IMPLEMENTING COUNCIL EFFICIENCIES IN LINE WITH THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS STAFF WHITE PAPER

1. Introduction

At the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council's) request, in September 2022, Council staff presented a paper "surveying ways in which Council operations might change based on what we have learned from operating successfully as a virtual, online organization" coming out of the global pandemic. The paper presented, at a high level, various observations and ideas in three broad categories: Meeting formats, Council decision making, and information flow. The Council directed staff to come back in April 2023 with a focused look at ideas for alternative meeting formats for advisory bodies. The Council remarked on the opportunities presented by online meeting formats to enhance transparency and public participation (while recognizing potential barriers this technology can impose). Based on experience thus far, staff identify four goals to frame culmination of this effort:

- 1. Changes lead to improved Council decisions.
- 2. Changes enhance inclusivity in Council processes and decision making.
- 3. We recognize, and seek to address, the large demands the Council process places on participants and stakeholders.
- 4. We find more cost-efficient ways of doing business.

During this exploration the Council's financial outlook changed due to inflation and appropriations. This creates a new imperative captured in the fourth goal. We propose this as an organizing mechanism for the culminating phase of this effort. To do so, outcomes would feed into the Council's grant preparation for the 2025-2029 funding cycle. Our grant proposal for this cycle is due to NOAA by the middle of 2024. The next grant proposal should align with any changes to processes and operations that the Council may wish to implement as part of the "Council efficiencies" process.

The purpose of this paper is to outline a planning process that aligns submission of the proposal for the next five-year grant cycle. This is consistent with the September 2022 staff white paper recommendation that the Council to engage in a "360-degree strategic planning exercise."

2. Proposed schedule

The deadline for Council staff to submit its grant pre-proposal imposes a deadline for finalizing recommendations at the March 2024 Council meeting. To meet this deadline, Council staff has proposed the following milestones:

- June 2023: Council confirms this proposed schedule and identifies options for changes to Council process and structure that staff will then analyze in detail.
- September 2023: Staff presents its initial analysis of options to the Budget Committee, which reports to the Council.

- November 2023: Based on Budget Committee feedback, staff presents a revised analysis
 to the Budget Committee and receives feedback on any further revisions. Based on Budget
 Committee input, the Council specifies those matters to be referred to a "committee of the
 whole." 1
- January 2024: The committee of the whole meets to consider the matters referred to it and recommends changes to Council processes and practices and identifies those elements that should be integrated into the funding proposal for the next grant cycle.
- March 2024: The Council considers the committee's report and makes its final recommendations on changes to Council processes and practices that affect the grant preproposal for the 2025-2029 funding cycle.
- June 2024: The Budget Committee recommends the final grant request for Council approval.
- Summer 2024: The grant request is submitted to NOAA.

3. Analysis of Council floor time

As presented in the appendix to this paper, staff analyzed the amount of Council meeting floor time spent on the topics, particular agenda items, and agenda item components during meetings from 2018 to 2022. This information can be mined for additional insights on how to make Council processes more efficient and effective. A few top-level takeaways are summarized in Table 1.

This analysis can help establish a baseline understanding of current Council operations in terms of time expenditure. This can be viewed as a proxy for the use of resources overall (e.g., staff time, length of advisory body meetings) and related costs. Considering these insights should help in identifying what improvements can be made to the Council process and operations.

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¹ §52 of Robert's Rules of Order (12th Edition, September 2020) describes the committee of the whole. More generally: "A committee of the whole is a meeting of a legislative or deliberative assembly using procedural rules that are based on those of a committee, except that in this case the committee includes all members of the assembly. As with other (standing) committees, the activities of a committee of the whole are limited to considering and making recommendations on matters that the assembly has referred to it; it cannot take up other matters or vote directly on the assembly's business. The purpose of a committee of the whole is to relax the usual limits on debate, allowing a more open exchange of views without the urgency of a final vote. Debates in a committee of the whole may be recorded but are often excluded from the assembly's minutes. After debating, the committee submits its conclusions to the assembly (that is, to itself) and business continues according to the normal rules." (Committee of the Whole, Wikipedia, last edited August 25, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee of the whole.)

Table 1. Drivers of Council meeting floor time.

