, if we needed to make any changes along those lines.

We're going to talk, in a few minutes here, about some handbook and updates to the operating procedures, and, of course, as always, we'll be monitoring the budget closely, and making any adjustments that we might need to as we go through 2026, and communicating those to the council as needed, and we'll also be engaging an auditing firm, as required by the statute, in 2026.

We'll take a walk through these documents, both the administrative handbook and the statement of organization practices and procedures, also known as the SOPP, but, just at a high level, the council, and all of the eight regional councils, were subjected to what was called an enhanced site visit in 2024.

That involved a handful of folks from the Fiscal Oversight Office in D.C., and the regional grant office came onsite to all of the councils, and they went through a very detailed multi-day process of reviewing procedures and processes, and all, you know, of the supporting documentation, focusing on the administrative end of things, and not the fishery management end of things, and, as a result of that process, you know, there were a handful of suggested changes, updates, additions, subtractions, those types of things, to some of the council's supporting documentation, such as the handbook and the SOPP.

Those updates were made, and then we also took the opportunity, since we were going to be coming to you with some of those changes, to make some other updates, particularly on the SOPP, which had not been updated for a number of years, to just align it with consistency, with, you know, how things were being done, and with the handbook, to get those two documents more in sync. We'll go through those in some detail here in just a couple of minutes.

We did want to call out attention, and I had mentioned some supplemental grants, and, you know, the primary supplemental grant that the council staff has been working on, and with the help of Lara, is the Inflation Reduction Act items.

In summary, just to refresh everybody's memory on this, you know, the council had submitted a number of projects, as all of the councils did, and requests were submitted for roughly \$3.4 million. Funding, at this point, has been received in the amount of \$2.6 million. The projects that are

underway are the four that you see listed there, and then there was one project that was still under review.

MR. CARMICHAEL: There's still Project 4, which was working with communities and a few other things. There's still a piece of that that hasn't been finally approved. We submitted revisions that went in just before the shutdown occurred. We have heard back from Kelly Dennett that it was received, and they have it on the list to get back to us, and hopefully we'll get that approved and can get that final part going.

MR. KLASNICK: I think I'll take a quick pause there, and turn it back to you, Trish, to see if there's any questions, or if you have any comments for us at this point.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Kelly, for going through all that. Does anybody have any questions for Kelly?

MR. KLASNICK: All right. I'm not seeing any hands at the moment.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well --

MR. KLASNICK: Then, if you're okay with it, Trish, I'll move on to the activity schedule and the workplan.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Yes, and let's do that.

MR. KLASNICK: Sounds good. All right, and so on the screen here is what we refer to as the activity schedule, and so what this document is used for is -- I get input from the council staff, which, of course, is coming from, you know, the objectives that the council has outlined for the next year, as far as meetings go, and I use that to help build-out the budget, and, all those variable pieces that I referenced earlier, these are the primary components to that.

We've grouped it just slightly differently this year. We moved most of the council activities to this first page, and so I'm not going to go through this in great detail, unless you guys have specific questions for us, but these are basically planned meetings, planned attendees, at the known locations, using the current per diems, historical travel information, that type of things, and it goes together to build this out, so that it gives us an idea of, you know, are we in the ballpark for where we need to be on travel budget, or, if this number is blowing things up, then do we need to come back here, and come back to the council, and say, well, you know, do we need to have -- Can we have all these meetings, and maybe we need to look at attendees, that type of thing.

The short story is, you know, based on what was presented, there's no need to come back to this and make any dramatic changes or anything at this point in time. We feel comfortable that, the way it's been laid out, and with the budget, and with past trends, that, even if all these meetings would occur, we feel comfortable that the council budget would be able to handle that, and so I'll just kind of pause there, to see if anybody had any specific questions, or if, John, if you had anything in particular you wanted to point out. It's fairly standard from what we do year to year, and we list all the AP meetings in here.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would say the one thing we've tried to do over the years is be more thorough in this, and be more specific, particularly in some of the extra meetings that occur, that in the past had been lumped under a single item, and we spell them out more. It's things such as the -- You know, like serving on various NFMS-level groups like HMS APs and take reduction teams and that sort of business, and so that's the biggest change we've made over the years, is just being real explicit there, so you can see everything where we're approving travel and planning on spending the money.

