

Agenda item 5.1(a)
For decision

Council

CNL(05)14

Report of the 'Next Steps for NASCO' Working Group

CNL(05)14

Report of the 'Next Steps for NASCO' Working Group

1. Last year, to mark NASCO's Twentieth Anniversary, the Heads of Delegations had asked the Secretary to review NASCO's working methods and structures. This review identified a wide range of issues for consideration and noted that it would be useful to further examine these in some depth. The US tabled a report entitled 'NASCO – the Past, Present and Future', and the Council also considered a 'Vision Statement for NASCO' which had been produced, under the auspices of the Atlantic Salmon Federation and the World Wildlife Fund (USA), by four authors, including the Chairman of NASCO's accredited NGOs.
2. In the light of the useful suggestions made, the Council had decided to establish a Working Group on the Next Steps for NASCO, with the aim of further developing and strengthening the Organization. The Terms of Reference for the Group included:
 - identifying the challenges facing NASCO in the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon, with particular reference to Article 3 of the Convention;
 - identifying ways to address these challenges;
 - conducting a review of the structure of NASCO;
 - discussing the current procedural aspects of NASCO and the relationship between the Organization, its Parties and stakeholders.

The Working Group was asked to seek advice, as appropriate, from NASCO's accredited NGOs and other stakeholders and to organize and convene a consultation meeting with stakeholders. Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway) was asked to chair the Working Group.

3. In order to address these Terms of Reference, the Working Group held two meetings, one in Dunkeld, Scotland, UK, during 5-8 October 2004 and another in Airlie, Warrenton, Virginia, USA, during 12-15 April 2005. Between these meetings the Working Group organised two stakeholder consultation meetings which were held in London, England, UK on 19 January 2005 and in Portland, Maine, USA on 25 January 2005. The report of these stakeholder consultation meetings is presented separately, CNL(05)13. NASCO is, we believe, the first international fishery Commission to undertake such an exercise. These consultations produced a useful, full and frank exchange of views and the feedback we received was very positive about the Organization's work. In the words of one participant who was attending his first NASCO meeting, "the goodwill evident during the consultations should be a cause for optimism about the future of the wild Atlantic salmon". There were, perhaps, two main themes that emerged from the consultations. Firstly, while NASCO has developed good agreements, there is a need for progress with regard to their implementation and on reporting on the measures taken. Secondly, while NASCO has an impressive record (see the document 'NASCO at Twenty Years',

NSCM(05)3), its work is not well enough known to stakeholders and resources should, therefore, be allocated to public relations.

4. The feedback from the consultation meetings was considered very carefully by the Working Group in developing its recommendations, which are contained in the attached report. In this report, the Working Group has developed a Strategic Approach for NASCO which first identifies the challenges facing NASCO in the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon, and then makes recommendations for meeting these challenges. The recommendations have been allocated to four areas for improvements, as follows:

- Commitments to NASCO's agreements and review in a challenging environment of progress with their implementation;
- Effective and efficient use of the time available to the Organization;
- Transparency and inclusivity so as to increase stakeholder involvement and improve NASCO's ability to meet its mandate;
- Raising NASCO's public and political profile to increase support for its work.

5. The Working Group's recommendations will be presented to the Council in an Open Session on the afternoon of Tuesday 7 June. At this Open Session all stakeholders will be invited to express their views on the Working Group's recommendations and put forward other ideas for NASCO's Next Steps before the Council makes its decisions. The Council will be asked to consider the Working Group's recommendations and the feedback from the Open Session in deciding on the Next Steps for NASCO.

Secretary
Edinburgh
4 May, 2005

NS(05)16

Report of the Second Meeting of the “Next Steps for NASCO” Working Group

**Airlie Conference Centre, Warrenton, Virginia, USA
12 – 15 April 2005**

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1 The Chairman of the Working Group, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Airlie. He referred to the progress that had been made at the Group’s first meeting in Dunkeld during which approaches had been developed to consolidate the progress made by NASCO in its first twenty years and to better achieve its objectives in the future. These approaches had been presented to stakeholders at consultation meetings held in London, UK, and Portland, Maine, USA, and he referred to the useful and frank exchange of views and the positive feedback that had been received at these meetings. He indicated that the challenge for the Working Group was now to take the various ideas that had been developed at the Group’s first meeting and at the consultation meetings and decide on the recommendations it would make to the Council on the Next Steps for NASCO. He noted that the Group had before it many excellent draft recommendations which had been developed inter-sessionally and which he believed addressed three main issues. Firstly, there are NASCO’s internal procedures and working arrangements, which he hoped would not be too difficult to resolve. These might not be of great interest outside NASCO but are important in ensuring the Organization can work effectively. Second, there are the arrangements for external relations with NASCO’s stakeholders, which he also hoped could be resolved quickly. The third, and perhaps the major challenge, will be the question of how the profile of NASCO’s work can be raised so that there is strong public and political support for the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon.

1.2 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

1.3 The report of the Working Group’s first meeting is contained in Annex 2.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

2.1 The Working Group adopted its agenda, NS(05)17 (Annex 3), after amending item 4.3 to read “Conclusions on, and prioritisation of, recommendations”.

3. Consideration of the Report of the Stakeholder Consultation Meetings

3.1 The Co-Chairman of the London consultation meeting, Mr Andrew Thomson (EU), presented a brief overview of the consultation meetings. He referred to the full report of the meeting, CNL(05)13, which has been distributed to all participants at the meetings and to a summary report, NS(05)2 (Annex 4), prepared by the Secretariat, which documents the main points arising from the meetings. He noted that there had been some trepidation among NASCO Parties in organising the consultation meetings

but it was clear that NASCO's stakeholders welcomed being involved in the 'Next Steps' process and are generally very pleased with the work of the Organization. The meetings had been very constructive and many interesting ideas had emerged. He felt that the exercise should be repeated on a regular basis in the future as part of NASCO's efforts to improve its external relations.

3.2 The Secretary suggested that the main messages arising from the consultation meetings were that:

- there is considerable goodwill and support among stakeholders for what NASCO has achieved;
- NASCO is 'hiding its light under a bushel' and needs to better promote and publicise its work since many stakeholders were unaware of what had been achieved;
- the Parties have developed good agreements in NASCO but there needs to be more urgency on implementation and improved reporting;
- NASCO's NGOs wish to be more involved in the Organization's work;
- the options developed by the Working Group at its first meeting for consolidating the progress made by NASCO to date, and to better ensure NASCO can meet its objectives in the future, were well received;
- there was considerable support for the work of NASCO's International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and widespread support for the focus areas for future NASCO work identified by the Working Group.

3.3 The Working Group welcomed the very positive feedback received from the consultation meetings. It was recognised that many stakeholders with a legitimate interest in the work of NASCO had not been represented at the meetings. However, in addition to the consultation meetings it was noted that some NASCO Parties involve stakeholders in their preparations for NASCO meetings and report back to them on the outcome of those meetings. The Working Group recognised that in the event that the Council decided to hold further consultation meetings it would be important to clarify the purpose of the meetings (e.g. an exercise in external relations, an opportunity to draw on stakeholder expertise) and to seek broader participation from interested parties.

4. Development of Recommendations

4.1 The Working Group reviewed background discussion documents prepared by the Parties, the Secretariat and the NGOs on the following topics:

- implementation and reporting, NS(05)3;
- identification of, and responsiveness to, new or emerging threats, NS(05)4;
- obtaining and using comprehensive knowledge, NS(05)5;
- fairness in management, NS(05)6;
- meetings structure and conduct, NS(05)7;

- focus areas, NS(05)8;
- public relations and cooperation with other organizations, NS(05)9;
- compliance, dispute settlement and other changes, NS(05)10;
- NGO and other stakeholder involvement in NASCO, NS(05)11, NS(05)13;
- the Convention, NS(05)12.

- 4.2 These documents contained draft recommendations to consolidate progress and better achieve NASCO's objectives and were based on the deliberations of the Working Group at its first meeting and ideas and suggestions arising from the consultation meetings. These draft recommendations were discussed extensively by the Working Group in formulating its proposals to the Council on the Next Steps for NASCO. At its first meeting the Working Group had discussed the need for changes to the Convention since the NGOs believe there is a need to give NASCO a stronger mandate and that failing to consider this option would be a wasted opportunity. The Group's initial view had been that commitments might be made to implement NASCO's agreements without the need to change the Convention. The Working Group again discussed this aspect and welcomed the discussion document from the EU and the US, NS(05)12, on this subject. It came to the view that the implementation plan approach should be used but that if, during a trial period, the implementation plans are not forthcoming or are not being adhered to, there should be further consideration of the interpretation of the Convention.
- 4.3 The Working Group identified a number of challenges for international cooperation. During the consultation meetings additional challenges were identified but the Working Group believes that these are addressed in the areas it has identified or by other recommendations proposed in this report.
- 4.4 The Working Group discussed the need to review the composition of the Standing Scientific Committee established by the Council in 1992 to develop the annual request to ICES for scientific advice. The Council's intention had been that this Committee should comprise a scientist and manager from each of NASCO's three regional Commissions and be chaired by the Assistant Secretary. However, the current Committee is made up predominantly of scientists. In the event that additional tasks are allocated to the Committee (e.g. preparing a brief overview, in simple terms, of the ICES advice) the Working Group suggests that the Council may wish to review its composition.
- 4.5 The Working Group believes that the Council should encourage exchange of information among the Parties on threatened or endangered salmon populations. The first task might be to further clarify the terms 'endangered', 'threatened', 'near-threatened' and 'vulnerable', and there could then be reporting by the Parties on the status of salmon populations and the measures being taken to conserve them, possibly in a Special Session dedicated to the subject. As a separate initiative, the Council might also wish to consider the feasibility of developing a programme for awarding the status of 'international salmon heritage rivers' on the basis of their international significance and conservation value. The intention would not be to downgrade the importance of other salmon rivers but to offer additional protection to designated rivers and encouragement to others. The designation of salmon heritage rivers might also assist in raising NASCO's profile.

- 4.6 In order to facilitate review of progress made by the Parties and their relevant jurisdictions in implementing NASCO's agreements, the Working Group has proposed in the Strategic Approach that the first step should be to establish an *ad hoc* group to assist the President. In the event that this does not lead to more critical review of the measures taken, the Council may wish to consider the establishment of a standing Implementation Review Committee. A number of other Regional Fishery Organizations have established such committees, often called 'compliance committees'. These arrangements might serve as models for NASCO's work and might be reviewed by the Secretariat prior to consideration by the Council of an appropriate approach for NASCO.
- 4.7 The Working Group suggests that dispute settlement procedures might also be considered by NASCO. However, the Working Group notes that unlike other Regional Fishery Organizations, where the work is predominantly in relation to regulatory functions, NASCO has developed a wide range of non-binding agreements which provide guidance to the Parties but which are not prescriptive as to the nature of the measures to be taken. In these circumstances, a dispute settlement procedure might not be appropriate but, as a first step, the Secretariat could be asked to review the arrangements used by other organizations and their applicability to NASCO.
- 4.8 The present conditions for NGO accreditation to NASCO merely require that the organization applying has objectives compatible with those of NASCO and can show that it has a legitimate interest in NASCO's proceedings. The present NGOs have raised some concerns about this procedure. However, it is also clear that many significant stakeholders are not represented in NASCO and did not participate in the stakeholder consultation meetings. The Working Group therefore suggests that the issue of NGO/stakeholder accreditation to NASCO be given further consideration by the public relations group proposed in the Strategic Approach.

