

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Webinar

November 12, 2020

Transcript

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The Executive Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Thursday, November 12, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: I have ten o'clock on my watch, and we've got the entire committee, and so why don't we get started. I will call to order the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Executive Committee meeting, and it's November 12, 2020. The committee members are myself, Steve Poland as Vice Chair, Chester Brewer, Carolyn Belcher, and Doug is sitting in for Carolyn, and Jessica McCawley, and that's the committee.

We've got a fairly short agenda, but a lot of things to cover in it, and so the first item of business would be Approval of the Agenda. One recommendation that I would have in adjusting the agenda is, since we were going to start out in open session and then shift to closed session for personnel-related discussions, is that maybe we have Other Business as Item 3, effectively, and so any other suggestions for the agenda or comments on the agenda?

Then, just for the mechanics of this, in other settings, we have actually shifted to a different webinar, basically, to cover the shift between open and closed. In this case, what we're going to do is, after we conclude with Other Business and we're ready to shift to the closed session, we would just ask everybody that is not on the committee or designated senior staff to just sign-off, and I think that's the way that's going to work, and so any objections to the agenda? Then, seeing none, the agenda is adopted, and we'll get started. Item 1 is a budget review, and I think that's going to be kicked off with Kelly and John running through a PowerPoint, and then we'll just head on from there.

MR. KLASNICK: Very good. Thank you, Mel. Myself and John will kind of be tag-teaming through this first presentation here, and there's just a handful of slides, and it will be Attachment 1A in the briefing book, and you might also want to have, and I will just flip to it quickly here, Attachment 1B. I will jump back and forth on occasion, but I don't want to give you all screen whiplash, and so some of the bullet points will be referring to the summary table that you're seeing here on the screen right now as Attachment 1B.

We'll start things off with just a recap on kind of how 2020 is progressing here, as we get into November, and these reports were produced a few weeks ago, on the 23rd of October, and so, of course, the numbers are changing on a daily basis, but this gives us a good snapshot of where things are at at this point of the year.

We were working off of a total budget number of \$3.9 million for 2020, and, if you refer to 1B, you will see, at the time this was produced, here on the far-right column, these are showing you percentages of expenditures related to the amount budgeted. If we're working across the table, we have the categories here on the left, and we have the 2020 number that we've been working with, and we'll get to 2021, but that shows you where things are as proposed. This expended column is going to show you where we were at as of the date of this report being produced, and then these are your percentages over here. When I refer to 53 percent, that's where that number is coming from.

As is typical for the council, we have some amount of our costs that are more predictable and fixed, like personnel and some of our infrastructure costs, whether that be software and rent and some things that are a little more easy to predict on an annual basis, and we can go to market on some

of those and understand, pretty close, what we're going to be looking at, but then a large portion of the council budget is quite variable, and that's driven by the activities schedules, number one, how those are projected to occur, which goes into the budgeting process, and then, secondly, of course, how that actually plays out as the year goes on.

We also have activities schedules for 2021 in the briefing book, and that's Attachment 2A, and so that will be this document here, and we'll talk about that a little bit more in a few minutes, but that's what I'm referring to as far as the activities schedule goes.

Just by the very nature of kind of how the year will flow, those costs could vary quite a bit, depending upon circumstances, and, of course, we had some quite unusual circumstances in 2020, as it relates to meetings, and I'm referring to pretty much from the March council meeting on, and everything has been conducted in some sort of virtual type of format, and so that has had an impact, of course, on related expenses that were projected for all the categories that touch meetings, and whether that's travel or the hotel expenses, and even some compensation expenses, because of the extra meeting times and all of that.

One thing that I thought was interesting, and I just wanted to put this out here, because, even though we've had a lot of virtual work done, as you're all aware, and that has had some impacts on the budget, I went back, just quickly, and totaled, for the last three years and this year, the briefing books that have been produced by council staff.

For those of you that are familiar, we put out a briefing book for each meeting that is -- I will call it a public meeting, something that is similar to this, where we have formalized presentations, and just about anybody that wants to can sign on, and so these numbers by no means account for all meetings, all the working meetings, and I didn't even put SEDAR in here, because they operate differently, but, just to give you some perspective, even though we've had a lot of virtual meetings, when I checked this morning, in 2020, projecting what is still to come, there has been at least thirty briefing book meetings that have been conducted, or will be conducted.

In comparison, in 2019, we had twenty-nine what I will call briefing book meetings. In 2018, we had twenty-four, and, in 2017, we had twenty-one. I just thought that was kind of interesting, and so it gives a little perspective on how these virtual meetings may or may not be impacting the pace of work and that type of thing.