Finding	Key Driver
Groundfish topics account for the largest proportion of Council floor time.	The complexity of the groundfish fishery due to the number of species, the number of individuals and interest groups, historic conservation concerns, and concerns about the social and economic status of dependent fishermen and groups.
In aggregate, the components of agenda items taking up the most time are presentation of reports followed by Council action.	The structure of Council and advisory body agendas. Multiple advisory bodies may comment on Council agenda items with reports often developed shortly before Council consideration. Advisory bodies may be expected to comment on a wider range of agenda items outside their core responsibility. Late submission of reports provides less opportunity for summarization in oral presentation. Discussion as part of Council action can be discursive, because many Council members wish to express their views.
Looking at specific agenda items across all Council meetings analyzed, agenda planning has accounted for the largest proportion of time, followed by annual salmon management, groundfish harvest specifications, and sablefish gear switching.	The top three items are recurring at all meetings (agenda planning) or on a regular schedule (harvest management). Furthermore, agenda planning serves as a proxy for prioritizing what issues the Council will consider, entailing lengthy discussion. Sablefish gear switching will have a fixed endpoint but is taking a lot of time because of its controversial nature and the introduction of new ideas during Council floor discussion (as opposed to being vetted through a committee).
The amount of time spent on non-routine administrative items and agenda items with an Endangered Species Act nexus increased over the analysis period.	The catch-all nature of agenda items falling under the administrative topic means an increasing number of issues beyond core administrative functions are taken up. The Council is spending more time on substantive issues like Marine Planning that are put under this topic. This reflects an expansion in the scope of Council activities. Increased interactions with endangered species or greater concern about such interactions may be reasons that ESA issues garner more attention. The Council also may want to be more involved in ESA-related decisions that otherwise would be made solely by NMFS. While this may result in more thoroughly vetted policies, it is another demand on Council attention.

4. Range of options

Staff white papers, advisory body recommendations, and Council discussion in September 2022 and April 2023 have resulted in a range of ideas for changes to Council procedures. The analysis of what Council floor time has been devoted to (see the appendix) provides still more information for considering process efficiencies. Finally, as described in the introduction, changes in Council processes have budget implications; these considerations will feed into the grant application process for the next budget cycle. Based on these considerations, staff identify the following categories of process changes it is prepared to explore in detail. At this meeting, the Council should tell staff what to focus on, recognizing that it is unlikely staff could tackle all possible ideas in all the categories.

Routine cost saving

This encompasses marginally disruptive changes Council staff already intend to implement. Such measures include moving Council meetings to cheaper locations and continuing to look at substituting some in-person advisory body meetings with online meetings, when appropriate, with an associated reduction in travel expenditure.

For this category Council staff can report back to the Budget Committee on the specific cost-saving initiatives it is undertaking. This analysis helps determine the scope of additional cost savings that may be needed to align with funding levels. If additional cost savings are necessary, changes outlined in the next two categories would be assessed for cost implications.

Scope of Council activities

The analysis of Council floor time suggests that the Council is spending more time on a range of topics outside of its core responsibilities under its four fishery management plans. This expanded scope mainly entails commenting on various agency activities such as Bureau of Ocean Energy Management offshore wind leasing or National Marine Fisheries Service policies such as Equity and Environmental Justice, National Saltwater Recreational Policy, and others. The Council could also reduce its engagement in ESA consultation processes. Staff, contractor, and Council member engagement with external bodies, such as attending regional fishery management organization meetings, could be reduced or eliminated, relying on NMFS to report outcomes. Narrowing the scope of topics the Council engages with could shorten floor time, reduce staff workload, and lessen demands for advisory bodies to comment on topics outside their core responsibility. In aggregate, a narrowed focus could save costs in terms of travel expenditure and compensation. Over the long term, Council staff size and contractor expenditures could be reduced.

For this category Council staff could evaluate agenda topics outside of the Council core fishery management responsibilities for impact on Council resources (floor time, advisory body engagement, staff workload, travel expenditure) and the resulting efficacy of Council engagement.

Council processes and information flow

The September 2022 staff white paper highlighted several possible avenues for further exploration related to the timing and format of Council meetings, advisory body meetings, and the way that

information in support of decision making gets before the Council. The April 2023 staff white paper took a deeper dive into employing different formats for advisory body meetings.

