

COUNCIL STAFF REPORT ON POTENTIAL PROJECTS FOR 2022 BUDGET CONSIDERATION

On Monday, November 15, the Budget Committee (BC or Committee) met to discuss the status and outlook of the Councils budget. The COVID pandemic has restricted travel for much of 2020 and 2021, and as a result the Council has accumulated savings. These savings could be used to help advance high priority and/or strategic issues of interest to the Council or could be used for infrastructure to support Council operations.

The Budget Committee requested that Council staff develop a list of possible initiatives of interest to the Council that could be advanced via one-time use of Council funds. The list below includes several possible projects that were not included in the staff proposed provisional budget (shown in C.5. Supplemental Attachment 2). These projects would be funded within the current grant period, which ends December 2024.

Should the Council express interest in any of the project below or others, staff would bring back information on costs and impacts on the Council's budget for consideration by 1) the Budget Committee and the Council in March, and 2) as part of the adoption of the Council's operating budget in April or June.

Council Infrastructure

- *Infrastructure to support hybrid-style Council and Advisory Body meetings.*

This entails the purchase of electronic infrastructure that would allow advisory body meetings to occur in a hybrid format outside of the Council office. Equipment includes microphones, central communication equipment, and speakers. Costs are approximately \$10K to support one advisory body, or up to \$100K to support several concurrent meetings.

- *Alternative to FTP site.*

There is interest among several technical staff (Council and management/technical teams) in having a location to store and update data and other analytical materials. The Council had previously utilized an FTP site for housing these types of materials, however FTP technology is effectively out of date. Therefore, a replacement may be necessary, such as GitHub or similar. The cost of this type of software to the Council is not immediately known.

Strategic/High Priority Initiatives

- *Contractor support for Trawl Individual Quota (IQ) Program Review.*

This would entail the use of available funding to have a third-party contractor evaluate the trawl IQ program at the start of our 5-year review process (tentatively scheduled for March 2022). This would serve as the analytical basis for considering modifications to the rationalization program. The cost of this approach could vary but may range from \$150K to \$250K over a 1.5-year period.

- *Support for climate-change strategy and fishery management planning.*

This contract would be used to help identify how climate change could be dealt with in the Council through changes to the fishery ecosystem plan, fishery management plans, and ongoing Council

processes. The cost of this concept is not known.

- *Electronic Monitoring (EM) and Trawl Program Cost Reduction.*

This concept would entail a contractual approach to help explore ways to cut costs of the trawl IQ program to help ensure the cost of the EM program could be covered by cost recovery. Cost of this work is not immediately clear.

- *Strategic Planning*

This concept is in response to some apparent interest regarding Council workload prioritization and Council strategy. A strategic planning effort could be focused on groundfish, or it could take a broader view. The Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council recently developed a strategic plan for roughly \$52k.

- *Salmon Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review*

This review is due in 2022. During the last salmon EFH review a contractor was used to conduct a literature review for roughly \$25K.

PFMC
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