I would say, you know, the real gist of this is the workplan that we do, that lays out the work over the next several years, and so, you know, that drives AP meetings, council meetings, all of that sort of business, and so the pieces come together in a financial sense right here in this document.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. Trish, are you okay if I move on, or do you want to see if there's any questions on that?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and just make sure there's no questions. I guess you can see hands, or not, and so, if there's nothing, we can move on.

MR. KLASNICK: Hold on here, it looks like Jessica has her hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for unmuting me. First, I was going to say that I love this sheet. This thing is awesome. I love how everything is broken down. Then I think my comment is for John. Can you remind me -- I didn't see COFI on here. Does it actually occur in the following year? I can't remember.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think that's the case.

MR. KLASNICK: I think you're right, John. I seem to remember you mentioning that that could come out. I'm just hesitating here as I move through it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I couldn't remember. Like are they every other year? I don't know.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and they were every other year. I feel like they were in the odd years, and then it's certainly something that I do keep in the back of my mind for that, if the opportunity comes up, which it should at some point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks.

MR. KLASNICK: I see Kerry has a hand up.

MS. MARHEFKA: Kelly, have you got me?

MR. KLASNICK: Yes, ma'am.

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay, and this is going to sound self-serving, and I swear to God it's not, you all, and I noticed, under the like CCC stuff, there's obviously not member comp, because it's always

been state directors, but, if there wasn't a state director, is that going to be a problem in the future, budget-wise?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and not at all, Kerry. The member comp isn't that much. That wouldn't be a problem. We just include that or not based on who would be going.

MS. MARHEFKA: Got it. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Any more questions for Kelly or John?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm not seeing any other hands, and so we'll go ahead to the workplan, if you're okay with that, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and go ahead.

MR. KLASNICK: All right.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and so we'll bring this up. This is where things stand now, after the September meeting. Obviously, things could be different, based on the impacts of the shutdown. Staff is now working to get up with their co-leads in the Regional Office on the various IPTs, to find out what kind of impacts we're going to expect, but, you know, probably some things are going to be pushed back. I think the biggest issue, that I expect we will raise in September as well, is kind of a heavy workload mid next year, which we may have to resolve.

I think the shutdown, and changes in potentially assessment plans as a result of the shutdown, will likely resolve some of those problems, as they often do, and so, for now, I think that's about all we know, but we're certainly working hard to find out what the impacts are.

In past years, I would say for a shutdown this long, you can expect many of the stock assessments to be pushed back by as much as six months. What happens then, in the assessment world, is you get a new data year, and we don't want to, you know, get an assessment that's really aged, and so that can add further delays, and so I think most of the activity will be in just working out what the assessment impacts are going to be for some of those projects that would be coming online later in 2026, and into 2027, and then, otherwise, we're, you know, really continuing to push hard for the things that we want to get final approval in December, and hopefully, we'll be able to. If not, some of those may push back a little bit to March. Any questions on that?

MS. MURPHEY: Any hands, Kelly?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm not seeing any hands at the moment, no. All right.

MS. MURPHEY: Then we can move on to the handbooks.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I thought what we'll do is call these up, and go through them, and pause at the various pieces that have comments tracked, and changes noted, and there's only a half-dozen or so places in the admin handbook, and so I will get Kelly just to scroll on down.

While he's doing that, these are primarily consistency with the SOPPs, some updated language from NMFS, and recommendations from that enhanced site visit. Otherwise, we're not looking at any procedural changes or anything, or policy changes, from a council perspective. The first one is under harassment, and this is some new language recommended by NMFS to include here, and just clarifying how to handle harassment reports.

MR. KLASNICK: I'll just move through, and, if anybody has something, just please put your hand up, and we'll let Trish know, and sorry about all the scrolling.

MR. CARMICHAEL: There was one more, and so this is from the enhanced site visit. They wanted some clarification on including receipts for when we reimbursed for moving expenses. We had in the past required receipts, but it just wasn't stated as such.

Then this is -- So this is the change in the outreach and communication personnel related to Kim's retirement. Her position was called the Public Information Officer. We're going to move away from that, and we'll have an Outreach Coordinator and a Communications Coordinator, and so that's going to change a little bit in two places, where Public Information Officer was just listed as a specific title.