The next bullet item, what I'm referring to there is the council did make some staffing structure changes during 2020 that impacted the budget, and, primarily, the council elected to bring on another technical staff member, and so we brought another fishery biologist on, and, as part of making that work within the budget that we have to work with, and really just looking at overall efficiency and how we can best meet the needs of the council and the public, we elected to eliminate one of the administrative positions that we had, and it really was not a direct result of any move to the virtual meetings or things like that, but it's just an assessment of technological changes and kind of how we staff meetings, and it was decided that we could get more out of the limited resources that we have by making that structural change.

To this point, it has certainly worked out very well, and clearly we'll get a better test once we go back to in-person meetings, but we're confident that we can make that work moving forward, and, of course, if we need to address things, activities-wise or whatnot, we will continue to do that, as

we always do, but that does -- It does, hopefully, maximize the staffing structure that we have available to us, and, really, it puts the South Atlantic Council into a very lean administrative perspective, and it gets you about 18 percent of the staffing structure is administrative, which is the lowest.

I have looked at the other councils out there, and the closest you get is there is 21 percent or 23 percent, depending upon the size of the staff and things like that, and so I think that puts us in a good position to hopefully, again, maximize those resources and use them as effectively as we can.

Another item that I just wanted to highlight in 2020 is we made some rather significant equipment upgrades, as it relates to the conference system, and, of course, we all -- Those of you that do join us in-person, we've only really had an opportunity to use that one time, back in March, and so I'm probably going to have to re-train myself on how to use that when it comes around again, but all the feedback at the time is it was well received, and it will hopefully make that process run smoother.

I also plan to continue making some upgrades there, and so you'll see, as we talk about 2021, that we do have some equipment line items on there, and the council has been judicious with its funds, and we've really gotten the most out of some of that technology, but there are other components there that have more than served their useful life, and they are in need of upgrading, and so that will be a winter project that we'll be working on, making some additional changes there to hopefully keep improving the output that we're able to put out for the public at those meetings, and we'll be going into that, and, like I said, the winter is a good time to work on that and get that going.

Then I will just highlight that we do have a bit of an overlap, and most of you are aware that Brian is going to be retiring at the end of the year, and we have -- The council has selected Myra to fill his place, and there is a little bit of overlap in those positions, just for the last six weeks or so of the year, to allow some of that information sharing as we make that transition. Of course, if you have questions, feel free to raise your hands as I'm going, and you don't have to wait for any particular pause here.

MR. BELL: Steve, go ahead, and then I have one.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Mel, and thank you, Kelly. I've got a question about staffing, and I may be wrong, but does the council still shy of one staff of being fully staffed? I know, with Gregg's retirement, and then the shuffle moving up, and wasn't there another tech staff position created, but it was still one shy of filling that, or am I off somewhere?

MR. CARMICHAEL: What we have done is -- You're probably thinking of when Gregg retired, and I moved up, and then Chip moved up, and Chip had been in the coral position, and what we've done is essentially shifted some of that over to Roger, for taking on the coral responsibilities and being covered under the coral grant, and then that gave us the flexibility to bring in Mike Schmidtke, and so we're at the same headcount of staff as we were then, other than the admin staff, as Kelly mentioned.

MR. POLAND: Okay. All right. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Kelly, you mentioned, and I remember when we voted to do this, and we kind of upgraded our mics and that sort of stuff, but is that -- I noticed, in 2020, we may not have budgeted for equipment, but that's reflected as the equipment expenditure then, and so that \$17,600 is all the stuff you were talking about?

MR. KLASNICK: Yes, sir.

MR. BELL: Got you. That was a good investment too, by the way.

MR. KLASNICK: Yes, and I think it will pay dividends for many years down the road, for sure. All right. I'm not seeing any other hands here, and we'll keep moving along. Now we'll touch on 2021 a bit, and I'll still bring the table up, so you'll have a chance to look at that a little bit as well for everybody.

As far as the 2021 process, we're working with basically a flat-level budget, and so the number will look familiar, right around that \$3.9 figure, and we haven't received any other guidance contradicting that, and so, at this point, that is what we're going with. I will highlight a few highlights that went into the budgeting process, and some of these are fairly typical, and we're going to stick with a 10 percent potential increase in our healthcare costs.

A couple of points I will make about that is you will see, as you're looking at your table, that it's going to be reflected in this fringe column, among other items, but healthcare is a large portion of that number, and you will see that 2021 is actually -- Still, we're coming in at a lower total budgeted number than we did in 2020, even with the increase, or the potential increase, I should say, and a couple of factors play into that.

The council has historically been pretty aggressive on shopping benefit components around on an annual basis, and our benefit year starts in April for the healthcare, and so, last December or January timeframe, whenever our existing provider at the time came back, there was a very substantial price increase that they were building in, and it was over 30 percent, and it was just off the charts, and so we shopped our plan around, and we moved providers, which, of course, is a little bit disruptive, and it takes additional work, and, you know, folks get used to things, but we're trying to keep those costs under control.