For this category Council staff could identify:

- Changes to the frequency, length, and format of Council meetings including associated advisory body meetings.
- Candidate policies pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of advisory bodies.
- Procedures to streamline advisory body report development, distribution, and presentation.
- Procedures to develop comments on agency policies off the Council floor with streamlined Council buyoff.
- Changes to the Council agenda planning process, for example setting agendas for an entire year of meetings at the beginning of the year (perhaps in a "special session") with limited scope to subsequently modify the agendas for that year's meetings.

Further developing strategic decision-making frameworks

While the Council's four fishery management plans (FMPs) incorporate various framework procedures intended to allow management measures to be adjusted through rulemaking, the potential scope and effective use of such methods could be further explored. Methods to more efficiently and effectively address analytical mandates could be further developed.

For this category, Council staff would explore with NMFS and NOAA General Counsel staffs, at a strategic level, how frameworking FMP actions and streamlining analyses could foster greater efficiency and flexibility in the fishery management decision making process. This is necessarily a longer-term exercise, which would not directly contribute to the upcoming grant application process. It is also consistent with the objectives of Fishery Ecosystem Plan Initiative 2.8, *Assess Flexibility in Fisheries Management Process*.

5. Staff approach to options analysis

Once the Council identifies what process changes it is interested in implementing, staff will flesh out detailed concepts in line with the categories outlined above. Figure 1 below presents an evaluation matrix staff will use for this assessment with a few example process changes mapped onto the it. The horizontal axis represents the degree to which a process change impacts Council operations. The vertical axis represents the impact on the Council's finances and resources. The cells in the matrix are shaded to indicate the overall impact of the process change, from green indicating low process impact/low cost savings to red indicating high process impact/low cost savings.

Taking the example process changes, "RFMO engagement" refers to staff, contractor, and Council member participation in RFMO meetings while "Meeting locations" refers to changing Council meeting locations from relatively expensive locations to cheaper locations. These changes are not expected to affect Council operations very noticeably but could result in cost reductions ranging from relatively low to fairly substantial. Inversely, "Remote Council meeting" refers to a scenario where some Council meetings regularly occur remotely. This would have a substantial impact on Council operations but would also result in substantial cost reductions. "Fewer AB comments" and

"Shorter Council meetings" represent noticeable changes to process but may be acceptable if accompanied with large changes in financial and resource demands. Process changes falling in the magenta-red region would greatly impact the Council process, but with marginal gain in terms of financial or resource efficiency.

Staff starts from the perspective that the Council process as currently structured works well and any changes to that process must be well justified, particularly with respect to their budgetary impact. Using this approach, staff would likely demerit items from further consideration that fall into the magenta-red region, unless there are clear advantages to considering something that is not captured in this framework.

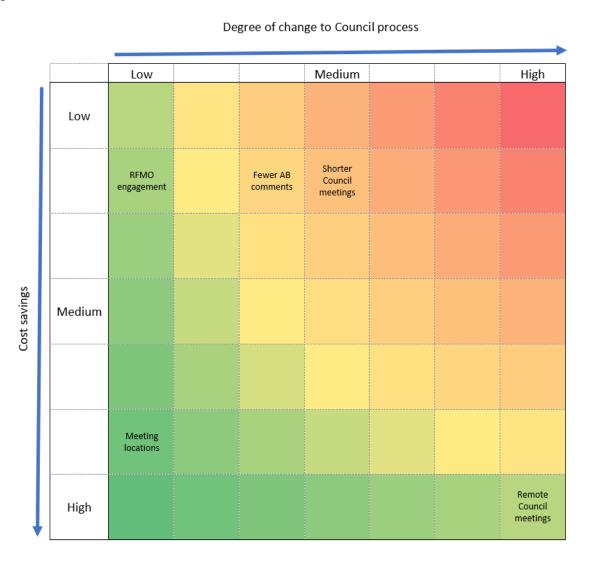


Figure 1. Evaluation matrix for Council process changes.

Appendix: Council Meeting Efficiencies: Data on Past Council Meetings

1. Introduction

Since the Council began digitally recording audio of its meetings, text files have been produced that include time stamps for each item on the published agenda. This data can be mined to summarize the amount of time the Council spends on various aspects of its agenda. Files for meetings from 2018 through 2022 were compiled and analyzed. Time intervals for two features of agendas can be summarized. As shown in the figure below, we call the major headings denoted by the lettered items on an agenda (e.g., A. Call to Order) *topics*, and the items that typically make up an individual agenda item (e.g., Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies) we call *categories*.