This one was, if you recall, we, in recent years, and again this year, have increased by 1 percent the amount of money being put in the employee's retirement account. While there was language in there that said we could change this, we just wanted to clarify and enhance this right here in this place, to note that, as part of our annual budget process, we can increase or decrease the contribution, and so, in the last couple of years, we've been doing an additional 2 percent going into that. We can do this as a year-to-year basis. There's language throughout this that says you can make changes, and it's all funding-dependent, but we thought it was important to restate that here at this point.

There's a little more coming up here, I think, when we get to some more site visit stuff. There we go, and so, the public comment at council meetings, in comparing this to the SOPPs, there was some difference in how the information was presented, and so this is some information that was in the SOPPs, and not as clear here, that just clarifies how we handle public comment at council meetings. It reflects the way we do business now, and so I think makes it a little more clear in our language in the handbook. Kelly, this was some of the changes in language from the site visit, as I recall?

MR. KLASNICK: Yes, and that's correct. We developed an entirely standalone procurement procedure. They were just looking for more details along those lines, and so I created a standalone procedure that replaces a lot of this language that was, you know -- It just wasn't quite as detailed, I guess, as they were looking for, and so that's been created, and it is, you know, available to all staff, and so we just updated it here to reference that other document.

Then I think the only appendix -- The appendices are updated with the latest SSC and AP policies that have been approved in the past. We got the AP updated, which you had done a bit ago, and then the next one, I think, is the telework policy, which reflects the current way we're doing that business, and so there's some changes in there. This hadn't been updated in a while, and so this is the post-COVID telework policy, essentially.

MR. KLASNICK: I believe that was the last of it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think that's the last one.

MR. KLASNICK: Sorry for that painful scrolling, everybody. All right. If there's no questions on that, we'll move to the SOPP document. I'm not seeing any hands here, and so we will move along, Trish, if you're good with that.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, actually -- No one has any comments?

MR. KLASNICK: Actually, I see Monica has a hand up now.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just, at the very end, you've added a whistleblower protection section to Appendix 7, I think.

MR. CARMICHAEL: There you go. I was thinking there was something else. Thank you, Monica.

MR. KLASNICK: This was also from that enhanced site visit. There's something in the code out there that you have to have this, and so we now have it. Thank you for that, and I see Amy Dukes has a hand up as well, Trish.

MS. DUKES: Hi, Kelly. Can you scroll back down to that area where you've got the teleworking policy update? I think you need to remove a number, because it says employees may telework up to forty-five days per week. I don't think that's right.

MR. KLASNICK: I think it was four, and then we put it to five.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and so it's a strikethrough.

MS. DUKES: The line through the four looks like part of the four. Just kidding. I could not see that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It really does, yes.

MS. DUKES: Okay, and so they may telework up to five days per week. Okay. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. KLASNICK: You're welcome.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any other comments? I actually have some comments, if it's okay.

MR. KLASNICK: Of course.

MS. MURPHEY: So I went through this a couple of weeks ago, and so some of my notes to myself may not mean anything to me now, but, on page 1, which I guess is page 8 on the PDF,

under Officers and Terms of Office, this has us doing this annually. I was wondering, since we've actually been doing this biannually, I guess, should we address that and change this to the serving every two years, instead of one year?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We've been doing it annually. There was a time in there where it was overlooked, because remember we did it back in September, and so we did think about changing this, but, you know, when I looked into it, I thought maybe we just leave well enough alone, because it seems to be working okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and I just know we -- Yes, and, I mean, that's fine. I just know we tend to do every other year. I know we vote every year, but, you know, I'm good with that, but I just wanted to bring that up.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I appreciate that, Trish. I think this gives us the most flexibility, potentially.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and, on page 11, PDF 11, under Public Hearings, should we also add AP meetings and SSC meetings as well to that list, besides just public comment, or public comment sessions, at those APs and SSCs as well?

MR. KLASNICK: Am I on the right section here?

MS. MURPHEY: Hang on. I've only got one screen, and so I have to go back and forth. Yes. That one.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Under the Public Hearings?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I think -- Yes, and that's it, and this may be a note that I don't understand myself. again. Now I've lost myself.

MR. KLASNICK: I see what you're -- I think what, Trish, you're indicating is this calls out at council public comment sessions, but are you suggesting that it should also include basically any public comment sessions?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that's what I meant. That's exactly what I meant.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, I mean, I think we could. What do folks think?