We moved to another provider, and so we ended up with less costs in 2020 than we were expecting, given that April timeframe of the change, and then, hopefully, when this new provider comes back with whatever they offer us under renewal, if it sticks within this 10 percent, then we'll be pretty comfortable moving forward with them again, and so we'll see.

I mean, I feel like that part of the industry is just so difficult to predict right now, and I don't know enough of what to make of it, and I'm not that close to it on an all-the-time basis, but, if you're following the news, I don't know what to make of the situation and how it's going to impact that industry at all, and so I guess we'll just see, and, given that it was the council's first year with that provider -- Historically, you're going to see quite a bit of variation in those costs, and it can often, be after that first year -- You know, they price us based on a bid and historical information and all of the market intelligence that they pull, but then the reality is how did we use that plan over 2020, and that's going to determine how they price us. That's just the way it is.

The council's plan is fully self-funded, and so it's really very heavily tied into how it's actually used during the year, and so we'll see where that comes out. Usually, we get the information back from that in January or so, and we'll see where that goes.

The overall compensation line, we build in some increase potential, depending upon what happens on the federal level, and depending upon the news of the day, and who knows? I have read everything from nothing to 3 percent, and so we'll just see how that all plays out, and anybody's guess is good there, but, even with building in an increase, we're still projecting an overall -- We're budgeting for an overall personnel decrease slightly, as you'll see here in the chart, from 2020.

A couple of factors that play into that, and we've had some more senior staff retirements, and some still continuing to retire here over the last couple of years, and so you're bringing in replacements that are generally lower compensated in those positions, and we also have one position, the MyFishCount, that will be going away at the end of 2020, and, of course, the corresponding funding for that will also be expended, and so it's not really a huge gain there. It's primarily from some of those personnel changes and people coming and going.

Then the activities schedule, as I mentioned before, really drives a lot of the variable costs, and so I have updated what you see there with the 2021 per diems that were published, and fuel mileage wasn't out yet, but I'm not expecting any big changes, given the price of gas and all that, and it might even drop, and we'll see what comes out on that.

Another item that the council approved that we added a line item for in the budget is the research initiatives that you all had talked about in a previous meeting and approved, and so we've carved out \$25,000, and these are for the staff research initiatives that are outside of the regular budget process historically, and so we carved some money out to make that possible ahead of that as well, and those are captured in this table under the Other category in here, which is primarily what you're seeing as some of that increase could be attributed to that.

Continuing on with 2021, here are just a few of the items that I will highlight, and some of these are I think a little more out of the ordinary, but some initiatives that the council is looking at doing in 2021 that will have potentially some significant impacts on the budget. A project has been kicked off to take a look at the website, the general safmc.net website, and we just sent out a request for some proposals in the last couple of weeks.

Some information is starting to trickle in on that, and I know some of the other folks on the phone here have been involved in some recent website projects, or their organizations have been, but, for those of you that haven't, it's a large-scale initiative. The council's website is really just going to be looked at with a critical eye and see what can be done there to make it more user friendly and more mobile friendly, and I know some of you have provided input already on some features that you would like to see there, but, from a budget standpoint, we don't really have a really strong feel on what that number is going to come in at, and it's really going to depend on the scope and scale of changes and what the market will offer, and so speculation is not something that I feel is really worth on that one.

If you go out and do your research, you can spend anywhere from \$10,000 to \$12,000 to well into six figures for a website re-do, and so it just really depends on what you want to do, and so we've taken the approach of trying to contact some vendors that we have recommendations on that have

products that we like, and we have a pretty broad RFP out there, and we'll let them come back, and then we'll start whittling through that process, and then we'll just kind of see where that shakes out, and we'll keep you all informed on that process as we go through it.

We've also got an initiative going on, and we're partnering with the Gulf on the commercial Fish Rules app, and that's something that is currently ongoing, and there's a little more certainty around some of the costs on that, but, for anybody that's been involved in any type of technological development project, those things can vary a good bit, even with the best of planning, as things shake out, and so we'll keep an eye on that and keep that moving, but that's also another initiative that we're looking to probably have most of the expenses in the 2021 budget cycle.

I mentioned briefly earlier that we're still continuing to make some equipment upgrades and updates, and so that will continue on, both for meeting items that we see at those public meetings and also just our usual refreshes, and we haven't done that with quite the frequency in 2020 that I normally would, and we're talking about staff equipment here, PCs and laptops and things like that, just because of the remote work environment, and everything is still functioning, but, typically, I like to spread that out a little bit over every year, and so we might see a little bit more of a hit in 2021, but nothing that we can't absorb. John, you were going to hit a little bit on the CitSci program eval effort.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I was, and what's being put together over there is essentially an evaluation of the baseline of attitudes towards citizen science and what people hope to get out of it and how they feel about the data that we have available and the data collection processes and the management processes, because one of the hopes is that, by getting people more involved in the data collection, that leads to improvements in attitudes towards the data that we have and the management program in general.