We can use box plots to graphically present the distribution of time values for topics and categories. The box portion represents the 25th and 75th percentiles of the distribution while the whiskers (vertical lines) extend to the inter-quartile range, or distance between the first and third quartiles. Outlier values are represented by points. Because of the way time stamps were applied there are various short duration items. For ease of interpretation, all items of less than one minute were removed from the data set used to make these plots.

Figure 1 shows box plots for the topics on Council agendas and Table 1 shows the average duration of the agenda items under each topic for the 25 Council meetings that occurred 2018-2022. Note that the data points symbolized in this box plot are the duration of the components of individual agenda items within the topic (what we are calling *categories*). The box plot suggests that outlier values are an important factor contributing to the length of Council meetings. For example, most administrative item components take less than half an hour, but some items took much longer.

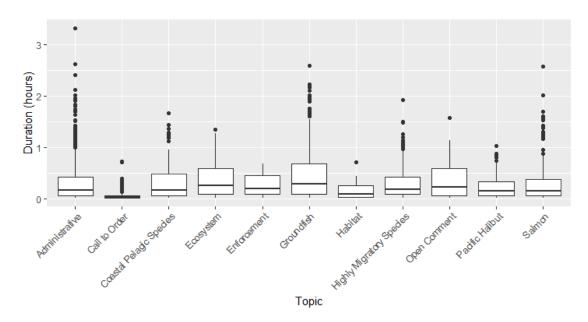


Figure 2. Box plot of duration of items by topic on Council agendas, 2018-2022.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of the time agenda topics take up on Council agendas. This suggests that if the Council wanted to develop policies to manage floor time, Groundfish and Administrative items would be the first places to look since these topics take up more than half of total floor time.

Table 2. Average duration of topics per Council meeting, 2018-2022 and percent of total.

Topic	Average Time	Percent
Groundfish	14.2	38.7%
Administrative	7.1	19.3%
Salmon	4.3	11.7%
Highly Migratory Species	3.8	10.4%
Coastal Pelagic Species	2.6	7.1%
Ecosystem	1.7	4.6%
Pacific Halibut	1.3	3.5%
Open Comment	0.7	1.9%
Habitat	0.5	1.4%
Call to Order	0.4	1.1%
Enforcement	0.1	0.3%

Figure 2 presents box plots for categories (components of individual agenda items). As with topics, outlier values are noticeable. Table 2 shows the average duration of each category. Reports and

Council action account for the bulk of floor time. It may be unrealistic to curtail time spent on Council action since that is at the core of decision making, but methods to streamline the presentation of reports, which account for the biggest share of floor time, could be a ripe target.

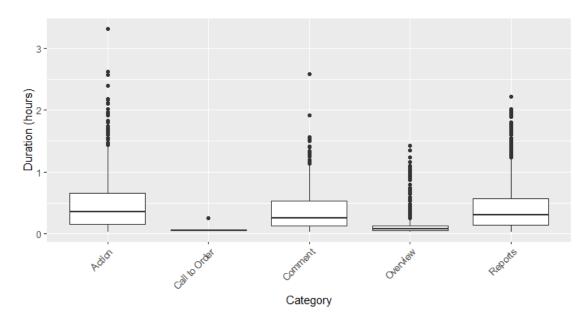


Figure 3. Box plot of duration of items by category (agenda item elements) on Council agendas, 2018-2022.

Table 3. Average duration of categories (agenda item components) per Council meeting, 2018-2022 and percent of total.

Category	Average Time	Percent
Reports	16.1	43.6%
Action	11.7	31.7%
Comment	6.3	17.1%
Overview	2.8	7.6%
Call to Order	0.0	0.0%

Finally, Table 3 cross tabulates selected categories and topics as percentages of the column (topic) sums. This shows, for each topic, the relative time taken up by categories (portions of an agenda item). The previous message that reports take up a substantial portion of time across agenda items is reinforced by this view, with notable variations across topics. (Habitat is a special case, because these agenda items are mainly taken up by reports from the Habitat Committee.) For most of the topics, reports take up around 40 percent of the time within agenda items, consistent with the overall average in Table 2.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of selected categories and topics with percentages of column totals.