MS. MURPHEY: Again, these are suggestions. I will leave it to the whole group.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think it's been an issue with SSC or AP members giving comment during their own meetings, because that would be where this would --

MS. MURPHEY: Well, I think it's happened one time. It happened one time.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, where an AP member commented during an AP meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and a council person commented at the public comment of an AP meeting.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Oh. Well, see, that would be different, right, because, you know, this says the council and committee members are discouraged for meetings at which they have voting privileges, and so they don't have voting privileges at an AP meeting, and so it would be broader to say to discourage council and committee members from commenting at AP or SSC meetings, potentially, which the council as a whole may take objection to. I know, quite often, council members comment at SSC meetings for sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and =, well, I just meant at public -- You know, when they do the public comment, and, again, I've only seen it happen one time that a voting council member gave public comment during the public comment of an AP, and so, I mean, I don't think it is a problem, but I just didn't know whether we just wanted to flag that, and that was the point.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think flagging it is good. Does anyone think it's an issue that we need to address? It might become something that's a little more touchy than the other kind of things, since it would -- You know, some other council members, and the Full Council, might be concerned about it.

MS. MURPHEY: Like I said, I'm not meaning that AP or council members can't speak at AP meetings, you know, because I know they get asked questions and stuff, but I was just talking about the public comment.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't know, and no one else is raising their hands, and so I think maybe not something to particularly solve at the moment.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and, on page 35, under Council Committees, do we need to discuss committee members from other councils, or do we want to wait on -- I guess the other option would be to wait on the internal review, or the review, of how the South Atlantic Council is working.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think that's right, because it does say that council members from other councils or commissions may be appointed, and so that leaves it up to the council to decide if they wish to appoint anybody.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It preserves the option if the council should choose to go back to that route.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and then, on page 37, SEDAR Committee, weren't we going to change the name of that committee? I think we changed it, but then there was some issue about what it got changed to.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we were going to change it, and it changed to a potentially lightning rod acronym, and so I think it's still just up in arms right now, and so, yes, and it's still up in the air. The last that Chip and I talked about it, we didn't really have a great idea for what to change it to.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so we'll just leave it as SEDAR Committee at this point, and then we can have that discussion again, like the last time.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, Well, that sounds fine, and I think -- Okay, Page 38, under Formal Meetings, do we need to talk about attendance, at least encouraging in-person attendance, and notifying the ED and the chair if they're unable to attend, and, anyway, and I didn't know if we wanted to put maybe a little bit stronger language, as far as at least encouraging in-person attendance, blah, blah, blah, something like that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, I mean, that's something I'm open to. I know that -- Is it the AP and SSC policies where we do acknowledge virtual meetings, and have language encouraging in-person participation at in-person meetings?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, anyway, I thought that might be a good idea too, to add that here, but, again, I'm just throwing out suggestions to the whole group.

MR. KLASNICK: Kerry has her hand up on that, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, Trish, I agree with you, and John just on a really important point, and I think we need to be at least as accountable as council members as we require of our AP members, and we take a lot of -- When we go through those AP selections, attendance is like something we really make a lot of decisions on, and so I do think it's important to have strong wording. Obviously, it's not up to any of us who a council member is, or anything like that, but I do feel like expressing what level of accountability we look for.

I also think there needs to be maybe some sort of procedures for, if you're a council member, and you can't make a meeting, which happens, and we all have, you know, emergencies in life, and how does the meeting -- How do you then slot into the meeting if you're attending remotely? What's the protocol, you know, as far as getting called on and things like that? I think this is definitely something, in this new day and age, we need to be very specific about, since virtual meetings -- Since attending virtually is an option.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Kelly, scroll down to D in this section. There's a section on virtual meetings, and this might be the place, if you want to provide an additional sentence, to do it.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, what do you think? There, or up in the other -- Or even in both places? I mean --

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I am on my phone, and so it is hard for me to see, which is appropriate for my discussion, for my comment, right? How ironic. I mean, I think it needs to be in two places. I think we need to talk about the importance of attending the meetings, and then, if you can't attend in person, and I don't know. Other people have opinions too, and so you don't just need mine, for sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody else have any thoughts on this discussion?