Consultations with the NGOs

- 4.9 After initial work in developing its draft recommendations, the Chairman welcomed Mr Chris Poupard (Chairman of NASCO's NGOs) and Mr Scott Burns (WWF) who had been invited to attend part of the meeting in order that the Working Group could present its initial ideas and seek their feedback. These representatives of the NGOs indicated that they welcomed the opportunity to take part in the on-going process of developing a future strategy for NASCO's work and applauded the transparent and inclusive way in which the process was being conducted. They had received all the papers for the meeting, which they welcomed, and on which they had no critical comments, although they recognised that the recommendations in these documents were still under consideration. They stated that NASCO had responded in an excellent manner to the Vision Statement tabled by the NGOs at the Organization's Twenty-First Annual Meeting and indicated that they looked forward to working with the Parties in order to strengthen a shared commitment to salmon conservation. They indicated that the main priorities which the NGOs wish to see introduced into NASCO's work are:
- development of implementation plans for NASCO's agreements with focused reporting;

- establishment of goals for implementation of agreements and of procedures to measure progress in achieving these;
- increased NGO participation in NASCO's work.

4.10 While the NGO representatives recognised that there are many models by which implementation and compliance issues can be addressed they felt that it is important to have some mechanism for critically reviewing progress on implementation of NASCO's agreements on the basis of the returns made by the Parties. They indicated that they believed that there had been a natural progression of increasing NGO involvement in NASCO and that they would now welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Council's deliberations. The NGOs fully recognise that commitment is a two-way process and that while their role in NASCO is different to that of the Parties, they wished to play an increasing role in the Organization's work in support of the Parties. The NGO representatives were then invited to meet with a sub-group established to develop recommendations on enhancing the role of NGOs in NASCO's work.

4.11 The Working Group considered the existing rules governing NGO participation, particularly the rule prohibiting the issuance of press releases after the close of the opening session until NASCO has agreed its own press release. With respect to this rule, it was clarified that the intention was to ensure an effective and efficient meeting process, not to diminish the effectiveness of stakeholder involvement in the work of NASCO or to limit the ability of NGOs to offer constructive criticism. The Parties underscored the common interests between NASCO, accredited NGOs, and certain other stakeholders and recognised the key role they play in helping NASCO fulfill its mandate. The Working Group urged the Council to strongly encourage those NGOs that have not already done so to reconsider acceptance of the communications rule, particularly in the light of the progress made during the Next Steps process.

Conclusion on, and prioritisation of, Recommendations

The Next Steps for NASCO Vision Statement and Strategic Approach

4.12 The Working Group recognised that NASCO had made great progress in the past 20 years but felt that the Organization's objectives and achievements could be more strategically organised and presented so as to better achieve NASCO's mandate and improve communication with NGOs, stakeholders and the public. The Working Group therefore recommends that the Council considers adopting a 'vision' for NASCO which will more clearly demonstrate its overall goal, along with the key approaches that will be adopted in working to achieve it. The Working Group further recommends that the future activities of NASCO should be framed in the form of a Strategic Approach which should highlight the main actions required for realising the Vision, under the headings of 'Commitments', 'Effectiveness and Efficiency', 'Transparency and Inclusivity', and 'Raising NASCO's Profile'. The Strategic Approach for NASCO's Next Steps, NS(05)15, is contained in Annex 5. The Working Group recommends the adoption of this Strategic Approach by the Council.

4.13 The Working Group considers that an Implementation Plan, as referred to in the Strategic Approach, is a document summarising a series of actions taken or planned by

a Party or relevant jurisdiction which aims to achieve the objectives of NASCO's agreements and guidelines on:

- management of salmon fisheries (reference Decision Structure, SCPA(02)16);
- habitat protection and restoration (reference Plan of Action, CNL(01)51);
- minimising impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics (reference Williamsburg Resolution, CNL(04)54(revised)).

Information on the use of the Council's socio-economic guidelines in relation to each of the agreements above should be included. Implementation Plans should demonstrate which elements have already been achieved and give a timeframe for those that have not yet been achieved. A list of objectives and elements for discussion should be developed and issued by the Council one year prior to any reporting Special Session. These might consist of questions and discussion points considered by the Council, after consultations with the NGOs, to be relevant to the review, which enable an assessment to be made of the extent of implementation of each of NASCO's agreements, and which enable the review to be conducted in a challenging environment. This should facilitate exchange of information on the effectiveness of the actions taken.

Priorities

4.14 The Working Group believes that of the recommendations presented in the Strategic Approach, the following should be considered the immediate priority areas for NASCO:

- strengthening its mechanisms for implementing its agreements and for assessing their effectiveness;
- improving its inclusivity and transparency;
- raising the profile of the conservation work carried out by NASCO and its Parties so as to gain more public and political support for this work.

Budgetary implications

4.15 The Working Group wishes to bring to the attention of the Council the fact that adoption of the recommendations in the Strategic Approach will have implications for the Organization's budget and possibly, in the longer term, its staffing level. In particular, if the Organization is to raise its profile, which was a major theme from the consultation meetings and an important component of the Strategic Approach, there will be a need to engage the services of a competent and experienced firm of public relations advisors. They will need to work closely with the Secretariat to bring NASCO's work more to the attention of politicians, stakeholders and the public in a positive, informative and interesting manner. Professional support and advice will also be needed in order to make NASCO's website more attractive, informative and interactive. The Working Group therefore recommends to the Council that it makes budgetary provision for these activities in the Organization's 2006 budget. There may be other budgetary implications from recommendations in the Strategic Approach which the Working Group has not been able to consider at this stage.

5. Arrangements for the Open Session during NASCO's Twenty-Second Annual Meeting

5.1 The Secretary advised the Working Group that the Open Session on the 'Next Steps for NASCO' has been scheduled for the afternoon of Tuesday 7 June and that all who had attended the consultation meetings have been invited to participate in this Open Session and the Opening Session of the Council. The whole of the afternoon has been allocated to the Open Session which will provide an opportunity for presentation of the Working Group's recommendations to stakeholders so as to allow them to offer any feedback and further ideas prior to the Council deciding, later in the week, on the appropriate Next Steps for NASCO. The Working Group's report will be made available to all attending the Open Session before the meeting, although it seems unlikely that many stakeholders other than the NASCO delegations and the accredited NGOs will participate in it. It will therefore be important to communicate the Council's decisions on the Next Steps for NASCO to all who participated in the consultation meetings and to the general public.

5.2 The Working Group recognised that if the Commissions agreed biennial measures at their Annual Meetings in 2005 there may be an opportunity to hold a reporting Special Session in 2006. It was noted that there had been discussions at the 2004 West Greenland Commission meeting on the possibility of establishing a two-year regulatory measure and the Commissions could decide to adopt such measures prior to resolution by the Council of the Next Steps for NASCO. The implications of a biennial request for scientific advice on the work of the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) had been raised with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fishery Management by the Secretary. In an initial response, ICES had welcomed this arrangement since it would allow additional time for the scientists to consider new approaches to the development of the advice. However, there is a possibility that in years when there is no request for advice some countries may not be willing to send their biologists to the ICES meeting. The Working Group agreed that it would be important to signify to ICES and to NASCO's Parties that continuation of the work of the WGNAS in years when no advice is sought by NASCO is important.

6. Any other business

6.1 There was no other business.

7. Report for the Working Group to the Council

7.1 The Working Group agreed the report of its meeting.

8. Close of the Meeting

8.1 The Chairman referred to the considerable progress made by the Working Group in planning out the future course for NASCO's work and to the excellent spirit of cooperation that had characterised the Group's two meetings. He thanked all participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

*Second Meeting of the 'Next Steps for NASCO' Working Group**List of Participants***CANADA**

Mr Guy Beaupré	Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ottawa, Ontario
Mr Serge Tremblay	Société de la Faune et des parcs du Québec, Québec
Mr Tim Young	Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ottawa, Ontario

DENMARK (IN RESPECT OF THE FAROE ISLANDS AND GREENLAND)

Mr Kaj P Mortensen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Torshavn, Faroe Islands
Mr Einar Lemche	Greenland Home Rule, Copenhagen, Denmark

EUROPEAN UNION

Mr David Dunkley	SEERAD, Edinburgh, UK
Mr Pentti Munne	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Fisheries and Game, Helsinki, Finland
Mr George O'Doherty	Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Dublin, Ireland
Mr Trevor Perfect	DEFRA, London, UK
Mr Ted Potter	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Lowestoft, UK
Mr Andrew Thomson	European Commission, Brussels, Belgium

ICELAND

Mr Guðmundur B Helgason	Ministry of Agriculture, Reykjavik, Iceland
Mr Arni Isaksson	Directorate of Freshwater Fisheries, Reykjavik

NORWAY

Raoul Bierach	Directorate for Nature Management, Trondheim
Mr Arne Eggereide	Directorate for Nature Management, Trondheim
Mr Steinar Hermansen (Chairman)	The Royal Ministry of Environment, Oslo

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dr Svetlana Krylova	Murmanrybvod, Murmansk
Dr Boris Prischepa	Murmanrybvod, Murmansk
Ms Elena Samoylova	PINRO, Murmansk
Dr Alexander Zubchenko	PINRO, Murmansk

USA

Ms Kimberly Blankenkemper	National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland
Ms Nikki Brajevich	US Department of State, Office of Marine Conservation, Washington, DC
Ms Mary Colligan	National Marine Fisheries Service, Gloucester, Massachusetts
Ms Patricia Kurkul	NOAA Fisheries, Gloucester, Massachusetts

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (13th (pm) and 14th (am) April only)

Mr Scott Burns	World Wildlife Fund, Washington DC, USA
Mr Chris Poupard	Chairman of NASCO's NGOs

SECRETARIAT

Dr Malcolm Windsor	Secretary
Dr Peter Hutchinson	Assistant Secretary

NS(04)9

*Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on
'The Next Steps for NASCO'*

**Hilton Dunkeld House Hotel, Dunkeld, Scotland
5-8 October, 2004**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairman of the Working Group, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the meeting and welcomed delegates to Dunkeld. He referred to the important task before the group. He noted that over the last 20 years NASCO had developed into an effective and well-respected international organization which had performed extraordinarily well in a very complex international field. He indicated that the task before the Group is to ensure that NASCO continues to perform well and to make it function even better in future, since the situation facing wild Atlantic stocks is very serious.
- 1.2 The Secretary added his welcome to that of the Chairman and referred to the advantages of international cooperation on salmon conservation and management. These include strength through unity, burden-sharing, better coordinated research, effective information exchange and better output when developing approaches to, for example, the Precautionary Approach. He referred to some of the challenges facing the Organization and stressed that just as adaptability is the key to species survival, it may also be the key to focusing the work of NASCO and its Contracting Parties.
- 1.3 A message of encouragement to the Working Group from the President of NASCO was distributed.
- 1.4 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

2. Ideas to improve NASCO's work

- 2.1 The Group held wide-ranging discussions on the options available to improve NASCO's work and an initial discussion document, NS(04)6, was developed reflecting this discussion. The Group agreed that this document provided a useful basis for its continuing work but that it would need considerable amendment prior to its distribution to stakeholders. A number of suggestions for changes were made by the Parties and the Group asked the Secretary to take these into account in developing the final document for distribution to stakeholders. The revised discussion document, NSCM(05)4, is contained in Annex 2. The Group considered that it might be useful to have slightly different documents for those who know NASCO well, such as its NGOs, and those who are new to its work.