The program is early, at this point, and we don't have -- We don't have data that's been collected through a program and reached its maturity and made its way into a stock assessment and then into the management program, and we knew all of that would take quite a while, and so the idea here is to start getting a baseline built and then, over time, as those other things come online, see how we potentially affect attitudes and opinions.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. Thanks, John. Then, on an annual basis, kind of depending on where we're at in the cycle, the council will have various vendor contracts that may come up and a couple are coming due here at the end of this year, and one was some office equipment, and this is primarily new printers and copies and things like that, and we were wrapping up a lease on that, and we went out and solicited competitive bids on that, and we're really just trying to right-size some of that equipment.

The council, even several years ago, was doing a lot more printing and hard-copy type output, and that has diminished considerably, and so our equipment can now get more in line with what I think our needs are, and so I'm actually going to be moving that forward here at the end of the year, and we're looking at a little over \$7,000 annually as a savings out of that, and so not a significant chunk, but we try to chip away where we can, when these things come available.

We also have a contract coming due for our communication, and, by this, I'm talking about internet service and phone service, and so we've got a review underway of that right now, and we'll see

how that plays out, and I'm not sure if that will be a savings or not, but we're going to see what the market will bear. At the very least, we're going to upgrade a little bit, to help with some of our remote work, as everybody else I'm sure has experienced, and technology has moved along, and you can have all sorts of remote desktop phones and things like that, and so we'll look to implement some of that, to provide staff with more flexibility, from a communications standpoint, whenever they're not here at the office. Hopefully we'll wrap that up as well by the end of the year and see where that goes.

I will touch on the activities schedule briefly, and so most of this is a repeat. One thing I will say is, although we're certainly planning for both in-person and virtual meetings, primarily the activities schedule is still reflecting a budget of an in-person meeting, because, as we know, the expenses are significantly higher with an in-person meeting, and so we're budgeting conservatively in that nature, and we'll just see what 2021 brings.

As we move through 2021, and what we'll be presenting here today will be a draft 2021 budget, and, again, not having any firm budget number for 2021, and we just kind of consider this a draft based on that flat amount, unless we get told otherwise, but all indications seem to be that's what we should expect, but, as we all know, Congress has only passed spending through I believe December 10, or somewhere around that date, and so we'll see what comes out of it.

Of course, budgeting is an iterative process, and updates and adjustments are made throughout the year, and we will continue to do the annual audit that the council gets distributed to them each year as it is completed. We can bring this guy up here, and we'll see if anybody has any questions about what was talked about or what you see on the screen.

MR. BELL: I've got a quick question. John, did we need to deal with the 2020 budget? Apparently, my understanding is we never actually had a final approval of the 2020 budget, and so, just to kind of keep things separate and clean -- First, we had the discussion of the 2020 budget, and, if there's no questions or concerns about the 2020 budget, we do need to actually officially have a motion to approve and adopt it, which we would carry to the December meeting Full Council. That would then just leave 2020 completely taken care of, and then we could move on to 2021 discussions and all. Just to kind of keep things clean, if someone would like to make a motion to actually have the final approval for the 2020 budget, and then, if there are questions, we can have questions. I am just looking for somebody from the committee to make that motion.

MR. BREWER: **I will make the motion.**

MR. BELL: Thank you, and so Chester has moved a motion, and do I have a second?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second.

MR. BELL: Second by Jessica. Okay. Any discussion of the 2020 budget, as we stand, as Kelly briefed it and where we landed right now? Okay. It is kind of late in the year, but this is the final approval for it. **Any objection to the final approval of this motion on the 2020 budget? Seeing no objection, then that motion is approved unanimously.** Then that takes us to the 2021, and, Chester, you had your hand up first related to, perhaps, questions on 2021.

MR. BREWER: I do, and it has to do with what is -- I guess it's really more from 2020, and maybe I should have asked this question before, but there is a line item here called Contractual, and I'm just curious as to what is included in that and why it is that it's essentially less than half of what was budgeted.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Chester, I will start on that, and then Kelly can probably lend some more, and so a few of the things that are in the contractual are the state liaison amounts, and not all of those have been paid out yet for the year. We have the transcription costs for doing the meetings, and so some of that has still not been paid out for doing the minutes and stuff like that, and then we have different administrative stuff that's related in there, and then we have the grants with the habitat and ecosystem stuff, and we have not fully paid out on those, and so we do anticipate, and, Kelly, correct me if I'm wrong, that that will be fully spent before the year is out, and none of those are really related to the travel situation.