MR. KLASNICK: Amy has a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: I agree that, if we have specific language regarding attendance in AP meetings, that we as council members should be held to the same standard. I don't think we can ask folks to attend, and have consequences from an AP standpoint, and we don't necessarily follow suit as a council, since we're supposed to be ultimately listening to that body, and to hold us to a different standard doesn't seem to be applicable, and so, just looking at the attendance guidelines in your AP administrative handbook, it just says that attendance in-person -- Well, the council prefers that all advisory panel members attend in-person, but recognize it's not always possible.

I think you're getting at a little bit of that, indeed, but maybe with not that same content, and then just -- Not that we need to put it like a number in there, per se, but I do think the language could be stronger. It would actually show support on the council side, and show that support to our APs, that we're taking it just as seriously as we're expecting them to.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: If you wanted to see that, that's down on page 52, PDF 52. It's section f of the Meeting Provisions for the Advisory Panel, F(2).

MS. MURPHEY: I mean, that language looks -- We could put that up there in the under formal meetings piece.

MR. KLASNICK: It looks like Kerry has a hand up.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and sorry. I realized I left it up, but this time it's real. I agree, and it could say something like it is expected that all council members will attend in-person meetings, and then just switch like to please notify the council chair, or ED, whatever you guys think is appropriate. It's not -- Like I get that no one can approve, I guess, whether a council member participates remotely, but I do feel like there needs to be some sort of communication and acknowledgement that it is the outlier, and not the norm.

MS. MURPHEY: So, John and Kelly, do you want us just to let you guys figure out where best to put this, or something similar? I like what this Number 2 says, and I thought it would be good to -- I'm thinking it would be good under the formal meetings for the council, but, if everybody else is fine, I'm fine with you guys kind of fixing it the way you think it would be addressed best in here.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think we can -- I mean, the pieces are pretty close between the formal meetings and then the virtual and webinar. I think this pertains to virtual. Maybe it fits a little bit better there, but, yes, it could be in either, if folks have a strong feeling for one or the other.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I have a strong feeling for it to be in both, but I know that is duplicative, but I just -- My gut just screams put it in both. What do you think, Kerry?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We can put something in both, and pass it around for you guys.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm fine with that. I think that's a good plan.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Amy, are you good?

MS. DUKES: Yes, and I'm good with both. I think that in leaving discretion to staff sounds good, but I think they get the gist of the thought process we were behind.

MS. MURPHEY: I agree. Well, that was it for me. That's just me going through when I read through this, and so that's all my input, and so thanks for listening.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay, and so we'll make that, and it will be similar to this language here.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that sounds good.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. Thank you. Thanks, everybody, for the discussion. We'll move over to the SOPP. Some equally painful scrolling, although the document is not quite as long, and so we have that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, again, dealing with the travel expenses, and so something that wasn't stated though is a number of the other councils have a statement like this, just to make it clear that you are only reimbursing the member, or their designee, and so, if someone were to bring -- A member were to also bring a normal designee with them, the council would only reimburse one person for travel to a council meeting.

Then the next one is the SSC section, which was rewritten a bit to be more consistent with the format of the AP, where it was a bit more general, and fewer subsections included in there, but it's the same content, and just a little more clearly and simply stated, and so that just creates a number of, you know, strikethroughs and moves and that sort of thing there in the SSC section.

The advisory panel has some information addressing to the stipends and things that came up from the site visit, because we just weren't clear on that information. Just a bit of clarification about who appoints committee members. Just little pieces in here that -- You know, we reviewed other council SOPPs, and we had the guidance from the site visit and such, and we compared between this and the handbook, to try to get things, you know, consistent between the two when it comes to things such as the committees and that business.

Some additional information on the CCC, which is that red insert, and it's language that's in other councils regarding the CCC, and just being clear in our process. A slight change from use of news media to communication channels, given the modern communication world that we're in. Federal Registers have something in there about advance request for assistance, and it's now up to five days. I think it used to be four days, and now the current FRN language is five days.

The written statement has changed to be more consistent between the SOPPs and the handbook. As I said, the handbook reflects the way that we do business now. There were some things in here that were potentially duplicative, or not totally clear, and then just some wording updates.

