

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE

Renaissance New Orleans Pere Marquette New Orleans, Louisiana

January 27, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
 John Sanchez.....Florida
 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
 Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
 Kesley Banks.....Texas
 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
 Troy Frady.....Alabama
 Tom Frazer.....Florida
 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
 LT Jackson Morton.....USCG
 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
 C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
 Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
 Assane Diagne.....Economist
 Matt Freeman.....Economist
 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
 Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Rick Burris.....MS
 Frank Helies.....NOAA

1 Tom Roller.....SAFMC
2 John Walter.....SEFSC
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4 - - -
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4 Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel. [The motion carried on page 12.](#)

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6 [PAGE 12](#): Motion that the council maintain the current membership
7 of the Coral and Data Collection Advisory Panels. [The motion carried](#)
8 [on page 12.](#)

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11

1 The Administrative/Budget Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Renaissance New Orleans Pere
3 Marquette in New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday morning, January 27,
4 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Joe Spraggins.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST 2024 MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN JOE SPRAGGINS:** First off, we would like to call the
10 Administrative Budget Committee to order, and we need to have an
11 adoption of -- Before we do that, the members are myself, Mr.
12 Donaldson is the vice chair, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Osborne, Sanchez,
13 Schieble, and Williamson. First off, we need adoption of the
14 agenda.

15
16 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Donaldson, and could I get a second?
19 Nobody is wanting to talk to me.

20
21 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** I second.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Thank you, and so the agenda is
24 adopted. Now I need approval of the August 2024 minutes. Could
25 I get a motion to --

26
27 **MR. DONALDSON:** So moved.

28
29 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Second.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right, and it's seconded. All right.
32 I'll turn it over now to the actions guide and next steps. Dr.
33 Simmons.

34
35 **REVIEW AND DISCUSS PROPOSED 2025 ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET**
36

37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
38 we'll just go through these item-by-item, if that's okay with the
39 committee, and so we have two items for Agenda Item IV. We have
40 proposed 2025 activities and a draft budget, and so this is
41 primarily for information and feedback to staff.

42
43 For the draft 2025 activities, that's Tab G, Number 4(a), and then
44 the proposed budget is Tab G, Number 4(b), and that's based on
45 estimated funding that has been developed by staff to date. The
46 activities list includes meetings that will be charged also to
47 other awards, and those have been noted with an asterisk at the
48 bottom of the activities list.

1
2 The draft budget only relates to the 2025 administrative award.
3 This is our new year, starting a new award cycle, four-year award
4 cycle, in 2025. The committee should ask questions and provide
5 feedback regarding the proposed activities and the cost
6 projections.

7
8 For the budget piece, you don't have to pass a motion for this.
9 Again, it's just a draft. We haven't received our final funding
10 yet, but this just gives you an idea of where we are and what our
11 plans are. So, Mr. Chair, we could probably just go into those
12 agenda items, unless there's any questions.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Is there any questions? No
15 questions, and so we can move now to the review and approval of
16 the proposed activities. Dr. Simmons?

17
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay, and so we go through these
19 proposed activities annually. This is pretty typical of what you
20 see for the committee. We have council meetings, and we have some
21 trainings, SSC meetings that are anticipated, advisory panel
22 meetings, technical committees, SEDAR meetings, public hearings,
23 and then outreach will be discussed under a different committee.

24
25 We've tried to list the number of meetings here, the type of
26 meeting we anticipate, and then the months, potentially, that we
27 could hold those meetings. Again, this is draft. It's just to
28 kind of give us an idea for planning purposes.

29
30 Then, again, the asterisks just demonstrate where we can defray
31 some cost for those meetings, either in our no-cost extension or
32 through the Inflation Reduction Act activities. So, Mr. Chair,
33 we're just looking for any feedback, any suggestions of things we
34 might have missed, or any questions about what we have planned for
35 this year.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Any questions? Okay. Now we've
38 got to just move forward then and go to the review of the draft
39 budget for 2025. Ms. Hagar.