		Coastal Pelagic				Highly Migratory	Open	Pacific	
Category	Administrative	Species	Ecosystem	Groundfish	Habitat	Species	Comment	Halibut	Salmon
Overview	7.3%	4.4%	3.7%	9.8%	4.7%	5.2%	3.9%	10.5%	5.5%
Comment	11.8%	29.1%	12.6%	18.0%	7.1%	24.0%	61.4%	4.2%	9.5%
Reports	39.6%	40.0%	62.2%	41.4%	88.2%	42.3%	19.8%	48.0%	50.1%
Action	41.3%	26.5%	21.5%	30.9%	0.0%	28.4%	14.9%	37.3%	35.0%

2. Length of Council meeting components through time

We can also ask whether there are any obvious trends over the five years examined in terms of the length of Council meeting floor times and the time spent on topics and categories. Figure 3 shows the total duration of Council meeting floor times, 2018-2022. There is no obvious linear trend, although as shown in Table 4 durations increased in 2020 and 2021, when the meetings were online, but subsequently decreased to levels below pre-pandemic durations in 2022.

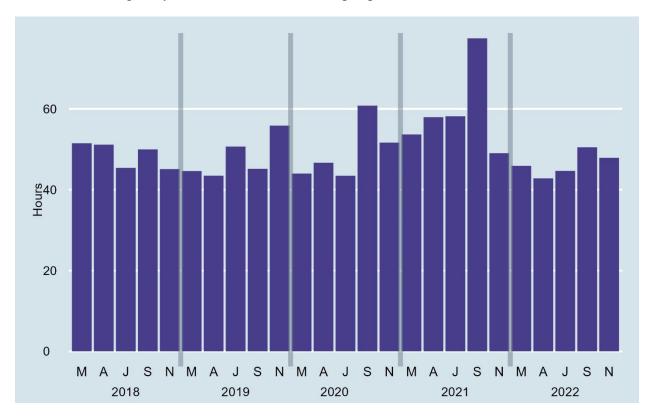


Figure 4. Total duration of Council meeting floor time, 2018-2022.

Table 5. Average floor time per Council meeting, 2018-2022.

Year	Average Floor Time
2018	48.6
2019	48.0
2020	49.3
2021	59.3
2022	46.4

Table 5 shows the average per-meeting duration of topics, grouped by year; Table 6 is a comparable view for categories. The only apparent trends in topics are that the average duration of administrative items increased while Coastal Pelagic Species and Highly Migratory Species decreased. The increase in time spent on administrative items suggests the Council has widened the scope of issues it considers beyond its traditional fishery management responsibilities. No trends are discernable for categories.

Table 6. Average duration of topics per meeting by year.

	-		Year		
Topic	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Administrative	5.96	5.49	6.72	10.15	7.89
Call to Order	0.52	0.52	0.65	0.46	0.17
Coastal Pelagic Species	5.58	4.80	2.82	3.61	2.48
Ecosystem	3.24	4.92	4.27	4.03	3.18
Enforcement	0.52	0.62	0.00	0.00	0.82
Groundfish	13.86	13.38	12.95	17.94	13.22
Habitat	0.24	0.62	0.75	0.74	0.56
Highly Migratory Species	7.48	6.02	2.72	4.52	3.76
Open Comment	0.43	1.19	1.29	0.75	0.65
Pacific Halibut	1.45	1.92	2.27	0.98	0.96
Salmon	4.57	4.99	5.93	4.82	4.41

Table 7. Average duration of categories per meeting by year.

	-		Year		
Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Action	11.98	11.96	11.74	13.60	9.10
Call to Order*	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.13	0.00
Comment	6.60	6.34	6.89	6.64	4.89
Overview	3.22	2.29	2.49	3.23	2.87
Reports	15.74	16.62	14.23	18.90	15.14

^{*}The Call to Order category only falls within the Call to Order topic.

3. Time by specific agenda items

Over the years the time stamped agenda files have been summarized into tables showing the amount of time each agenda item took. These tables were compiled and processed to derive an estimate of the amount of time particular issues have taken on the Council floor. These estimates are necessarily imprecise because of the methodology. Recurring phrases (text strings) in agenda titles were used to group agenda items into selected issue categories. However, agenda titles related to a particular issue do not always include the same phrases, meaning that some agenda items may not be picked up in the groupings. Issues were selected based on a staff assessment of importance.