There was a lot of language in here about the public testimony that really wasn't the way we were doing things, and saying, in some cases, we may defer public testimony, and I haven't seen a situation where we would do that, and I really didn't think we wanted to be in a situation where we advertised that we were taking public comment and then we decided we would just totally defer that, and so, because we've never done that, we might as well just delete this, because there's nothing in the handbook, which we had really been following for testimony, about, well, we'll just defer it until some later time. I think that's maybe some language from when council business was perhaps done a different way.

Closed meetings just specifies the section in MSA where that was. There was some language about it, but this allows us to be consistent with the MSA, even if that is changed. You know, we know the things dealing with major fishing ports, and it's kind of a lot of different situations in today's world. I don't think it's enough to just advertise in public fishing ports anymore, and so we'll just reference the MSA here.

The council member compensation, and so, for a number of years now, we've been paying hourly increments, you know, with the time cards for council members who are compensated, and that was really done as we moved away from just your standard meeting format to the webinar meetings and virtual meetings, where you may have a meeting that's only an hour or two, and so, rather than always just paying the eight-hour day, we just went to the hourly thing, which is consistent with being able to pay less than eight hours, but it also then includes that no more than eight hours can be compensated, and so this language just makes sure that what's in the SOPPs matches the way we handle the compensation.

The thing that struck through is suggested for deleting, and it talked about appointed state members of state government may be compensated if they take leave. We've never dealt with this. I've never seen this come up, and I just wondered if it was something that we really did need, and I did not see it in other council SOPPs, and so recommended for deleting this piece.

MR. KLASNICK: Trish, Carolyn has a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I just wanted to say that I would agree with that, John, because it starts getting to be a slippery slope with people being -- Because the reason you're on there, right, is you're appointed as a state employee. If you're not allowed to take compensation as a state employee, you being on leave doesn't change your position, and so I think that is kind of -- It's opening up grounds for somebody who doesn't really have the expertise to recognize that that can get them in trouble, especially at home.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I was thinking that too, Carolyn, because like, well, what's leave without pay? That opens up a whole can of worms for a potential state employee too, I would think, that I'm going to take leave without pay, and then you have that job because of your position. Yes, and I felt the same way.

DR. BELCHER: We dealt with it when I was over at the university, and it was basically one of those things where the university said you couldn't do it, and so, fine, and I'm on leave, and that was how people handled it, but, to me, it didn't make it right, because your invitation was because of your position.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Right. Exactly, and so cool. It sounds like we're good to delete that. The next section is just some clarifying things on when you can actually receive the stipend payments, and this is another piece that was in a lot of other council SOPPs for clarifying the conditions.

The section here was repeated below, and a lot of this -- There was details on staffing that we're now just simply referring to the administrative handbook. It will reduce some inconsistencies between this and the handbook down the road, and then this was some information on harassment, but, as you guys can recall, there's been a lot of developments on harassment that are reflected in the handbook, in response to the agency making changes, and so, by referring to the handbook, any future changes, we can make them just in the handbook, in one place, and not have to try to keep two documents synchronized, and, based on what I've seen for this, it wouldn't surprise me if there's more changes in a couple of years for harassment. It seems to be something that's in flux quite often.

A little clarification for the leave accounting, which is those accounts that Kelly mentioned earlier, just clarifying how they are, and that it could be more than one account, which I think was a change from when this was originally written, and then a whole bunch of stuff on leave referring to the handbook, and the FMLA as well, which is another thing that we reference in the handbook, and could be subject to change, and so that will make future changes simpler.

There was some language that was in the handbook on foreign travel that wasn't here, and so we've added that, and then there's language from NMFS policies about the Fly America Act and foreign air carriers.

Then information on training again, and then referring to standards of conduct, and we have detailed information on that in the handbook, and there's standalone documents for this as well that we refer to. If those documents change, we can simply update the links to them in the handbook, and not have to do it in two places. Some changes in positions there noted, and then the procurement stuff, and Kelly mentioned that earlier, you know, coming up with some standalone documentation on that, and referring to the handbook.

This last piece, I wasn't sure what this is, and what it did, and it referred to habitat. It's abilities that we already have, and it's clearly stated in the act. It didn't, to me, seem to really provide any SOPPs-level information, and so we suggested this for deletion, and that was it., and so, you know, actually, after all the changes we did in the handbook a couple of years ago, I think Kelly and I thought there might be more changes to be made in the SOPPs, and so, mainly, by just referring to the handbook in a lot of places, I think we avoided a lot of that, and I think now the SOPPs are pretty robust, and they shouldn't need to be changed for a while, barring any big changes in federal policies.