40
41 **MS. BETH HAGAR:** Tab G, Number 4(b), we are presenting here the
42 2024 approved budget, the funded budget, alongside the 2025
43 proposed budget. The figures are rounded to thousands, as we
44 normally present them, and the instruction from NOAA was to
45 anticipate level funding for 2025, and so you'll see that both
46 budgets total \$4,301,800.

47
48 The travel budget here is slightly higher than 2024. This reflects

1 the ambitious activities presented by Dr. Simmons and rising
2 meeting-related costs. These projections would be higher, but
3 there's some offset due to planned activities that we'll be able
4 to charge and attribute to the no-cost with the remaining 2024
5 funding.

6
7 There will also be some adjustments within all of the line items,
8 when we present the final budget, and the final funding is known,
9 and so realize, please, that this is a draft.

10
11 The council and staff personnel costs have been adjusted to include
12 the COLA that we received January 1 of this year, and the staff
13 line has been adjusted specifically to -- It's been reduced
14 slightly to reflect the current staffing. Fringe costs were a net
15 increase, due to increases in health insurance costs.

16
17 Then projected contractual and rent costs both decreased, due to
18 the negotiation of a lease extension for our office space. This
19 will delay our need to move the office until the end of 2026. The
20 extension removed our obligation to pay building-related
21 operational costs, what we would call KM, which is great. That
22 was a fantastic improvement, and we will not need to hire movers,
23 and so that's the reflection, the contractual decrease.

24
25 We will bring the final funded budget request before the council
26 later in the year, and, as Dr. Simmons mentioned, we've only
27 received \$759,000 of the 2025 funding. That's about 18 percent,
28 if we receive level funding in 2024, and so that's where we stand.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Is there any questions on the budget,
31 and we don't have an idea of when you're going to receive any
32 additional funds or anything, and I'm sure they're waiting for new
33 appointments and --

34
35 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, sir. Things are stuck in Congress, I imagine.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Well, we'll just have to live with it
38 until we get there. All right. Any questions on the budget? If
39 not, could you go ahead and move forward with the update on the
40 2020 and 2024 administrative award no-cost extension?

41
42 **UPDATE ON 2020-2024 ADMINISTRATIVE AWARD NO-COST EXTENSION**
43 **REQUEST**

44
45 **MS. HAGER:** Okay, and so, in Tab G, Number 5, if we want to put
46 that up on the board, here we're presenting the activities in the
47 budget that was approved for the 2020 to 2024 no-cost extension.
48 The total unexpended funds were much lower than in prior award

1 periods. It was \$586,345.

2
3 In addition to the Red Snapper Data Workshop and planned AP and
4 public hearing meetings that are listed in this tab, we've included
5 plans to complete the recreational initiative activities that are
6 in progress, fill the open fisheries outreach position, and to
7 complete the contract to update our council website, along with
8 three contracts related to the CCC initiatives. At the very bottom
9 of this tab, you can see the budget byline item, how it lays out.
10 That's it, and it's pretty simple. Are there any questions?

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Any questions? Yes, sir, Mr. Donaldson.

13
14 **MR. DONALDSON:** So has the no-cost extension been approved? Okay.
15 Good.

16
17 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, sir.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any further questions? All right.
20 We'll move right along, if you can, to give us an update to the
21 Inflation Reduction Act funding.

22
23 **STATUS UPDATE ON INFLATION REDUCTION ACT FUNDING FOR THE**
24 **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT COUNCILS**

25
26 **MS. HAGER:** Okay, and we didn't actually even present a tab on
27 this, because it's pretty simple. On August 14, we received the
28 first funding, which was the first \$375,000. Subsequently,
29 throughout the -- Towards up until December, we received the rest
30 of the funding. It totaled \$2,025,276. We're working currently
31 to revise the project timeline, because it was such a delay to
32 receive the funds.