3. Arrangements for Consultation Meetings

- 3.1 In its Terms of Reference the Group was asked by the Council to organize and convene a consultative meeting with stakeholders, to summarise the input it receives

from these stakeholders and to make this summary available to the stakeholders. Document NS(04)4, outlining a possible approach to the stakeholder consultation meeting, was presented. The Working Group decided, in consultation with the NGO representatives present at the meeting, to hold one-day consultation meetings in London, UK, on 19 January 2005, and in Boston, USA, on 25 January 2005. The venues will be resolved by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairmen.

- 3.2 Each Contracting Party agreed to provide to the Secretariat by 20 October a list of stakeholders to be invited to participate in the consultation meetings. It was estimated that in the region of 150 invitations would be issued. A document which would form the basis for an invitation to the consultation meetings was agreed by the Working Group, NSCM(05)2 (Annex 3). The invitations will be issued by the Secretary together with the document "NASCO at 20 years" which provides background on NASCO's achievements to date. The Working Group also agreed an agenda for the consultation meetings, NSCM(05)1 (Annex 4). The invitation and other documentation will also be made available on the Organization's website with an invitation to those stakeholders who cannot attend either of the consultation meetings to offer comments on the future challenges for NASCO. The Secretariat will not advertise the consultation meetings but it was recognized that the Parties and NASCO's NGOs might wish to do so. The consultation meetings will be open to all, subject to any restrictions on space.
- 3.3 The Working Group agreed that the consultation meetings should allow for an open dialogue between the Contracting Parties and the stakeholders. A report of the meetings will be prepared, including all the comments and suggestions received, and stakeholders will be given the opportunity to comment on the report and to include any additional statements in the light of the consultation meetings. The additional statements would be required within 10 days of the consultation meetings. The Group agreed that the media should be allowed to attend the consultation meetings but that recording equipment would not be permitted. The Working Group did not resolve whether or not the stakeholders should be invited to participate in its next meeting but agreed that it would recommend to the Council that a session open to all stakeholders who participated in the consultation meetings be held during the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting in June 2005 so as to allow for input from stakeholders when the final report from the Group is presented.
- 3.4 The Working Group felt that it would be desirable for the consultation meetings to be co-chaired by representatives of the Parties and of the NGOs. Mr Andrew Thomson (EU) was appointed Chairman for the London meeting and Ms Pat Kurkul was appointed Chairman for the Boston meeting. These Chairmen will liaise with the NGOs on the appointment of Co-Chairmen. The Group recognized that it would be desirable for the NASCO Chairmen to attend both consultation meetings.

4. Views from NASCO's NGOs

- 4.1 The Chairman welcomed Mr Chris Poupard (Chairman of NASCO's accredited NGOs) and Mr Bjornulf Kristiansen (Norwegian Farmers Union) to the meeting. Together with Dr Andrew Rosenberg (USA) and Dr Wilfred Carter (Canada), they had co-authored the document 'NASCO's Future – a Vision Statement' which had been presented at NASCO's Twenty-First Annual Meeting. The Secretary presented to the NGO representatives an overview of the Working Group's initial ideas on

approaches to improve the work of NASCO in future, as contained in document NS(04)6. A number of comments were made by the NGO representatives but these were provisional as they had not been able to consult their NGO colleagues. The Chairman indicated that these initial comments would be considered in developing further the Group's ideas.

- 4.2 The NGO representatives also offered a number of helpful suggestions in relation to arrangements for the consultation meetings. It was suggested that the NGOs might liaise with the Parties in developing a list of organizations to be invited to the consultation meetings and that the NGOs could assist in advertising the consultation meetings. It was noted that there may be a need to structure the agenda depending on the numbers of stakeholders attending the meetings. In this regard the Group was advised that NASCO's accredited NGOs intend to submit one written statement to the consultation meetings where there is a common view. The Group agreed that it would be useful if there was a cooperative approach with regard to developing a media strategy to publicize its work and asked that the Secretary and Co-Chairmen of the consultation meetings and the Chairman of NASCO's NGOs liaise on this aspect.

5. Future work programme

- 5.1 The Working Group agreed that in order to further develop its initial ideas on approaches for improvements to the way NASCO conducts its work, the Secretariat and Parties should develop background papers for consideration at the Group's next meeting. These documents should take into account any ideas arising from the consultation meetings. Any suggestions for new areas of work not already under consideration by the Group would be included on the agenda for its next meeting to allow for their consideration. While each Party could contribute background papers, the Group assigned particular areas of its work to the Parties and Secretariat as follows:

Discussion document to be developed	Responsibility
Implementation and reporting	Secretariat
Public relations and cooperation with other organizations	EU
NGO involvement	Russia/Canada/NGOs
Responsiveness to threats	Secretariat
More complete knowledge	Secretariat/Iceland
Management of fisheries	Denmark (Faroe Islands & Greenland)
Focus areas	Norway
Convention/Protocol, etc.	US/EU
Meeting structure	Secretariat/US
Other changes (e.g. dispute settlement procedures)	EU
Commitments	Secretariat

- 5.2 The Working Group aims to hold its next meeting during the week beginning 7 March 2005 assuming that the consultation meetings take place as planned and that venues are available. Discussion documents incorporating any new ideas arising from the consultations meetings should be sent to the Secretariat at least two weeks before the Group's next meeting. The Secretary will liaise with the Parties on the date and venue of its next meeting. To enable the Group to communicate prior to its next meeting, the Secretary was asked to issue an e-mail circulation list to all participants.

6. Close of Meeting

6.1 The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked the Parties for their contributions.

USA

Ms Mary Colligan National Marine Fisheries Service, Gloucester,
Massachusetts

Ms Patricia Kurkul NOAA Fisheries, Gloucester, Massachusetts

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (7 October only)

Mr Chris Poupard European Anglers Alliance and Chairman of NASCO's
NGOs

Mr Bjornulf Kristiansen Norges Bondelag (Norwegian Farmers Union), Norway

SECRETARIAT

Dr Malcolm Windsor Secretary

Dr Peter Hutchinson Assistant Secretary

Next Steps for NASCO

Discussion Document Stakeholder Consultation Meetings

Introduction

NASCO is the international, inter-governmental treaty Organization charged with contributing through international cooperation to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean. All the North Atlantic governments with salmon interests are members of NASCO. NASCO also has about 30 non-government organizations as observers.

Recognising that many of the factors influencing abundance of Atlantic salmon stocks may be natural phenomena which may not be amenable to management action, NASCO has set the following goal for its work:

To conserve and, wherever possible, restore the natural capacity for salmon production to ensure that:

- salmon habitat is fully utilised by salmon;
- the salmon stocks provide the greatest possible benefits to society and individuals.

Although NASCO started out with an intense focus on the development of regulatory measures for fisheries, it has greatly broadened its work over the last 20 years. The reason for this is that we believe that the problems facing Atlantic salmon are wide-ranging and complex. So, we have looked at all the many threats that might have an impact. NASCO has therefore developed guidelines for:

- management of all homewater fisheries;
- habitat protection and restoration;
- proper control and management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics;
- stock rebuilding programmes;
- minimizing by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries;
- incorporating social and economic factors into management decisions.

These and other steps are summarised in the document 'NASCO at 20 years' (NSCM(05)3). However, in spite of all this effort and of the sacrifices made around the North Atlantic, many salmon stocks have continued to decline. In such a situation we need to review our efforts to protect this valuable and highly prized species.

To mark its 20th Anniversary, NASCO has decided that it will not only look back but, more importantly, look forward to the next decade to ensure that it can anticipate and respond to future challenges. A Working Group has, therefore, been established to examine the future challenges for the management of Atlantic salmon and the ability of NASCO to respond to those challenges. If NASCO is to deliver to the international, national and local communities

what they need to conserve and restore wild salmon stocks then we would like to seek all the support and guidance that we can obtain from the stakeholders interested in the management and conservation of Atlantic salmon, e.g. recreational, commercial and subsistence fishermen, those who care about the wild Atlantic salmon, and those whose activities depend on, or could impact, the resource.

The Working Group has reviewed the work being carried out by NASCO and considers that the Organization has in fact developed its own ‘radar’ to detect new threats to the species as they arise and has broadened its base soundly to address them. It is already working well on the major threats to the conservation of wild salmon stocks. NASCO will, however, need to consider carefully:

Future focus - areas to which we should give a particular focus in future;

For the next few years, the Working Group believes that, besides managing salmon fisheries, the major focus might be on the following areas, most of which are of a continuing nature:

- Research on salmon at sea (including studies of by-catch of salmon);
- Aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics;
- Habitat protection and restoration;
- Initiatives for endangered populations;
- Social and economic aspects of Atlantic salmon;
- *Gyrodactylus salaris*.

Consolidating progress – how we can consolidate progress and better achieve our objectives;

The Working Group believes that NASCO is well positioned to meet the challenges that face Atlantic salmon today and into the future, but has developed a list of options (see Annex 1) to improve the way that NASCO conducts its business to ensure that it remains a productive and valuable international fisheries organization. It has also considered what fundamental changes in procedures might be required. The Working Group stresses that at this stage these are all still options, none of which have been decided upon.

In developing these options, we are very grateful to our NGOs who have contributed ideas, papers and statements on the future direction for NASCO. We have considered these very carefully in our initial review.

NASCO’s role - the most effective use of NASCO’s international role, bearing in mind that much action to manage and conserve salmon is taken at national, regional and local levels;

The Working Group has examined the unique role which NASCO can play in complementing and strengthening the efforts of the Contracting Parties. NASCO is the forum for facilitating information-sharing on the status of salmon stocks and the challenges facing salmon management. It also provides the forum for developing internationally accepted views and agreements on what should be done, how it might be done and by whom.