MR. KLASNICK: That's correct, John.

MR. BREWER: Thank you.

MR. KLASNICK: It's primarily the state liaison grants, and most of those are paid on a semi-annual or an annual basis, although South Carolina is completely annual, and so that number will bump right up against the budget number, if not in December, then in January, typically, once we get all of the final reports and the invoices in from all the states.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Kelly. Are there other questions on the 2021? Okay. No questions on the 2021.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. I will just mention the activities schedule, and I have no intention of paging through this, but I would just like to present it and see if there's any questions from the group. Again, it's been updated with the per diems and the information that's available out there from the travel site, and then this is basically built on input from -- Primarily from Brian and other tech staff, based on what they are anticipating happening in 2021, from a meeting perspective, and this is what we use then to come up with those budget figures that build out that 2021 number. I would say, if anybody has a specific question, we can address that.

Otherwise, it should look familiar to those of you that have attended a lot of these meetings, and I can't think of anything huge. We did still build in for an international ICCAT, based on the feedback that they were going to -- If they did conduct it in 2021, they were going to hold the rotation, and so the South Atlantic was due to send somebody in person, and so that is still in here, and we do account for that, and it's going to be a relatively large-ticket item, from an expense standpoint. Other than that, it was really just anticipating the meetings that were out there.

MR. BELL: The activities schedule is, lord willing, what we're going to actually be doing in 2021, which the budget will support, and I think, as Kelly mentioned, we've got a continuing resolution through I think it's 11 December, and living from continuing resolution to continuing resolution is challenging enough in non-election years, and, this year, given the current level of uncertainty with things, it's just kind of a big question-mark, I guess, and I don't think anybody has a perfect crystal ball on how things are going to shake out, but this is planning for what we anticipate, and, as Kelly mentioned, you've got to plan ahead for -- I mean, the idea would be to actually be able

to meet again, and so we've got to plan for that, and then you have to plan in advance, obviously, contractually, for hotels and that sort of thing, but we'll just see what happens with 2021. Chester, do you have a question?

MR. BREWER: I just want to voice my continuing objection to the amount of money that gets spent on ICCAT. I think that, for what the council gets, by way of benefit to the council and our management, it's just not worth the money, and I have said this before, and it's certainly not anything against Anna, but I just don't think that we get the return that we should be getting for that amount of money.

MR. BELL: So yours is just the investment of those funds in that process, and you don't feel like we're getting our bang for our buck, and it's not having anything to do with Anna, but, Anna, go ahead.

MS. BECKWITH: To sort of agree, and, I mean, it's probably not inaccurate, but I think you get in what you -- You get out what you kind of put into it, and I think, for folks that have never participated in the process, one of those international meetings is pretty educational, and it really puts the type of management that we do in perspective, and so, I mean, next year, it will be somebody different that has the opportunity to go from the South Atlantic, but, whoever that person is, if they've got an interest in sort of -- If they've seen state management, and they've seen the federal management, and they have participated in HMS-type meetings, and you sort of witness the chaos and the forty-odd countries trying to come to consensus, and I think it's really educational, but, yes, I would agree that, if this was sort of an annual expense, rather than once every I think six or -- Every five years or so, I would definitely say it's too much money, but it's probably worth the experience for most.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, guys. Any other questions or comments on the 2021 activities schedule or budget? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I don't know if you -- Excuse me if you already covered this, John, and Kelly really, but I know the council is allowed to carry over money from one year to the next, under certain circumstances, and I think given parameters of it, and it has to be a certain amount. Because this year was so unusual, with monies for meetings, in-person meetings, not being spent, did you need any extra allowances or provisions from the service? Can I help with that at all, in terms of allowing you to carry over even more money than they normally allow you to do, or have they already taken care of that?

MR. KLASNICK: Thank you, Monica. The council runs on a five-year grant cycle, and 2020 was the first year of the new cycle, and so, as far as that carryover process, we don't need to do any type of special request as it relates to within this five-year cycle. That would come up at the end of 2024, depending upon where things wash out.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay. Great. Thank you.

MR. KLASNICK: But I appreciate the offer for help, and I will keep that on my list for when I need it.

MR. BELL: Thanks for the offer and the discussion there, because I am just sort of naively not worried about it carrying over. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. In that activities schedule, 2A, kind of like the question about ICCAT that Chester had, I don't see that CCC meeting, where we were the rep for that, and maybe it's under the Other Meeting category at the end, and I'm not sure, but I just wanted to clarify. I think it's in there, and I'm just having a hard time finding it.

MR. KLASNICK: Jessica, you're correct. It is captured under this Other line item, and so, basically, we have \$100,000 that are allocated for what I will call one-off or ad-hoc-type meetings that we might know are going to happen, or sometimes we don't even know. As the year goes on, just various opportunities come up, whether it's for council members to attend something or for staff to attend something, and we use that bucket there to kind of catch those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Kelly.