The results are shown in Table 7; Table 8 shows the distribution of the remaining 32 percent of floor time by topic. As more issues were added to the data processing procedure, it became clear that no one issue took up a substantial amount of total floor time even once the identified issues accounted for almost 70 percent of total floor time. While more issues could have been searched for, it seemed unlikely that an unaccounted-for issue would join the top ranks. At a particular Council meeting an agenda item may take up a large portion of floor time over a day or two, but when assessed against several years of Council meetings, single issues become less significant in terms of floor time. The top-ranked items in Table 7 are mostly recurring issues. Agenda Planning is a standing item at every Council meeting while the second- and third-ranked issues, Salmon Annual Management and Groundfish Harvest Specifications, recur annually or biennially. Regular administrative items, NMFS Reports, and exempted fishing permit (EFP) recommendations are also recurring items. Thus, when considering ways to make Council meeting time more efficient, focusing on recurring items may be more productive, even if "big ticket" items (such as Sablefish Gear Switching, which is the highest ranking "one off" issue) draw more attention.

Table 8. Duration of selected issues across Council meeting agenda items.

Category	Hours	Percent
All Other Items	299.6	31.5%
Agenda Planning	65.7	6.9%
Salmon Annual Management	56.2	5.9%
Groundfish Specifications	54.8	5.8%
Sablefish Gear Switching	50.2	5.3%
NMFS Reports*	45.3	4.8%
Other Administrative**	42.4	4.5%
Regular Administrative (except agenda planning)†	39.6	4.2%
EFPs*	34.3	3.6%
Electronic Monitoring	31.1	3.3%
Groundfish Stock Assessment	27.6	2.9%

Category	Hours	Percent
Groundfish Inseason	25.7	2.7%
Marine Planning	25.4	2.7%
International HMS	21.2	2.2%
DGN	19.5	2.0%
DSBG	19.1	2.0%
FEP	15.5	1.6%
SRKW	14.9	1.6%
FEP Initiative	14.5	1.5%
SONCC ESA	12.5	1.3%
Salmon Methodology	10.2	1.1%
Northern Anchovy	6.8	0.7%
Groundfish Stock Definitions	6.4	0.7%
Groundfish Program Review	5.4	0.6%
Groundfish Methodology	4.9	0.5%
Non-Trawl	3.4	0.4%

[†] Legislative, budget, meeting record, and membership appointments items.

** e.g., Marine Planning.

* Across all FMPs.

Table 9. Duration of agenda items not specified in Table 7 by topic.

Topic	Hours	Percent
Groundfish	117.5	39.2%
Coastal Pelagic Species	48.7	16.3%
Pacific Halibut	32.5	10.9%
Salmon	20.7	6.9%
Open Comment	20.3	6.8%
Highly Migratory Species	19.6	6.6%
Ecosystem	14.8	4.9%
Habitat	13.4	4.5%
Call to Order	9.5	3.2%
Enforcement	2.6	0.9%

4. Time spent responding to Endangered Species Act (ESA) related issues

Staff also examined how responding to Endangered Species Act (ESA) related issues has impacted Council floor time. While several agenda items have ESA related components (e.g., hard caps in DGN or developing Reserve rules for Chinook salmon in the groundfish specifications), there are specific items which are driven entirely by ESA mandates (e.g., Southern Resident Killer Whale ESA Consultation). Figure 4 below shows the proportion of floor time by year and FMP (plus Pacific halibut) spent on ESA items. Staff assigned each agenda item based on whether it was not ESA related (black), was mandated by ESA (dark grey), or had elements related to ESA (light grey). Of the four FMPs, only groundfish and salmon have issues that are agendized entirely for dealing with ESA issues. HMS and salmon generally have more than half of their floor time associated with ESA related items, with groundfish having about one-quarter to one-third of the time on related matters.