Stakeholders' role - *enhancing NGO and other stakeholder involvement in the Organization where this can make it more effective in managing and conserving wild stocks.*

We believe it is important to benefit from the wealth of experience which exists in NASCO's NGOs and other stakeholders, and to engage them as fully as possible in the work of NASCO. However, there is a need to maintain a balance between increasing transparency and maintaining a forum in which effective and sometimes delicate negotiations and decision-making can take place.

The consultations

At the two consultation meetings we would like to ask the stakeholders to:

- *comment on the work that NASCO has done in its first 20 years (see paper NSCM(05)3);*
- *advise on where the Organization might focus its efforts in the next decade;*
- *consider the options and ideas to consolidate progress and better achieve objectives (Annex 1 of this paper);*
- *suggest new ideas for managing and conserving salmon stocks and for the work of the Organization.*

Annex 1 to NSCM(05)4

Approaches to consolidating progress and to better achieve NASCO's objectives

The Working Group discussed a range of options for consolidating the progress made so far, and for assisting NASCO to better achieve its objectives in the future. The Working Group believes that NASCO should aim for a high degree of flexibility in its procedures and structures. The Working Group identified the following list of options, which is not definitive, and which we hope will be expanded by stakeholders:

(a) *Implementation of agreements and effective reporting procedures*

There is a need to ensure that NASCO agreements referred to in the introduction to this document are implemented by the Contracting Parties in a given timescale, and that reporting back to the Council is comprehensive, transparent and conducted in a challenging environment. With the existing reporting procedures, it is difficult to determine to what extent they have been implemented, and the procedures do not facilitate information exchange. The following options were developed to improve cooperation, implementation and reporting:

- Require each Party to develop a plan of action for implementation of all NASCO's agreements, including milestones for implementation. Such plans could establish quantifiable goals for implementation of particular elements of an agreement in a given timeframe;
- Restructure the format of Annual Meetings, with alternate years focusing on reporting on implementation of the agreements so as to allow for review of progress;
- Rather than a brief annual review there could be a more intense focus on each agreement every few years to assess progress;
- These reports on progress on implementation of agreements could be made at Special Sessions of the Council (i.e. sessions at which all participants at the Council meeting can contribute to the discussion) so as to extend NGO participation and allow for a thorough critical review;
- Develop and issue well in advance of the Special Session at which an agreement will be reviewed, a list of fundamental questions to assess the extent of implementation;
- Commission an independent panel to undertake a critical external review of the actions taken by the Parties to implement agreements;
- Reconsider reporting formats so as to facilitate comprehensive reports (rather than new measures only) and so as to facilitate database entry of information provided;
- Seek reports from the Parties on identification of threatened or endangered populations and on special measures introduced for their protection, and establish and maintain an inventory of this information;
- Designate internationally recognised Salmon Heritage Rivers which would have special protection;
- Resolve any conflicts which might occur between measures to conserve wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and international trade agreements.

(b) External relations, public and political support

Public and political support for salmon conservation is essential. The Working Group believes that NASCO could do better in the field of external relations and public relations. There may be possibilities to develop partnerships. The following options were developed to improve external relations of, and public and political support for, NASCO's work:

- Commit to a new public relations strategy and make budgetary provision for professional support to operate the strategy;
- Issue Press Releases in relation to specific achievements throughout the year, not just following the Annual Meeting;
- Explore possibilities for partnerships with accredited NGOs on a media strategy;
- Develop, on an annual or biennial basis, reports on activities, on stock status and on social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon;
- Issue a brief, attractive brochure presenting NASCO's activities and distribute widely;
- Liaise and strengthen links with other relevant international fisheries bodies and also regional seas organizations;
- Organise joint meetings with other international salmon Commissions in the Pacific Ocean and Baltic Sea on subjects of mutual interest;
- Seek guidance from the Council on issues to raise with other international fisheries organizations;
- Further develop the Organization's website as an information base and educational tool, and establish reciprocal links to NGO websites;
- Expand the website to encompass a summary of the spiritual, cultural, heritage and economic values of Atlantic salmon;
- Develop educational materials, for example a video or brochure, to be used in stimulating the interest of young people in the Atlantic salmon and its conservation;
- Use fishing lodges, outfitters, aquaria, etc. for the distribution of information about NASCO and its work for salmon;
- Better publicise the awards in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme and, for example, send an item bearing the NASCO logo to all fishermen returning tags for inclusion in the Scheme;
- Develop other promotional items;
- Encourage the Contracting Parties to publicise the work of NASCO within their own territories;
- Establish a fund to obtain publicity for NASCO's work through commissioning articles, posters, etc., to recognise exceptional contributions to salmon conservation and to support relevant projects.

(c) Enhanced NGO and other stakeholder involvement

The use of the knowledge and experience of the NGOs and other stakeholders can contribute to improve NASCO's work and its effectiveness. However, NASCO is an inter-governmental body and it is essential to maintain the appropriate atmosphere and environment. The following options were identified to enhance NASCO's relationship with its NGOs and other stakeholders:

- Seek NGO cooperation in developing the public relations strategy;
- Hold more Special Sessions to encourage presentations by NGOs on, for example, their own work and habitat issues, so as to increase their involvement and draw on their expertise;
- Consult NGOs on topics for Special Sessions;
- Allow interventions at the meetings of the Council by the Chairman of the accredited NGOs or his/her designated spokesman at the discretion of the President of NASCO;
- Seek improved contact with major stakeholders who are not currently NGOs to NASCO;
- Improve the effectiveness and openness of the Liaison Group with the North Atlantic salmon farming industry.

(d) *Identification of, and responsiveness to, new or emerging threats*

The Working Group believes that NASCO has shown that it can anticipate threats to the resource and respond effectively to them. It will be important to maintain and improve this responsiveness and the following options were identified:

- Build on NASCO's track record of identifying and responding to new threats to the resource by including an annual Council agenda item on identification of new or emerging threats to salmon conservation and management;
- Seek advice from the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) on new and emerging threats on the basis of a review of the ACFM advice and the compilation of salmon-related literature;
- Use the NASCO website to report on new threats to the resource and the measures taken by NASCO and its Contracting Parties.

(e) *Obtaining and using comprehensive knowledge*

NASCO and its Contracting Parties are committed to basing management decisions on the best available information. There are some significant gaps in the scientific and socio-economic information available to managers. There is a need to continue to acquire and share scientific information, particularly with regard to salmon at sea. On the other hand, some of the scientific advice provided to NASCO is similar from one year to the next. There is a need to make the best use of resources to ensure that a sound basis exists for rational management. The following options were identified:

- Give greater emphasis to social and economic aspects, including further consideration of bio-economic modelling approaches;
- Establish a new socio-economic Working Group to advise on these issues in parallel with the advice received on biological issues;
- If regulatory measures are developed on a biennial basis, consider requesting scientific advice in every other year. Any cost saving could be used in support of research on salmon at sea;
- Support the work of NASCO's International Atlantic Salmon Research Board in coordinating and funding research on mortality of salmon at sea;
- Seek NGO cooperation and support in fund-raising for research on salmon at sea;
- Continue to liaise with ICES to ensure timeliness of the advice and the quality and clarity of its presentation;

- Request that NASCO's SSC review the scientific advice and provide a brief overview in simple terms;
- Develop procedures to communicate information and advice more effectively to those within NASCO and elsewhere whose first language is not English;

(f) *Management of fisheries*

Some, but not all, mixed-stock fisheries are subject to the establishment of regulatory measures in NASCO. The Working Group recognises the need to review the balance and fairness between management of distant-water and homewater fisheries. There is a need to share information on management measures to ensure that they are equitable. The following options were developed:

- States of Origin should communicate clearly and succinctly to the Commissions or Council on the measures taken to implement and enforce conservation and management measures so that these can be taken into account in the establishment of regulatory or other measures;
- Comprehensive reporting on the use of the Decision Structure on the Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries should be used to demonstrate actions taken in relation to management of all fisheries;
- Request ICES to advise on the stock composition of harvests in mixed stock fisheries given recent improvements in stock identification methods;
- Seek further ideas to improve the 'fairness' and balance in management of distant-water fisheries;
- Consider establishing regulatory measures on a biennial basis.

(g) *Changes to the Convention*

It has been suggested by NASCO's NGOs that it may be beneficial to change the Convention so as to give NASCO a stronger mandate.

- In the light of the options identified in paragraphs (a) to (f) above, the Working Group's present view is that for NASCO to achieve its objectives there is no need to change the Convention or the Organization's Rules of Procedure. Indeed, the Working Group is aware of certain risks when a Convention is re-opened. However, no decision has been made and the Working Group will consider the pros and cons of such action in the light of the consultation meetings;
- Commitments might be made which would achieve a similar result to changing the Convention. For example, the NASCO Parties could produce action plans relating to the NASCO agreements which would commit them to achieve implementation of elements of these agreements by certain dates (see paragraph (a) above). These action plans would be submitted to the Council of NASCO for its consideration;
- There may be a need to consider a mechanism for dispute settlement.

***An invitation to all stakeholders interested in
the future of the North Atlantic salmon***

“Next Steps for NASCO”

Future challenges in the management and conservation of Atlantic Salmon

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) was established in 1984 with the objective of contributing to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of Atlantic salmon through international cooperation. NASCO is an inter-governmental organization with the following Contracting Parties: Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. NASCO also has twenty-three accredited non-government organizations which have observer status. Details of the work of the Organization can be found in the accompanying document ‘NASCO at 20 Years’ and on our website at www.nasco.int. In spite of all the sacrifices made and the hard work by many organizations and individuals, the stocks have continued to decline. The reasons for this decline are complex and poorly understood.

To mark the Twentieth Anniversary of NASCO, we are doing something quite new. We are undertaking a review of all the challenges NASCO faces in the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and ways in which these challenges may be met in the coming decade. We call this the ‘Next Steps for NASCO’ and a Working Group has been established to advise the Council of NASCO. We will not only consider how to meet current and future management challenges but also the relationship with our stakeholders. In the accompanying discussion document (NSCM(05)4) some initial options, developed by the Working Group to consolidate progress and better achieve NASCO’s objectives, are outlined.

In undertaking this review, we are seeking input from all stakeholders interested in the management and conservation of Atlantic salmon, e.g. recreational, commercial and subsistence fishermen, those who care about the wild Atlantic salmon, and those whose activities depend on, or could impact, the resource. To facilitate this process, we are organising consultation meetings in London, England, and in or in the vicinity of Boston, USA.

Place	Probable Date	Time
London, England	19 January 2005	10.00hrs
Boston, USA	25 January 2005	10.00hrs

*The venues will be confirmed nearer the time.