MR. BELL: Good. Thanks for asking that, Jessica, because I wanted to make sure we had that covered, and so that's carrying the 2020 meeting that we didn't have into 2021, I guess, and so hopefully we'll have, or they will have --

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mel, I wanted to add to that, to that amount, because that encompasses the CCC, and they are planning an in-person in the fall, and they have decided to shift the -- Normally, we would meet at one of the councils in the spring and in D.C. in the fall, and they have asked for NMFS to host the spring, assuming that will still be remote, so that we can meet in person, hosted by the Pacific Council, in the fall.

That's in there, and then there's also been the development -- As a few of you know, the Council Member Ongoing Development, and it used to be the Fisheries Forum, that got cancelled, but the councils and NMFS, through the CCC, want to continue doing that and send a few council members from each council each year, or maybe every other year, depending on funding, to a training, and so there is one planned for this year, and NMFS is covering half the bill, and the councils are, collectively, covering half the bill.

It will probably be close to -- Between our share of the space and then facilitation, and then sending a couple of members, it would probably be on the order of \$20,000 or something for that training, and so, between the trips that have been booted and the CCC, we probably will be -- We'll be certainly spending every bit of that, if not a little bit more, and so that's where the travel funds that we didn't spend from this year I think will really be helpful for next year, as we catch up on some of those things that have really been deferred as a result of COVID. I think there will be a lot of travel, once travel gets started again next year.

MR. BELL: Thanks, John. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. Then two more questions. The first question is the attendance at the Gulf Council and the Mid-Atlantic, and I'm assuming that that's under Other Meetings also, and I was having trouble finding that, and then, the new ecosystem group that I think we're sending Myra to, is that covered? I wanted to make sure that was on there too, and I didn't know if that was considered System Management Plan or if it's also covered under Other Meetings.

MR. KLASNICK: Those are all going to fall under that Other Meeting category, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Kelly.

MR. KLASNICK: Sure.

MR. BELL: Thanks for following-up on that, Jessica. Those are things that we obligated ourselves to, and we need to make sure that we have them covered, and so good. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Mel, and, along the same lines as Jessica, the ad hoc committee that we created on Monday, during our rec topics meeting, I assume any costs incurred from those meetings would come out of this Other Meetings, or do we need to put that in as a line item, because we did provide a completion date in that of December 2021, and so all work on that ad hoc committee should come out of this 2021 budget, and I just didn't know if it was somewhere in the budget.

MR. BELL: That is freshly created, you're right, and that wouldn't have gone into the thinking at the time for this, and so we do -- And assuming there will actually be a physical meeting or two somewhere, and we want to make sure we have that covered. Is that something, John, we need to kind of tweak to adjust for, because we honestly weren't thinking of that when this was put together.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that we could, and it's a matter of whether you guys want to -- Do you want to update the activities schedule for 2021 and look at that, and we can. I think what we're seeing here, in the last few weeks, really developing intensively, but kind of building this year, is an increase in the number of those other meetings, whereas, in the past years, that Other category was probably enough to capture it, and now it seems to be getting more detailed, and we may want to flesh that out, and it's something that we could do, if you all are interested, and we could bring back more detail for this category.

I think we should also consider, with the working groups, and we do have the scenario planning group, and we have the council's joint working group with the Gulf, and we have this new working group that we've created, that maybe we make an overall category for these extra working groups, so that we do get them in there and you guys can see that they're accounted for and they're planned for and we're not potentially overlooking them.

I think, within the SSC, given their action recently, depending on where we go with habitat and the Ecopath model, and they talked about creating a working group, and that's going to be fairly intensive work. If they were to create something say that was a standing sub-committee to deal with that, that would also be something we would probably need to add to the SSC line item for the future.

MR. BELL: Thanks, John. There's a lot of stuff going on, a lot of new stuff going on. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Mel, and I think, just for the essence of transparency, any of these meetings that we know we're obligated for, to try to capture them here in this activities schedule.

MR. BELL: So break that down in a more detailed fashion, you're saying, so we can actually see it?

MR. POLAND: Yes, because I know, in the past, the liaison commitments and all that were captured in there, and so I personally would like to see it, and I don't know how the rest of the committee feels.

MR. BELL: I agree, and I think that's reasonable, just more level of detail, and, that way, we make sure we have everything that we're committed to, and we know it's covered. Any other questions?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mel, I was going to say we can do that, and do you want to see a revised version of this when we meet in December?