33
34 All of the timeline has to be updated, and we will submit this to
35 the Grants Office, along with a plan to use -- We did receive an
36 additional \$120,000 of funding. We need to develop the plan for
37 that and submit it by -- I believe, it's March 7 to the Grants
38 Office, and so that's the plan right now.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Is there any questions from anyone?
41 All right, and we're going to move right along then, and we're
42 going to go to Dr. Simmons, if you can, with the Review of Advisory
43 Panel Appointments for Coral, Data Collection, and Spiny Lobster.

44
45 **REVIEW ADVISORY PANEL APPOINTMENTS FOR CORAL, DATA COLLECTION,**
46 **AND SPINY LOBSTER**

47
48 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, at the

1 beginning of each year, the council reviews any ad hoc advisory
2 panels, which you have two right now, and those have been recently
3 populated, and so we assume they still have a charge to complete,
4 and so you're going to maintain those.

5
6 We also bring any advisory panels that are up for repopulation,
7 and those are Coral, Data Collection, and Spiny Lobster APs, and
8 those are three-year terms.

9
10 The committee should decide if we want to readvertise for new AP
11 members, based on the usual timing, or if you would like to perhaps
12 maintain membership, and we would ask if they were still interested
13 in serving.

14
15 I know that we don't typically use Coral and Spiny Lobster as
16 regularly as we do some of our other advisory panels, but just an
17 idea to bring that up with the panel, but just direct us on what
18 you would like us to do, whether you would like us to readvertise,
19 as we typically do, or if you want to consider maintaining
20 membership, if folks are interested, and so if we could bring up
21 that tab, please. That's Tab G-7.

22
23 So this just -- You can go to the link there, and it shows you
24 your membership. These are the three APs. They're the standing
25 APs. The appointment period was June 2022 to June 2025, and these
26 are the meetings.

27
28 We did have two Coral meetings during that period, one Data
29 Collection meeting, and two Spiny Lobster meetings, and recall
30 that you appointed that ad hoc charter for hire -- I'm going to
31 get the name mixed up, but that AP, that one, and so we did not
32 use the standing Data Collection Committee as much, because they
33 had a particular charge, which is to work on that charter-for-hire
34 data collection program.

35
36 This data collection group is going to, you know, cover more
37 general and broad both commercial and recreational programs and
38 other issues that may come before that committee. So, Mr. Chair,
39 that's where we are with the committees. What would you like us
40 to do?

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and I would open it up for discussion.
43 Would you all like to continue with -- If you want to look on your
44 tab there, you can pull up the three different ones, and the Data
45 Collection, the Spiny Lobster, and the Coral Reef, and it tells
46 who are the members, if you'll see that in your -- Did anybody
47 have any trouble there? All right. My question is do we want to
48 keep them as is, or do we want to readvertise? So what do you all

1 want? I'm open for discussion. Yes, Dr. Sweetman.

2
3 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on the committee
4 here. My only thought here is I have no opposition to keeping
5 some of these people on these APs, but the only thought that I
6 have is on Spiny Lobster. I see Bill Kelly is on there, and I
7 know he's retired at this point, and so I'll just throw that out
8 for consideration.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons.

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You bring up
13 a good point, Dr. Sweetman. I remember we did have some interest,
14 and we thought we would have to go through the normal process to
15 change that personnel, and so good point.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Do we have another question? So, obviously,
18 we need to take Bill Kelly off, and do we need to look at opening
19 up, or do we want to go in and basically open up each and every
20 one of them, as to whether or not we do readvertisement? That's
21 up to the committee, and that's what I'd like to ask right now.
22 Yes, Dr. Frazer.

23
24 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess my question is
25 how often do we intend to convene these meetings in the near
26 future? I don't want to put a lot of effort into it if we're not
27 going to convene them.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Simmons, do you have --

30
31 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** In the next year, we're not
32 anticipating any spiny lobster activities, that I'm aware of, but
33 we could use the Coral AP, maybe, to finalize and review the MOU,
34 as well as receive a final presentation from the Florida Keys
35 National Marine Sanctuary on the blueprint, and then we still have
36 a charge to start looking at some other areas for HAPCs,
37 potentially, and potential changes to coral EFH as well, and so we
38 have some coral activities that could happen mid to late year that
39 we could need that group for, I guess.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Schieble.