An agenda for these meetings is attached but it is intended only as a guide. Our intention is that these consultations will be inclusive, free-thinking, creative and open-minded. No views will be excluded and all views will be listed and presented to the Council of NASCO. We encourage submission of papers either before, during, or within 10 days after the consultation meetings. All papers received will be distributed to the Council of NASCO. The Working Group will consider these views before the next Annual Meeting of NASCO and will make its own recommendations on the appropriate next steps for the Organization. These

recommendations will be presented to the Council of NASCO at an open session during its Annual Meeting in June 2005. All who have attended the consultation meetings may participate in this open session. If you would like to take part in one of the two consultation meetings, please advise the NASCO Secretariat using the enclosed registration form. The consultation meetings will be open to all, subject to any restrictions on space.

These consultation meetings are an opportunity for all those with an interest in the management and conservation of Atlantic salmon to have their say and we do hope you will consider attending one of the meetings. If you can't attend, we would still very much like to hear your views on the future challenges facing NASCO and the Atlantic salmon, and you can send these to us via our website.

We sincerely hope that you will take this opportunity to help us to focus our future work in the best way to ensure that NASCO is a productive and valuable international organization and that wild salmon stocks have the best possible support from NASCO, its Contracting Parties and all the stakeholders.

'Next Steps for NASCO'

Future challenges in the management and conservation of Atlantic salmon - an invitation to stakeholders

Registration

I wish to participate in the consultation meetings on the 'Next Steps for NASCO' and would like to receive any further information that may be issued.

Name:.....

Organization:.....

.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Telephone: Fax:

e-mail:

Consultation Meeting Choice:

<input type="checkbox"/>	London, England, 19 January 2005
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boston, USA, 25 January 2005

Please complete this form and return, if possible, by **7 January 2005** to:

NASCO, 11 Rutland Square, Edinburgh EH1 2AS
Tel: Int +44 131-228-2551 Fax: Int +44 131-228-4384
or send an e-mail to hq@nasco.int

NS(04)Registration

Stakeholder Consultation Meetings on the 'Next Steps for NASCO'

***London, England, 19 January 2005 and Boston, USA, 25 January 2005
(Venues to be advised)***

Agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting

2. Report on Progress by the Next Steps Working Group

The Working Group has discussed a number of options to ensure that NASCO is well positioned to meet future challenges in relation to salmon conservation and management. We would like to share these with stakeholders (see attached discussion document NSCM(05)4) and we would welcome comments and feedback on the options presented in that document.

3. Views from Stakeholders

The views of stakeholders are warmly invited, not just on the options presented in document NSCM(05)4, but also on any other ideas for NASCO, to ensure that it can meet its objectives and future challenges. This part of the meeting will be structured in the light of the number of presentations. We may need to limit the time for oral presentations at the meeting but we encourage submission of papers either before, during or within 10 days after the consultation meeting. All papers submitted will be made available to the Council of NASCO.

4. General Discussions and Dialogue

We seek to encourage a dialogue with stakeholders on the future challenges for NASCO and time will be allocated for what we hope will be open and frank discussions. These discussions will be summarized and reported back to the Council of NASCO together with all written statements submitted.

5. Report of the Meeting

The draft report of the consultation meeting will be submitted to those stakeholders who were present to ensure that the views reported are accurately expressed. Stakeholders will also be invited to submit additional views and comments in the light of what they have heard at the consultation meetings. The final report will be sent to all participants and will be presented to the Council of NASCO at its Twenty-Second Annual Meeting during a session that will be open to all who have participated in the consultation meetings.

6. Close of Consultation Meeting

NS(05)17

*Second Meeting of the 'Next Steps for NASCO' Working Group**Airlie Centre, Warrenton, Virginia, USA**12-15 April 2005**Agenda*

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Consideration of the Report of the Stakeholder Consultation Meetings
4. Development of Recommendations:
 - 4.1 Development of Draft Recommendations on:
 - (a) *Implementation of agreements and effective reporting procedures*
 - (b) *External relations, public and political support*
 - (c) *Enhanced NGO and other stakeholder involvement*
 - (d) *Identification of, and responsiveness to, new or emerging threats*
 - (e) *Obtaining and using more comprehensive knowledge*
 - (f) *Management of fisheries*
 - (g) *Changes to the Convention*
 - (h) *Changes to Meeting Structure*
 - (i) *Future focus areas*
 - (j) *Ecosystem approach to salmon management*
 - (k) *Other recommendations (e.g. dispute settlement procedures)*
 - 4.2 Consultations with NGOs on the Draft Recommendations
 - 4.3 Conclusions on, and Prioritisation of, Recommendations
5. Arrangements for the Open Session during NASCO's Twenty-Second Annual Meeting
6. Any other business
7. Report from the Working Group to the Council
8. Close of the meeting

Note: The meeting will commence at 10.00hrs on Tuesday 12 April. Representatives of the NGOs and the non-NASCO Co-Chairs of the Consultation Meetings have been invited to participate in the meeting on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 April and the morning of Thursday 14 April for agenda items 4.2 and 5. The intention is that the meeting will conclude around midday on Friday 15 April.

NS(05)2

*Summary Report of the Next Steps for NASCO Consultation Meetings***Introduction**

1. NASCO is, we believe, the first international fishery commission to undertake consultations with its stakeholders on the future challenges for the Organization. Two meetings were held in London, UK, and Portland, Maine, USA, and were attended by 44 and 35 participants respectively. The report of the consultation meetings is presented separately in document CNL(05)13. There was a useful, full and frank exchange of views and the feedback we received was very positive about the Organization's work. In the words of one participant who was attending his first NASCO meeting, "the goodwill evident during the consultations should be a cause for optimism about the future of the wild Atlantic salmon". The central theme was that the agreements and guidelines developed in NASCO, for example under the Precautionary Approach, were very good but that there was a need for progress with regard to their implementation and reporting of the measures taken. Another major theme was that NASCO had an impressive record but that its work was not well known to stakeholders and resources should be allocated to public relations. The approaches developed by the Next Steps for NASCO Working Group to consolidate progress and to better achieve NASCO's objectives were generally well received, although different views were expressed about the need for mandate change. These approaches are contained in Annex 1 to this summary.
2. In this overview we have attempted to summarise the suggestions made, both in written submissions and verbally at the meetings. We have grouped the suggestions according to the main areas where the Working Group had developed approaches for consolidating progress to date and for ensuring that NASCO can effectively achieve its objectives (see Annex 1).
 - (a) *Implementation of agreements and effective reporting procedures*
 - There was recognition that NASCO had developed good agreements but concern was expressed by some participants that NASCO lacks 'teeth' to ensure that its agreements are implemented. The need for improved accountability of the Parties with regard to implementation of NASCO's agreements was stressed.
 - Some felt that there was a moral obligation to implement the agreements and that the NGOs could play an important role in ensuring that commitments made in NASCO are adhered to by the Parties. Mandate change to allow development of binding agreements may not be appropriate, since regulatory agreements could take a long time to develop and, even with such agreements, it could be difficult to ensure compliance.
 - NASCO's NGOs felt that it was inappropriate to rely on the moral obligation, and would like NASCO to review its mandate (see paragraph (g) below). In the meantime, they supported action plans for implementing NASCO agreements, with

quantifiable goals and timescales, together with robust mechanisms for reporting and a critical review process. They suggested a new protocol to the Convention specifying the obligation of the Parties to report to NASCO on its agreements. They recommend that the Working Group review the reporting format for each agreement to ensure it is adequate in scope and specificity and that there should be reporting on monitoring, enforcement and compliance. The protocol should require provision of data that is specific enough to distinguish among different degrees of achievement of desired results. The protocol should also establish a commitment to make all data reported public.

- Consistent with an adaptive management approach, the effectiveness of NASCO's agreements should be monitored and refinements made as necessary.
- There was support for less frequent (perhaps a 3-year cycle), but much more challenging, reporting on each major agreement, with greater emphasis on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the measures introduced. Evaluation of progress in implementing agreements could be undertaken by the Parties, by the NGOs, by a 'compliance committee' comprising representatives of the Parties and the NGOs, or through external 'independent' review. The NGOs support the establishment of an independent peer review panel. There was also support for a change in meeting structure with alternate years focussing on reporting and for more frequent Special Sessions.
- Problems of non-compliance occur in other international fishery organizations. There may be value in reviewing how these issues have been addressed in other organizations (e.g. the OECD Fishery Commission).
- While some supported the creation of salmon heritage rivers, others felt that this could inadvertently lower the profile of non-designated rivers, e.g. rivers under restoration.

(b) *External relations, public and political support*

- NASCO has worked well but has been 'hiding its light under a bushel'. An effective, well-funded public awareness and media strategy, based on credible and consistent statements, and focusing on the wild Atlantic salmon, would show that NASCO is taking appropriate action, and should increase public and political support for its work to give it more 'teeth'!
- There is a need to focus on the 'big picture' for public relations work. In this regard there is some good news to report, e.g. rivers that have been restored. On the other hand the NGOs stress the need to move beyond a public relations exercise that presents a rosy picture of progress in implementing NASCO agreements.
- The NGOs propose that a working group be established to explore a possible partnership on a media strategy; that the NASCO website be re-designed to appeal to a wider audience; that an annual layman's guide on the status of salmon stocks and NASCO's actions over the previous year be produced; and that there might be a relaxation of NASCO's rules concerning NGOs and the media during Annual Meetings. The contrary view was also expressed, however, that a joint NASCO/NGO media approach could de-legitimise NASCO.

- NASCO should continue to serve as an ‘honest broker’ for disseminating reliable and consistent information, e.g. on social and economic values of salmon.
- NASCO should place greater emphasis on education and communication, and consider holding consultation meetings with stakeholders on a regular basis. The value of meeting in different countries, in communities close to salmon rivers, was noted. The NGOs proposed a public awareness campaign targeted at the angling community to advise of the threats posed by *Gyrodactylus salaris*.

(c) *Enhanced NGO and other stakeholder involvement*

- The NGOs want to create a framework to maximise their involvement and, more specifically, they seek to participate more in Council meetings through interventions by a designated spokesperson at the discretion of the President; to be consulted on topics for Special Sessions; to participate in any panel established to review implementation of NASCO agreements; to participate in the salmon farming Liaison Group; to develop a partnership strategy for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board; to contribute to any working group that is established on socio-economic aspects; and to participate in development of a media strategy.
- All NGOs should work in partnership with NASCO to improve its effectiveness. In this regard NGOs can play an important role in reinforcing the moral obligation on the Parties to implement NASCO agreements. Some Parties felt that they would have concerns about greater NGO involvement if NASCO was developing binding agreements on the broader aspects of its work. NGOs can also play an important role in fund-raising for research on salmon at sea.
- Many stakeholders are not currently involved with NASCO, e.g. tourism, agriculture interests, etc. A ‘quality control’ system might be considered for admitting NGOs as accredited observers to NASCO.
- Aboriginal peoples seek involvement and participation in the formulation and implementation of NASCO’s agreements. An Aboriginal Sub-Committee or Liaison Group might also be established and a Special Session organised to bring together indigenous organizations to consider topical issues.
- Salmon farming industry representatives in North America do not support NGO involvement in the Liaison Group for the time being.