MR. KLASNICK: Monica has a hand up on that.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Hi. Thanks. I had two things. One, you know, the regulations still contain some things like language about the Secretary approving the SOPPs, and so I'm not quite sure when that's last been done. I think it was just languishing at Headquarters for a long time, but I'll look into that, and, to the extent that it needs to be submitted in some fashion to the service for approval, or whatever, and so I'll get back with you on that one.

Then, you know, in many places, the SOPPs refers to the handbook, and I think that it's important to have both the SOPPs and the handbook available on the council's website, and, if you do that already, great. I think I found the SOPPs, and I'm not sure I've always found the handbook, but I think that would be important, since so many things refer to the handbook. Does that make sense?

MR. CARMICHAEL: That does, Monica, yes, and thank you for that. The approval was something that the CCC has talked about a lot in the past, and the general agreement that was discussed there was, yes, to submit changes, when they occur, to the agency, and so I would submit it to like you and Andy formally, I suppose, and then post them on the website, and consider that the council is doing its part, and then, if the Secretary formally approves them at some point, let us know.

It sounded like, the last ED discussion, no one could even remember the last time that they had gotten a message that the Secretary had approved SOPPs, and some of the councils only function with SOPPs, and not handbooks, and make changes fairly often, and none of them had received any notice of approval, and so it seems like the agency at least has been fine with us just submitting them, and then posting them on the website, and, yes, we'll have this and the handbook on the website to go hand-in-hand.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica. Any other questions for John?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm not seeing any hands up.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I had one comment on this one. On PDF page 14, you've got a typo. I'm assuming that "C" by itself was supposed to be the end of "public".

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and it sure was. It should be. That's funny.

MS. MURPHEY: Based off the discussions over the handbook, I've got no other comments for this particular document. Does anybody else have anything, any input, on these documents?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm not seeing any hands.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MR. KLASNICK: If it's okay, Trish, I have a few motions that we would ask from the committee.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MR. KLASNICK: If you're okay with that, and Jessica has her hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and back on the budget. I started searching online, and, John, I sent you a message. COFI is in September of 2026, and so I don't know if it needs to be on that sheet or not.

MR. CARMICHAEL Okay. We can. I feel like another council was potentially doing 2026, but we can look into that for the CCC.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sounds good.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. I'm not seeing any other hands, and so, Trish, if you're okay with a few motions for the committee here, I'll bring these --

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MR. KLASNICK: All right, and I'll bring these up.

MS. MURPHEY: Whoever wants to make the motion, just raise your hand and read it, and Kelly can see your hand, and then read it, and then we'll get a second and go through all of it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Then, Trish, I do want to point out -- This meeting, due to the shutdown was not noticed. However, this is a committee. This is not final action, and so these motions will come before the council for final action at the December meeting. This will come up as any other committee report for the committees that are actually happening during that meeting, and so what we can do is, if we approve the handbook as modified, we'll include the modifications you guys discussed, and that version will be what will be with this report for the council briefing book in December.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. That sounds good, John. Thanks.

MR. KLASNICK: I see Jessica had a hand up on the motion, I believe.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I was going to make Motion Number 1, if you're ready, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: I am.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **I move that we approve the updates to the administrative handbook as presented and modified.**

MS. DUKES: Kelly, this is Amy. I'll second that motion.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Any discussion on this motion? **Any objection to the motion? Then the motion is passed.** So Motion Number 2.

MR. KLASNICK: Carolyn has a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to make the motion to approve the updates to the Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures, or the SOPPs, as presented and modified.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second?

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, you've got a second.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Any discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion? The motion is approved.** Then we'll move to the third motion here.

MR. KLASNICK: Carolyn has a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to make the motion to approve the Draft 2026 Operational Budget as presented and modified.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have a second?

MS. DUKES: Second.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you. Any discussion on this motion? **Any objections to this motion? I call the motion approved.** Thank you, guys.