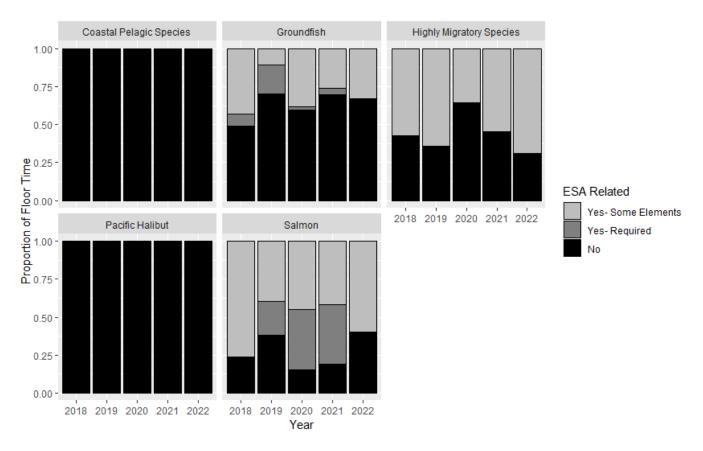


Figure 5. Proportion of Agenda Floor Time related to ESA. Note- does not include emergency January 2022 Council Meeting.

5. Other administrative items

Since administrative items have been an important part of Council meetings in recent years, this section focuses only on those items. Using the same data set as above, if agenda titles contained the phrases "Council Meeting Record", "Membership Appointments", "Legislative", "Fiscal", or "Future Council Meeting" they were classified as "regular administrative"; all other administrative items were classified as "other."

Figure 4 shows, just for administrative items, the proportion of time spent on regular versus other administrative items by Council meeting. This suggests an increasing trend towards spending time on other administrative items versus regular administrative items.

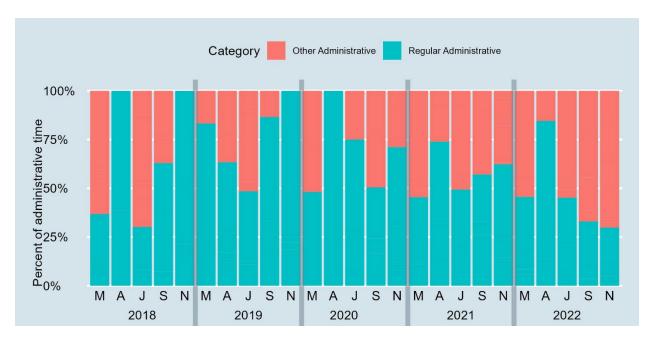


Figure 6. Proportion of total administrative item time by regular and other administrative item categories, by Council meeting.

Table 9 shows the average time (decimal hours) per meeting spent on regular and other administrative items by year. This view shows that in absolute terms, on an annual basis, time spent on other administrative items has been increasing, but less time was spent on those items compared to regular administrative items until 2022.

Table 10. Average time per Council meeting taken up by administrative items by year.

Year	Other Administrative	Regular Administrative
2018	2.4	3.7
2019	1.8	4.0
2020	2.3	4.4
2021	4.3	5.6
2022	4.6	3.3

Table 10 shows these categories in terms of the proportion of total floor time by year. Looked at this way, the proportion of total floor time accounted for by other administrative items has steadily increased while the proportion of regular administrative items showed increases in 2020 and 2021 but returned to its pre-pandemic level in 2022.

Table 11. Administrative item categories as a percent of total floor time, by year.

Year	Other Administrative	Regular Administrative
2018	6.3%	9.8%
2019	4.6%	10.4%
2020	6.3%	12.0%
2021	10.1%	13.1%
2022	13.6%	9.6%

6. Number of agenda item by topic

In addition to looking at the total time spent on particular items, we can consider the number of agenda items involved. The number of agenda items could increase overall workload in terms of the preparation of supporting materials such as situation summaries, analyses, and reports, even if the aggregate floor time does not change significantly. As shown in Table 11, the number of agenda items generally correlates with the time spent on topics, as presented above. (Note that the Call to Order topic is excluded.) But this view does suggest the potential breadth of items under consideration.

Table 12. Number of agenda items per topic, by year.

Year	Administr ative	Coastal Pelagic Species	Ecosyste m	Enforcem ent	Groundfis h	Habitat	Highly Migratory Species	Open Comment	Pacific Halibut	Salmon
2018	33	14	5	1	37	5	20	5	6	18
2019	31	13	5	2	42	5	16	5	10	26
2020	26	6	5	0	25	3	12	5	11	24
2021	38	9	5	0	38	5	16	5	7	22
2022	36	12	5	1	43	5	15	5	7	18

PFMC 05/31/23