(d) *Identification of, and responsiveness to, new or emerging threats*

- The NGOs, including those representing Aboriginal peoples, have an important role to play in bringing examples of local problems, and best practice in addressing them, to NASCO’s attention, and in identifying new and emerging threats to the resource.

(e) *Obtaining and using comprehensive knowledge*

- International support in NASCO for salmon research is important in ensuring that it receives appropriate support domestically.

- The NGOs urge caution before changing the frequency of ICES scientific advice. Alternative reporting arrangements for statistical information might be required in years when ICES advice is not sought. Some aspects of the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Working Group (e.g. trajectories for stock rebuilding) might need to be continued in other fora within ICES if NASCO did not seek annual advice. On the other hand, less frequent requests for advice might give ICES time to develop robust scientific analyses.

(f) *Management of fisheries*

- The NGOs seek closure of all mixed stock salmon fisheries in home waters and the phase-out of all commercial salmon fisheries where the exploited stocks are not meeting conservation limits, with fair compensation as appropriate. Rod fisheries where stocks are not meeting conservation limits should also be subject to controls. Genetic fingerprinting should be incorporated into the Decision Structure on management of fisheries. There is a need to clearly define the terms ‘interception fishery’ and ‘mixed stock fishery’.
- The NGOs made reference to the value of the Special Session on salmon fisheries in the EU and Norway held at NASCO’s Twenty-First Annual Meeting. They referred to the failure to implement ICES advice regarding mixed stock salmon fisheries.
- NASCO could play a role in compensation agreements or in developing alternative economic activities for salmon fishermen.
- While there was recognition of the sacrifices made by Greenland and the Faroe Islands, concern was expressed that any increase in the West Greenland fishery could severely impact endangered US stocks.
- Reference was made to the greater socio-economic value derived from salmon caught in the recreational fishery or spawning in rivers under restoration compared to their value when harvested for food.
- NASCO might establish regulatory measures for two- or three-year periods rather than annually so as to allocate more time at Annual Meetings to non-regulatory aspects of its work, and to allow ICES time to develop more robust models and scientific analyses.

(g) *Changes to the Convention*

- The NGOs propose that a small Working Party be established to examine the mechanism for, and feasibility of, mandate change, since they consider NASCO has, at present, no legal mandate to make recommendations on issues such as habitat protection, aquaculture management and conservation limits that pertain to the stocks within the jurisdiction of a Party to the Convention.
- NASCO’s mandate might be broadened to include other salmonids, particularly sea trout, and to allow participation by Chile because of its salmon farming interests, and its possible future use of transgenic salmon.

- Some Parties expressed reservations about changing the NASCO Convention, which would require unanimous agreement of the Parties and could take considerable time to achieve. The NGOs felt that the procedure under Article 19 of the Convention for amending the Convention would not ‘re-open’ the Convention and need not be time-consuming.

Future focus - areas to which we should give a particular focus in future;

- There was widespread support for the focus areas identified by the Next Steps for NASCO Working Group. There was particular support for research on salmon at sea, and the need for the Parties to support this initiative was stressed. Issues in fresh water and estuaries should not, however, be ignored.
- The following additional focus areas were identified:
 - effects on wild Atlantic salmon of forage fish removal;
 - predation of salmon so as to share information on predator numbers and their impacts on salmon, and to review predator management measures;
 - diseases and parasites in addition to *Gyrodactylus salaris*, particularly sea lice and Infectious Salmon Anaemia;
 - the implications of climate change for the wild Atlantic salmon;
 - impacts of acid rain;
 - education and communication;
 - ecosystem-based approach to management.
- The view was expressed that there should be fewer, ‘more important’, focus areas. However, there was also concern that if NASCO did not have a broad focus, then important aspects, including monitoring new and emerging threats and acting in response to these, might be given a low priority. Research and socio-economics should not be focus areas in their own right, but supportive of the key issues.
- In future, the focus should not just be on those stocks performing badly but on those that are doing well, so that lessons can be learned.

Other proposals

- A number of other suggestions were made, including the following:
 - introduction of a certification scheme for developments (e.g. hydro-electric schemes) which are operated in a manner considered to be ‘salmon-friendly’;
 - convening a workshop and establishing a working group on restoration of Atlantic salmon rivers;
 - enhanced cooperation between fisheries departments and other government departments on salmon issues, particularly impacts of predation;
 - the NGOs highlighted the dangers of diffuse pollution and acid rain and the threat posed by renewable energy projects (e.g. wind-farms, small-scale hydro-electricity facilities) to wild Atlantic salmon;
 - enhanced involvement of all EU Member States with Atlantic salmon interests;
 - the use of transgenic salmon, which might be less damaging to the wild stocks than present practices. However, the NGOs are fundamentally opposed to the practical application of transgenic salmon and suggest NASCO and its Parties resist the current

- US licence application. Similarly, the salmon farming industry does not support the use of transgenic salmon;
- the NGOs wish to see by-catch of Atlantic salmon afforded a higher priority, and more urgent and robust approaches to NEAFC and NAFO to ensure their cooperation in relation to by-catch;
 - NGOs support a NASCO initiative on endangered populations. The NGOs propose that the EU designate Atlantic salmon as a protected species and urge other Parties to adopt this approach;
 - NASCO could establish a fund to promote habitat improvements which could also benefit other species.

Secretary
Edinburgh
8 March, 2005

Approaches to consolidating progress and to better achieve NASCO's objectives

The Working Group discussed a range of options for consolidating the progress made so far, and for assisting NASCO to better achieve its objectives in the future. The Working Group believes that NASCO should aim for a high degree of flexibility in its procedures and structures. The Working Group identified the following list of options, which is not definitive, and which we hope will be expanded by stakeholders:

(a) *Implementation of agreements and effective reporting procedures*

There is a need to ensure that NASCO agreements referred to in the introduction to this document are implemented by the Contracting Parties in a given timescale, and that reporting back to the Council is comprehensive, transparent and conducted in a challenging environment. With the existing reporting procedures, it is difficult to determine to what extent they have been implemented, and the procedures do not facilitate information exchange. The following options were developed to improve cooperation, implementation and reporting:

- Require each Party to develop a plan of action for implementation of all NASCO's agreements, including milestones for implementation. Such plans could establish quantifiable goals for implementation of particular elements of an agreement in a given timeframe;
- Restructure the format of Annual Meetings, with alternate years focusing on reporting on implementation of the agreements so as to allow for review of progress;
- Rather than a brief annual review there could be a more intense focus on each agreement every few years to assess progress;
- These reports on progress on implementation of agreements could be made at Special Sessions of the Council (i.e. sessions at which all participants at the Council meeting can contribute to the discussion) so as to extend NGO participation and allow for a thorough critical review;
- Develop and issue well in advance of the Special Session at which an agreement will be reviewed, a list of fundamental questions to assess the extent of implementation;
- Commission an independent panel to undertake a critical external review of the actions taken by the Parties to implement agreements;
- Reconsider reporting formats so as to facilitate comprehensive reports (rather than new measures only) and so as to facilitate database entry of information provided;
- Seek reports from the Parties on identification of threatened or endangered populations and on special measures introduced for their protection, and establish and maintain an inventory of this information;
- Designate internationally recognised Salmon Heritage Rivers which would have special protection;
- Resolve any conflicts which might occur between measures to conserve wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and international trade agreements.

(b) External relations, public and political support

Public and political support for salmon conservation is essential. The Working Group believes that NASCO could do better in the field of external relations and public relations. There may be possibilities to develop partnerships. The following options were developed to improve external relations of, and public and political support for, NASCO's work:

- Commit to a new public relations strategy and make budgetary provision for professional support to operate the strategy;
- Issue Press Releases in relation to specific achievements throughout the year, not just following the Annual Meeting;
- Explore possibilities for partnerships with accredited NGOs on a media strategy;
- Develop, on an annual or biennial basis, reports on activities, on stock status and on social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon;
- Issue a brief, attractive brochure presenting NASCO's activities and distribute widely;
- Liaise and strengthen links with other relevant international fisheries bodies and also regional seas organizations;
- Organise joint meetings with other international salmon Commissions in the Pacific Ocean and Baltic Sea on subjects of mutual interest;
- Seek guidance from the Council on issues to raise with other international fisheries organizations;
- Further develop the Organization's website as an information base and educational tool, and establish reciprocal links to NGO websites;
- Expand the website to encompass a summary of the spiritual, cultural, heritage and economic values of Atlantic salmon;
- Develop educational materials, for example a video or brochure, to be used in stimulating the interest of young people in the Atlantic salmon and its conservation;
- Use fishing lodges, outfitters, aquaria, etc. for the distribution of information about NASCO and its work for salmon;
- Better publicise the awards in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme and, for example, send an item bearing the NASCO logo to all fishermen returning tags for inclusion in the Scheme;
- Develop other promotional items;
- Encourage the Contracting Parties to publicise the work of NASCO within their own territories;
- Establish a fund to obtain publicity for NASCO's work through commissioning articles, posters, etc., to recognise exceptional contributions to salmon conservation and to support relevant projects.

(c) Enhanced NGO and other stakeholder involvement

The use of the knowledge and experience of the NGOs and other stakeholders can contribute to improve NASCO's work and its effectiveness. However, NASCO is an inter-governmental body and it is essential to maintain the appropriate atmosphere and environment. The following options were identified to enhance NASCO's relationship with its NGOs and other stakeholders:

- Seek NGO cooperation in developing the public relations strategy;

- Hold more Special Sessions to encourage presentations by NGOs on, for example, their own work and habitat issues, so as to increase their involvement and draw on their expertise;
- Consult NGOs on topics for Special Sessions;
- Allow interventions at the meetings of the Council by the Chairman of the accredited NGOs or his/her designated spokesman at the discretion of the President of NASCO;
- Seek improved contact with major stakeholders who are not currently NGOs to NASCO;
- Improve the effectiveness and openness of the Liaison Group with the North Atlantic salmon farming industry.

(d) *Identification of, and responsiveness to, new or emerging threats*

The Working Group believes that NASCO has shown that it can anticipate threats to the resource and respond effectively to them. It will be important to maintain and improve this responsiveness and the following options were identified:

- Build on NASCO's track record of identifying and responding to new threats to the resource by including an annual Council agenda item on identification of new or emerging threats to salmon conservation and management;
- Seek advice from the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) on new and emerging threats on the basis of a review of the ACFM advice and the compilation of salmon-related literature;
- Use the NASCO website to report on new threats to the resource and the measures taken by NASCO and its Contracting Parties.