MR. BELL: Sure, because we're going to have to go for, I guess, the final initial approval, or whatever we're calling that, in December, when we take this back to the Full Council in December, and so that would be nice to have that explained out a little bit. I don't think we'll create anything new between now and December, and so that should be everything, as we start into the fiscal year, and remember that we're going through this process -- The way we're doing it now, we kind of modified it now so that we can actually enter the calendar year with a budget that we're satisfied with and that does what we need it to do for what we're planning to do, and so, yes, I think, if we could have a modified version for the meeting in December, that would be great.

MR. KLASNICK: All right. That's not a problem, and I can add those other line items to it.

MR. BELL: Okay. Just for me, and maybe this is my problem, but could you add numbers to the pages somehow, just for purposes of discussing things or whatever? It just helps me out, because I actually printed this out in little teeny-tiny print, but just if that's doable with the format you're using.

MR. KLASNICK: Sure, and you should be seeing them, Mel. They're in a header and a footer, and so I don't know if maybe that's -- They're in the footer, actually.

MR. BELL: Actually, I see it now, and you're right. I'm sorry. Good lord, that's so --

MR. CARMICHAEL: They're tiny.

MR. BELL: It's so tiny that it actually landed on a line. I've got to ramp up to probably 2X, I guess.

MR. KLASNICK: No problem.

MR. BELL: Okay. Any other questions or observations or anything about the 2021 draft budget here or activities plan? I see no hands, and, if that's the case, then we would need to go ahead and have a motion to approve the draft 2021 operational budget, as presented, and then, like I said, they will bring back a -- I should say presented and modified, I guess, but they will bring that back to us at the Full Council meeting in December, and so if someone would like to make that motion. Steve.

MR. POLAND: **So moved.**

MR. BELL: Do I have a second?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Jessica. Any further discussion of the motion for the draft budget? I don't see any. **Any objection?**

MR. KLASNICK: Chester has got a hand up.

MR. BELL: Okay. I didn't see that. Sorry, Chester.

MR. BREWER: I took it down, because I was going to second the motion, but somebody else beat me to it.

MR. BELL: Thank you. **If there's no further discussion, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none and hearing none, then the motion carries.** All right. John, do we need to have any further discussion of the activity plan or details or what we're doing? Are we good on all of that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think we're good on all of that, and so what we would do is these motions will come before the Full Council in December, at the council session. If there's any changes, if we know any more about 2021 or anything of that nature, we'll discuss it during the Executive Committee that's planned, and we'll have the revised activities schedules, and we'll highlight these additional details that will be itemized more on the activities schedule to look at in December.

MR. BELL: All right. Thank you. If there's no further discussion on this particular item, then that would take us to Other Business.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mel, we have a quick look at the workplan first.

MR. BELL: The workplan. Okay. Sorry.

MR. CARMICHAEL: What we're showing here is, as it stands now, and we will look at this more in detail in December, is the plan, but this is just a heads-up, an FYI, at this point. What we have done since December is added in the ABC control rule and the Oculina boundary, and so Lines 11 and 12 have been added to the workload, and then I added Line 16, which is the Spanish mackerel assessment, because the intent here is to cover two years' worth of activities, and that was the only assessment that we're planned to get during 2021 and 2022 that was not already included on this, and so that fleshes out our full workload that we're obligated to for dealing with assessments and things that are under way and your other priorities through 2021 and 2022.

We have talked about the work overload that pops up in 2021, and so where that comes up here is down in 28, with the two red blocks, and so we've essentially set a standard workload of eight units, and so, if you think of our council meeting running from Monday after lunch to Friday at

lunchtime, that's eight half-day sessions during the course of that week, and so that's sort of our basic building block for managing it.

We have added in more here, in say Lines 18 to 26, about the different things that we know will come before the council during the year that will take up some of that workload time, such as AP Selection and SSC Selection, and the SEDAR Committee meets intermittently, and the Citizen Science Committee meets intermittently. We have added some Habitat Committee too, because we know we'll be moving into potentially considering developing a habitat blueprint, which will require more meetings, probably.

We have factored in, based on the discussion in September, the allocation and species shift scenario reporting, and the idea really is to help the council and staff both keep track of some of these other activities that are coming up and make sure that we plan for them within our overall agenda workload, and so the totals here are, first, on Line 17, for the basic FMP project work, and then 27 brings in the other meetings that we're obligated to do at each council meeting, and then they're added up in 28. If it's more than eight, then it turns red, and we have a couple of reds, and we see that we're at eight in December, and you can't just sort of push a thing or two back, because then we'll just shift the red back in time.

What the council staff has been doing since the December meeting, I mean since the September meeting, in prep for the December meeting, is looking here within the FMP section, the matrix of orange and yellow boxes, and thinking does everything that's orange need to be orange?