42
43 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regards to the
44 Data Collection Committee, I would, I guess, advocate for it to
45 remain as it is until we get through the for-hire reporting
46 document, just for consistency's sake.

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

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** That's the ad hoc that is charged
3 with working on that, and not the standing Data Collection.
4
5 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So this is the standing?
6
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes.
8
9 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Did I miss something, Mr. Sanchez? Did I
10 miss you?
11
12 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I could reach out to
13 Bill Kelly and see if he has an interest in continuing to be
14 available to serve on the Spiny Lobster and get back with everybody
15 before Full Council.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other questions? Mr. Donaldson.
18
19 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seeing that we don't
20 anticipate spiny lobster having any action, or activities, this
21 year, I don't know that we need to -- As Dr. Frazer pointed out,
22 that we need to put a lot of effort into it. I think Mr. Sanchez
23 is checking with Bill Kelly, to see if he wants to do it, but I
24 would say we don't do anything with Spiny, and we keep Data
25 Collection and Coral as-is.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Any other comments? Dr. Simmons.
28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, Dr. Sweetman reminded me of
30 something. We did have some interest to serve on Spiny Lobster,
31 and I guess you could just handle that potentially in closed
32 session, but then you might want to readvertise as well and see if
33 there's anybody else that wants to be added. I can't remember the
34 gentleman's name that took over Mr. Kelly's position, but he was
35 interested in serving on Spiny Lobster.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. From that conversation, I think we're
38 looking at Data Collection, and we think it's okay, and is that -
39 - I think we think Coral is okay, and so why don't we just open up
40 Spiny Lobster for advertisement for anybody who would like to
41 apply, and the ones that are on it -- You know, we can look at it.
42 Do we want to just leave the committee as it is, and then any
43 additional who would like to apply? Would that be okay?
44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We can do that, if you would like to
46 do that for Spiny.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and let's do that with Spiny Lobster.

1 Does anybody have a problem with that? Do we need to vote on that
2 or --
3
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think it would be good to have a
5 motion, if we could, so we're clear.
6
7 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Could I get a motion then to advertise
8 for any additional who would like to be on the Spiny Lobster
9 Committee, if we can get that brought up.
10
11 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Second.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. We have a motion. I guess I made the
14 motion, and I don't know. Then Mr. Broussard seconded. **Any**
15 **discussion? All in favor; any opposed? None opposed, I guess,**
16 **right?** That's what we're going to do, if that's all right with
17 you, Dr. Simmons.
18
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes. Do you want to say maintain
20 membership for the Coral and Data Collection, and we can just make
21 sure that those members still want to serve?
22
23 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Sure.
24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Or do not readvertise, or something
26 like that?
27
28 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and we can modify the motion to do that.
29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We can just do another one. It's
31 fine. You can just do a second motion.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** We can do a second motion. **Okay, and we can**
34 **just do a second motion then to leave the Data Collection and Coral**
35 **Reef Committees as-is, and then if anyone -- We'll just leave it**
36 **at that point, if that's good. The membership of the Coral and**
37 **Data Collection Panel. Okay. Can I get a second?**
38
39 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Second.
40
41 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** Okay. We've got a second. Any discussion?
42 All right. **Any opposed? It looks good.** Okay, and that leads us
43 down to, I think, where we had anything else. Dr. Simmons, do you
44 have --
45
46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I just wanted to mention one other
47 thing. We have our 2025 council meeting dates. Those have been
48 on the website, and I would just remind everybody that we have the

1 proposed 2026 dates, and we did tweak those April dates, and so
2 we're going to start populating the hotels for 2026, and so please
3 take a look at those, because we're going to move forward with
4 contracts shortly after this council meeting in areas.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SPRAGGINS:** All right. Is there any other business to be
7 brought forth to the Administrative/Budget Committee? If not,
8 then, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to turn back about twenty-two
9 minutes.

10
11 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 27, 2025.)

12
13

- - -