(e) *Obtaining and using comprehensive knowledge*

NASCO and its Contracting Parties are committed to basing management decisions on the best available information. There are some significant gaps in the scientific and socio-economic information available to managers. There is a need to continue to acquire and share scientific information, particularly with regard to salmon at sea. On the other hand, some of the scientific advice provided to NASCO is similar from one year to the next. There is a need to make the best use of resources to ensure that a sound basis exists for rational management. The following options were identified:

- Give greater emphasis to social and economic aspects, including further consideration of bio-economic modelling approaches;
- Establish a new socio-economic Working Group to advise on these issues in parallel with the advice received on biological issues;
- If regulatory measures are developed on a biennial basis, consider requesting scientific advice in every other year. Any cost saving could be used in support of research on salmon at sea;
- Support the work of NASCO's International Atlantic Salmon Research Board in coordinating and funding research on mortality of salmon at sea;
- Seek NGO cooperation and support in fund-raising for research on salmon at sea;
- Continue to liaise with ICES to ensure timeliness of the advice and the quality and clarity of its presentation;
- Request that NASCO's SSC review the scientific advice and provide a brief overview in simple terms;

- Develop procedures to communicate information and advice more effectively to those within NASCO and elsewhere whose first language is not English.

(f) Management of fisheries

Some, but not all, mixed-stock fisheries are subject to the establishment of regulatory measures in NASCO. The Working Group recognises the need to review the balance and fairness between management of distant-water and homewater fisheries. There is a need to share information on management measures to ensure that they are equitable. The following options were developed:

- States of Origin should communicate clearly and succinctly to the Commissions or Council on the measures taken to implement and enforce conservation and management measures so that these can be taken into account in the establishment of regulatory or other measures;
- Comprehensive reporting on the use of the Decision Structure on the Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries should be used to demonstrate actions taken in relation to management of all fisheries;
- Request ICES to advise on the stock composition of harvests in mixed stock fisheries given recent improvements in stock identification methods;
- Seek further ideas to improve the ‘fairness’ and balance in management of distant-water fisheries;
- Consider establishing regulatory measures on a biennial basis.

(g) Changes to the Convention

It has been suggested by NASCO’s NGOs that it may be beneficial to change the Convention so as to give NASCO a stronger mandate.

- In the light of the options identified in paragraphs (a) to (f) above, the Working Group’s present view is that for NASCO to achieve its objectives there is no need to change the Convention or the Organization’s Rules of Procedure. Indeed, the Working Group is aware of certain risks when a Convention is re-opened. However, no decision has been made and the Working Group will consider the pros and cons of such action in the light of the consultation meetings;
- Commitments might be made which would achieve a similar result to changing the Convention. For example, the NASCO Parties could produce action plans relating to the NASCO agreements which would commit them to achieve implementation of elements of these agreements by certain dates (see paragraph (a) above). These action plans would be submitted to the Council of NASCO for its consideration;
- There may be a need to consider a mechanism for dispute settlement.

NS(05)15

*Strategic Approach for NASCO's 'Next Steps'***The NASCO Vision**

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) has made great progress in the past 20 years, but the Organization's objectives and achievements could be more strategically organised and presented, which would enhance NASCO's ability to achieve its mandate as well as improve communication with NGOs, stakeholders and the public. The following proposed 'vision' for NASCO clearly demonstrates its overall goal along with the key approaches that will be adopted in working to achieve it.

NASCO will pursue the restoration of abundant Atlantic salmon stocks throughout the species' range with the aim of providing the greatest possible benefits to society and individuals.

To achieve this vision, NASCO will:

- *be committed to the measures and agreements it develops and actively review progress with implementation plans;*
- *increase its effectiveness and efficiency by ensuring that it uses the best available knowledge to inform its actions and by actively seeking to identify and respond to new opportunities and threats;*
- *ensure transparency in its operations and enhance the use of NGO and stakeholder knowledge and experience;*
- *increase its visibility and raise its profile in international, national and local communities by developing its communications and public relations activities.*

The Strategic Approach

NASCO's work over the past 20 years provides a strong foundation for the development of a strategic approach to the future work of the Organization. Key elements of this foundation, which support the Vision Statement, are outlined below.

NASCO is an international, inter-governmental treaty Organization charged with contributing through international consultation and co-operation to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean, taking into account the best available scientific advice.

NASCO and its Parties have embraced the Precautionary Approach in the management of salmon stocks and are committed to basing management decisions on the best available scientific information, taking account of its uncertainties. They have also adopted an Ecosystem-based Approach, recognising the complex interaction of many activities that

affect salmon stocks as well as the effects of salmon management upon other activities. NASCO has based its management activities on these approaches.

NASCO is well positioned to identify and respond effectively to threats to the salmon resource and to seize new conservation opportunities. It will continue to identify these issues and prioritise activities to address them.

NASCO has a unique role to play in complementing and enhancing the efforts of its Parties. It is well-placed to provide a forum for sharing information on the status of stocks and the challenges facing salmon management and for developing and disseminating best practice.

NASCO wishes to demonstrate that its agreements are implemented by the Parties in a timely manner, and that reporting to the Council is comprehensive, transparent and conducted in a challenging environment.

NASCO has responsibilities for developing management measures for mixed-stock fisheries in Faroese and Greenlandic waters, but it recognises the need to review the balance and fairness between management of distant-water and homewater fisheries. There is a need to share information on management measures to ensure that they are equitable.

NASCO and its Parties need to collect and share information on salmon stocks, particularly in areas where information is currently sparse.

NASCO's NGOs, along with other stakeholders in the salmon resource, hold a wealth of knowledge and experience which is highly relevant to NASCO's aims and objectives and can contribute to improve NASCO's work and effectiveness. NASCO will therefore continue to engage with these groups as fully as possible, in order to make best use of this information. It is essential that these links are developed appropriately given NASCO's status as an inter-governmental body.

Public and political support are essential elements of effective salmon conservation, and NASCO must make full use of opportunities to develop external relations.

Challenges

The challenges facing NASCO in the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and ways to address these challenges have been identified, specifically highlighting areas which would benefit from international cooperation and collaboration. The primary challenges are:

- Managing salmon fisheries;
- Social and economic aspects of Atlantic salmon;
- Research on salmon at sea (including studies of by-catch of salmon);
- Habitat protection and restoration;
- Aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics (highlighting *Gyrodactylus salaris*);
- Initiatives for endangered populations.

Each of these challenges is described below. Suggesting these as challenges does not imply other areas are not important, but recognises that there is a need to prioritise given resource and personnel constraints.

Management of salmon fisheries

The goals for the management of salmon fisheries for NASCO and its Parties are to promote the diversity and abundance of salmon stocks and to maintain all stocks above their conservation limits (reference Action Plan for Application of the Precautionary Approach, CNL(99)48).

The key issues in relation to the management of salmon fisheries are to:

- maintain an effective prohibition on fishing for salmon beyond areas of fisheries jurisdiction;
- further improve the ‘fairness’ and balance in management of distant-water fisheries;
- explore possibilities for longer-term regulatory measures;
- exchange information and transfer expertise and knowledge between Parties and between NGOs and the authorities;
- further develop the knowledge basis for fisheries regulations.

Social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon

The goal for NASCO and its Parties on the social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon is to ensure that the salmon stocks provide the greatest possible benefits to society and individuals.

The key issues in relation to the social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon are to:

- ensure that appropriate emphasis is given to the social and economic aspects of the Atlantic salmon;
- strengthen the socio-economic data as a basis for managing Atlantic salmon;
- integrate social and economic aspects and considerations in an open and transparent way into the decision-making processes within NASCO;
- disseminate information on the social and economic aspects of the wild Atlantic salmon in order to ensure that they are given due weight compared to other important commercial and public interests.

Research on salmon at sea (including studies of by-catch of salmon)

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to promote collaboration and cooperation on research into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality.

The key issues in relation to research on salmon at sea are to:

- develop an effective fund-raising strategy and identify and target potential sponsors;
- strengthen NGO involvement in, and support for, the Board and for its fund-raising activities.

Protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat.

The key issues in relation to habitat protection and restoration are to:

- ensure effective implementation of NASCO's Plan of Action for Habitat Protection and Restoration, CNL(01)51;
- enhance sharing and exchange of information on habitat issues and best management practices between NASCO Parties and other relevant international bodies (i.e. International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC), North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC));
- maintain the NASCO salmon rivers database.

Aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to minimise the possible adverse impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics on the wild stocks of Atlantic salmon, including working with industry stakeholders, where appropriate.

The key issues in relation to aquaculture, introduction and transfers and transgenics are to:

- determine the need for internationally agreed regulations or standards for aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics;
- enhance public awareness of developments concerning aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics;
- minimise the escape of farmed salmon to a level that is as close as practicable to zero;
- minimise any negative impacts of ranched salmon by utilizing, as far as possible, local stocks and developing and applying appropriate release and harvest strategies;
- minimise the adverse genetic and other biological interactions from salmon enhancement activities, including introductions and transfers;
- minimise the risk of transmission to wild salmon stocks of diseases and parasites from all aquaculture activities and from introductions and transfers;
- consider the consequences of aquaculture of Atlantic salmon in countries that are not parties to NASCO.

Gyrodactylus salaris

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to prevent the further spread of this parasite and to eradicate it from infected areas, working with stakeholders, where appropriate.

The key issues in relation to *G. salaris* are to:

- minimise the threat posed by *G. salaris* to Atlantic salmon;
- enhance cooperation on monitoring, research and dissemination of information regarding *G. salaris*, with special regard to the lack of knowledge on distribution and ecology of the parasite; and
- strengthen international, national and regional legislation and guidelines to prevent the further spread of *G. salaris*.

Initiatives for endangered salmon populations

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to cooperate internationally to protect and rebuild threatened and endangered salmon populations in order to preserve natural diversity.

The key issues in relation to endangered salmon populations are to:

- develop a common terminology to describe the level of threat (i.e. endangered, threatened, near-threatened, vulnerable);
- choose the appropriate strategy, management actions and conservation approaches;
- facilitate a regular exchange of know-how in this field;
- identify efficient stock monitoring techniques to measure success.

Recommendations on the Next Steps for NASCO

The recommendations that follow build on and strengthen the solid foundation that NASCO has developed over the past twenty years and provide tools to assist NASCO in achieving its vision. They are organised into the following four areas:

- Commitments;
- Effectiveness and efficiency;
- Transparency and inclusivity;
- Raising NASCO's profile.

The primary recommendations are presented in boxes followed by further explanatory text and possible methods and options for implementation.

Commitments

NASCO seeks to improve commitment to its agreements and to facilitate review, in a challenging environment, of progress on their implementation.

Implementation

Recommendation 1: Each Party or relevant jurisdiction should develop an implementation plan for meeting the objectives of NASCO's agreements. Each Party or relevant jurisdiction should then report on steps taken pursuant to the Plan. These approaches should be evaluated after a trial period.

The Implementation Plan would describe how the goals laid out in the various Council agreements will be addressed and would establish measurable goals for implementation in a given timeframe. The Parties could commit to these Implementation Plans pursuant to Article 15, paragraph 5(b) and report on their implementation also under Article 15.