MR. KLASNICK: Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So we'll go back to the agenda. The next thing would be Other Business, and, Trish, I think it would be a good time to ask if there's any public comment, and then I have a little bit of other business for you.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. We'll go ahead and do public comment. Is anybody -- Would any members of the public like to provide comment to the Executive Committee? Just raise your hand, and Kelly will recognize you.

MR. KLASNICK: Seeing no hands.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, we'll move into Other Business, and so, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The first thing I wanted to point out is the CCC meeting in 2026 is going to be October 19th through 21st. There's some -- You know, it's planned to be a virtual meeting, an agreement the year before last to move the fall meeting to virtual, but there was some recent discussion, when the EDs met, after the planned meeting this fall was canceled, and consideration

of would it be worthwhile to meet in-person, mainly being tied back to the 50th anniversary of Magnuson, and it could be an opportunity to maybe attract some D.C. attention.

The issue wasn't really settled.

I think not all of the EDs were onboard with that. Some were concerned about the timing of it, and planned for a virtual meeting during those days, and weren't sure that, you know, they could travel during that time, and so it's kind of up in the air, and I just wanted to put it out there for you guys, to see if, you know, maybe at the December meeting or something, or if you want to now, relay some of your thoughts on how you feel about in-person versus virtual for that meeting, because it's something the EDs are going to need to decide probably certainly early in the next year.

Then the other thing, similar, is just to put a pin in this for you. We will host the CCC in 2027, potentially to be the week of May 10th, and so that would be Jessica as the chair, presumably, at that point, and then, whoever comes on as vice chair, clear your calendars for the week of May 10th, and we would be hosting the CCC.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Anybody have any thoughts on virtual versus in-person for the fall CCC meeting?

MR. KLASNICK: Jessica has a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know. I'm 50-50, because I feel like a lot of what we do in that meeting can be done virtually, but, if we're going to do something to celebrate Magnuson, I get it for that particular fall meeting, and so I'm torn. I'm good to leave it up to John with, you know, whatever he thinks.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm kind of like you, Jessica. I'm kind of sitting on the fence. I would probably go with the majority. So far, I don't think anybody's made a real, real strong reason to go in-person, and it doesn't have a real clear plan of what we would do at that point to celebrate, and so it may hinge on someone coming up with something that we can afford to do that would attract some attention to us in a positive way.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I was -- I guess I'm still leaning -- Of course, I won't be attending this particular meeting, but I would have still -- I think I still would have leaned more towards virtual, because it does seem like it's mostly all updates, and, I mean, if something was put together specifically to celebrate Magnuson, I think that would be something that would change my mind, but, how things have been, it just seems a lot more efficient, just for this particular meeting, to go virtual, but that's my two-cents, and I won't be attending anyway, but I think, if there was a real effort to make something of the anniversary, I would -- I could see going in-person.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks, Trish, and, yes, so I think that's helpful. If you have any more thoughts, feel free to pass them on to me. I'll keep you posted.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and then the other was the South Atlantic Council will be hosting the CCC in 2027, and so I'm sure you guys will -- Especially in Charleston, there should be lots of things that can be done to have a really good --

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we'll have to -- We'll be starting to look at places, and coming up with some potential events, and so, Kerry, we'll look to you for some great ideas to entertain this crowd.

MS. MARHEFKA: Oh Lord. You know you'll be in trouble then, but I'll start thinking. Amy and I are on it.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, that sounds good. I think you all will come up with something awesome. I know you will.

MS. DUKES: I think I just got voluntold.

MS. MARHEFKA: Amy, we have to put on our South Carolina hospitality. Sorry.

MS. DUKES: Yes, ma'am. We will do it gladly.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Have everybody come out in the harbor and pull a trap on the Palmetto.

MS. DUKES: We could do that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Wait. You don't want everyone on the Amy Marie? I don't understand.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just VIPs on the Amy Marie.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everyone. Anything else to discuss today? Hearing none, I'll go ahead and adjourn this meeting, and so thank you all very much for being here and participating, and so we'll see you in December.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on November 17, 2025.)

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Last Name	First Name
Klasnick	01Kelly
Carmichael	John

Last Name	First Name
Belcher	Carolyn
Brouwer	Myra
Byrd	Julia
Curtis	Judd
Dukes	Amy
Marhefka	00Kerry
McCawley	00-Jessica
Murphey	Trish
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Wiegand	Christina
collier	chip
thomas	suz