Do you need three to four hours of discussion, or maybe two hours will suffice, and do we need each meeting in order, and do we need to talk about topics, some of these FMPs, every meeting, one to another, in succession, or are there some that maybe we skip a meeting, because we're dealing with, perhaps, waiting on SSC or AP input, and so staff has been going through this on a project-by-project basis and trying to see how we can shuffle things slightly to resolve these couple of red blocks, but maintaining a number of the things we know were definitive endpoints, like we need to get dolphin wahoo done, and red porgy is under a statutory deadline. Looking at Lines 4, 5, and 6, red snapper, we want to get that in done in time to affect the season for next year, and so those are some of the hard-and-fast ones that we know we can't shift back.

Some of these others down underneath there, maybe we have some opportunity to slide the schedule back a meeting or two and address this workload, and so we will come in December with a potential solution and some options for how we can resolve that red, and so then the council can weigh-in on priorities and where you want to have certain projects end and maybe what projects you're willing to have slip a little bit, in terms of balancing out the workload.

Unless there is any questions about where this stands, that's all I was going to say about it for now, and we continue to try to make this a more useful tool, more comprehensive, and try to show us a longer-term planning window, since these projects take so long.

MR. BELL: I like the format of this, and you can kind of just look into the future at a glance, and if you guys are going to bring us a plan, or suggestion, for how to get rid of the red, that's great. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Mel. John, I have a question for you. Something that I know is, at least down in south Florida and the Keys is a very hot item, and that is longlining dolphin, and we had a motion that -- I mean, it was in, or at least the option was in, I think it was 10, and we took it out, saying that we would deal with it at a later time, and I don't see it on this workplan, and it concerned me when you said that this is -- That you're trying to incorporate two years. I think that waiting two years on that issue is not a good idea, but do we need like a formal motion to begin an amendment before it gets onto this workplan or just can we, at some point, maybe at the December meeting, say I think this is an issue that needs to be looked at? Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Sure, Chester, and thanks for that. Kelly, if you scroll down a little bit, it is down there below Line 34, and it's forty-something, I think, where the dolphin PLL fishery -- It's Line 41. That is one of those amendments in this list here that is things the council would like to work to, but they have not elevated themselves up into that greater list, and so that is something we could talk about in December and potentially think about when the council would like to put that on the schedule. Then the council would need to decide, potentially, what's up there that you don't do, or how do we get something like that done within the limitations of the time we have at meetings to discuss stuff and the time that staff has to prepare materials for you.

MR. BELL: Thanks, and it is good, Chester, that you mentioned that, and so we do have it captured on there, but I think kind of how we deal with that and when we deal with that, rather than the Executive Committee right now kind of doing that, that's something we would come back with Full Council and have that discussion in December. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Mel. I just assumed that it was kind of in our hands, and the council would decide when we kind of wanted to initiate that, and I agree. I think we need to work that into the schedule as quickly as possible, and we also had some discussion, at the last council meeting, in the Dolphin Wahoo Committee, about also looking into potential regional management for that dolphin fishery, and I don't see that captured on this list, and so I just wanted to point that out.

MR. BELL: That came out of the AP, or was that the last committee discussion, Steve?

MR. POLAND: That was the last committee discussion.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Sure, Steve, and we can add the dolphin regional down there as potential topics, and then, when I look at this overall workload, I do see a little light at the end of the tunnel, and it's March of 2022, and it seems a long ways away, but, once we see in December how we deal with those couple of red blocks, and what that does say to March, and potentially June, of 2022, then I see the council being in a position to pencil in some of those other projects, as getting started, and it would really be up to you to decide, of those things, starting on Line 34, which one do you believe is the most important and would be the one that you would pencil in to say get started in June of 2022.

MR. BELL: Like you said, those discussions are something, when we're sitting down thinking about, okay, what are we going to take off, or what are we going to replace up here that's down here, and that needs to be a larger discussion, but that's -- There's only so much time available in a meeting, and it's nothing new, and we've been dealing with this forever, but it's good that we've

captured those things, to make sure they're on the list down there. Any other questions or discussion on the potential workplan here?

All right, and so we'll see this again in December, at the council meeting, and then, as John mentioned, staff will bring us some recommendations on how to deal with the potential total workload, particularly for June and September of next year, and then we can work through the whole thing, as we do, at Full Council. If there is no other questions about the workplan, John, do you have what you need from us right now?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, I do. Thank you very much, and we'll talk about that more in December.

MR. BELL: Okay. All right. Then now that takes us to Other Business, and is there any other business that anyone would like to bring before the Executive Committee at this time? I am not seeing any, and I'm not hearing any. All right. If there is no other business, that would take us to the last item on our agenda, which would be the personnel component of the budget discussions, and that will be in closed session, and so what we need folks to do then, if you're not on the committee, or not one of the designated staff that is supposed to stay on -- We bid you fond farewell, and we'll see you in December, I guess.

(Whereupon, the meeting went into closed session on November 12, 2020.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
November 23, 2020

SAFMC Executive Committee

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