If, after a trial period, it is determined that the Implementation Plans were not forthcoming and/or not being adhered to, then the Council could create a working party with representatives of the Parties, the Secretariat and the NGOs to further discuss the language in the Convention and the interpretation and application of that language to the work of

NASCO. If the Implementation Plans are being implemented, but not having the desired effect, then the Council could investigate the cause and take appropriate action.

Recommendation 2: The Council should keep its agreements under regular review and adapt them, in the light of new information as to their effectiveness.

As an example, the Council could consider whether there is a need to develop international guidelines for the North-East Atlantic Commission area on *Gyrodactylus salaris* or to amend the Williamsburg Resolution.

Recommendation 3: The Council should explore the feasibility of arranging a Ministerial Conference to strengthen the Parties' commitment to the conservation of wild salmon through the NASCO Convention.

The arrangement of such a Ministerial Conference would also serve to raise the profile of NASCO's work.

Reporting in a challenging environment

Recommendation 4: Reporting to the Council on progress in achieving the objectives should be conducted in a Special Session so as to allow direct NGO involvement, greater opportunity for discussion, and critical review of the reports made by the Parties in implementation of agreements.

Reporting on implementation of NASCO's various agreements would be on a cycle of not more than 4 years so as to facilitate more detailed focus on best practice in relation to each agreement. This cycle might be, for example, as follows:

- Year 1 Habitat protection and restoration
- Year 2 Management of fisheries
- Year 3 Minimising impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics

Reporting in relation to application of the Council's socio-economic guidelines would be considered in relation to each of these areas.

The Council could agree on a list of objectives and elements for discussion to be issued the year before each reporting Special Session so as to assess the extent of implementation of the agreements and the effectiveness of the actions taken in achieving the objectives of the agreement.

These Special Sessions would not supplant the continued use of inter-sessional meetings and symposia as an effective way of making significant progress on complex or specific issues. In addition to the reporting Special Sessions recommended here, topical Special Sessions may continue to be held for general information exchange on relevant issues. The views of NASCO's NGOs are important with respect to the content and organization of Special Sessions; they could be encouraged to make presentations regarding relevant work they have undertaken.

Recommendation 5: The Council should establish an *ad hoc* group to support the President in determining the conclusions of the Special Sessions at which progress reports on Implementation Plans have been presented and reviewed.

The *ad hoc* group would assist the President in reviewing reports made by the Parties and their relevant jurisdictions on their progress in implementing NASCO's agreements and other conservation measures and in developing conclusions for consideration by the Council.

Fairness in management

Recommendation 6: The homewater Parties should inform the relevant NASCO Commission of the management measures established or envisaged and their expected effects.

In order that there is balance and fairness between management of distant-water and homewater fisheries, prior to a NASCO meeting at which regulatory measures are to be discussed the homewater Parties would inform the relevant Commission of the management measures established or envisaged and their expected effects. The Parties would take this information into account in establishing regulatory measures. The format of the information could be pre-agreed. Homewater Parties may take into account the regulatory measures agreed for distant-water fisheries in establishing measures for homewaters.

Effectiveness and efficiency

NASCO wishes to use the time available to it in the most efficient and effective way and in a manner that improves inclusivity and transparency.

Changes to meeting structure

Recommendation 7: The West Greenland and North-East Atlantic Commissions of NASCO should consider whether regulatory measures for the Greenland and Faroese fisheries could be adopted and scientific advice from ICES sought on a biennial or multi-year basis.

If biennial regulatory agreements can be reached, then meetings of the Commissions may be able to be very limited in alternate years allowing more time for discussion within the Council and in Special Sessions. In preparing the agendas for the Annual Meeting, all efforts should be made to reduce duplication of issues within Commissions and to ensure that common topics are instead discussed within the Council.

The Secretariat will need to liaise further with ICES through their annual management advisory group meetings to ensure the timeliness of the advice and to emphasize the importance of its quality and clarity of presentation. The implications of a biennial request for advice on the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Working Group will also need to be discussed with the ICES management advisory group.

In the event that regulatory measures are developed on a biennial basis, scientific advice could be requested every second year, i.e. for those years when regulatory measure are on the agenda. In alternative years, reporting on salmon stocks will continue under Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention.

Obtaining and using socio-economic information

Recommendation 8: The Council should continue and expand as necessary existing efforts to incorporate social and economic factors into its work.

NASCO's Standing Committee on the Precautionary Approach (SCPA) has developed guidelines outlining ways in which social and economic factors can be incorporated into management decisions under the Precautionary Approach. The Council has agreed that work should start on the development of a bio-economic model and a Technical Working Group meeting is planned. To more fully incorporate social and economic factors into NASCO's work, the Council should request the SCPA to review the recommendations of the Technical Working Group and to identify other actions deemed necessary.

Responsiveness to new or emerging opportunities and threats

Recommendation 9: The Council should include an item on its agenda entitled "New or emerging opportunities for, or threats to, salmon conservation and management" and request ICES and the NGOs to provide relevant information.

It is recognised that some actions may need to be taken by the Parties and some by NASCO in response to new opportunities for, or threats to, salmon conservation and management. In either case, there would need to be an agreed mechanism for responding rapidly.

The Organization's website and the stakeholder dialogue meetings could be used to disseminate and seek information on new and emerging opportunities for, or threats to, salmon conservation and management and the measures being taken by NASCO and its Parties.

Transparency and inclusivity

An environment of greater cooperation would improve NASCO's ability to meet its mandate by facilitating evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of NASCO agreements; enhancing two-way information-sharing among NASCO and its membership, and other interested parties; and increasing stakeholder involvement in NASCO's work.

Recommendation 10: The Council should seek ways to increase NGO involvement in its meetings by amending current NGO observer rules to provide discretion to the NASCO President and Commission Chairmen to recognise requests for the floor by observers on any agenda item under discussion before and after debate by the Parties on that item, and soliciting stakeholder input on standing or *ad hoc* working groups as appropriate.

The President and Commission Chairmen could establish appropriate ground-rules governing such interventions, such as a time limit or a limit on the number of speakers, as deemed necessary to ensure effective and efficient running of meetings.

Greater involvement of stakeholders in working groups would be achieved by soliciting stakeholder input on issues to be considered by NASCO's standing or *ad hoc* working groups in advance of these meetings and ensuring timely reporting of the outcomes of such meetings to facilitate review by all interested parties in advance of the Annual Meeting at which the results will be considered. If the Chairman of a Working Group determines that there is a

need for direct involvement of outside experts in a working group, for example to address technical issues, stakeholders with relevant expertise may be invited to participate in relevant working group sessions.

Recommendation 11: The Council should continue to support broader stakeholder participation in the Liaison Group between NASCO and the North Atlantic salmon farming industry.

NASCO would like to see involvement of its accredited NGOs for all or part of the Liaison Group meetings as a confidence-building measure and to share information.

Recommendation 12: The Council should periodically conduct stakeholder dialogue meetings to improve outreach and education with regard to NASCO and its work and to seek information on ways to continue to improve the Organization's work.

These stakeholder dialogue meetings would be held across the NASCO membership area and an initial focus could be to report on the progress achieved during the Next Steps process. The timing and location(s) of the stakeholder dialogue meetings should be decided by the Council in consultation with its stakeholders.

Recommendation 13: The Council should encourage accredited NGOs and, as appropriate, other stakeholders to continue to improve their cooperation with NASCO.

Cooperation could be improved through the timely sharing by NGOs/stakeholders of relevant documents (such as reports resulting from participation in NASCO Annual Meetings) with the Council, dissemination of information concerning NASCO and its work by NGOs/stakeholders to their members, and support for the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between NASCO and stakeholder groups. In addition, recognizing that NGOs and other stakeholders are often involved in initiatives of relevance to NASCO's work, such as habitat improvement and public education efforts, and that stewardship programmes have, in some cases, encouraged NGO/stakeholder activities, accredited NGOs and other relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to share relevant experiences and expertise through venues such as Special Sessions. Stakeholders should be invited to provide further suggestions on ways to improve their cooperation with NASCO.

Recommendation 14: Seek input from NASCO's accredited NGOs to the development of the Organization's media strategy.

Some of NASCO's NGOs have considerable expertise in public relations and could provide valuable assistance to the Organization in its efforts to raise its profile.

Recommendation 15: Initial discussion of all agenda items should occur within the Council and Commissions. Decisions reached at the Heads of Delegations meetings, to the maximum extent possible, should be explained during the Council and Commission meetings, including relevant debate surrounding the issue and the rationale for the final decision.

Transparency in decision-making is important. Issues should only be referred to the Heads of Delegations when they cannot be resolved during normal Council and Commission discussions.

Raising NASCO's profile

NASCO seeks to raise its public and political profile in order to gain the support it needs to further its conservation work. One approach is to hold a Ministerial Conference, which is included as Recommendation 3.

Public relations

Recommendation 16: NASCO should develop and implement a clear public relations strategy, including the establishment of a public relations group, aimed at enhancing its profile and ensuring the most effective publicity for its work and achievements.

This strategy would focus primarily on how NASCO communicates its messages and should ensure, in as far as possible within its resource constraints, that the delivery of these messages is achieved using the best available communication methods.

The strategy could address key issues including:

- What is NASCO?
- What are NASCO's aims?
- Why are these important?
- What has it done to date?
- What plans are there for future work?

The role of this group would be to identify and provide on-going advice on the best ways to communicate the work of NASCO to ensure that the Organization achieves and maintains a high public profile. The group will also provide a forum for the exchange of information on public relations campaigns and opportunities, and should seek input from NASCO's NGOs, where appropriate.

Recommendation 17: The Secretariat should engage professional expertise to produce media products and to develop a more relevant, attractive, informative and interactive website.

The content of media releases and the website could include items such as:

- Annual reports on the status of salmon stocks around the North Atlantic;
- Publicity for forthcoming events;
- Links to and from appropriate websites;
- Reports of meetings of the Council, Commissions and Working Groups;
- Resolutions, Protocols, Guidelines, Codes of Practice, and other documents reflecting best practice for salmon management and conservation;
- Information from national inventories;
- The NASCO salmon rivers database;
- Success stories, new threats and opportunities.

Recommendation 18: NASCO should develop links with educational programmes and establish the means to achieve mutual benefits from such alignment.

Educational initiatives for NASCO might include publicising appropriate educational schemes and developing a system of awards for novel or innovative means of sharing best practice.

Recommendation 19: The Council should consider the need for additional reports to improve the public understanding of information relevant to NASCO's activities.

Options for additional reports could include an annual summary of the ICES advice in simple terms and a status of Atlantic salmon stocks report which could include information on fisheries, habitat, aquaculture and socio-economics, to assist NASCO with its public relations work. Production of these reports could be a significant undertaking.

Co-operation with other organizations

Recommendation 20: The Council should review its relationships with other international organizations and explore areas of mutual interest.

Such a review could:

- explore ways to strengthen existing links with other international salmon management organizations such as the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) and the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC);
- identify methods to maintain close contact with organizations such as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), and the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Council (EIFAC) to ensure that issues such as fishing for prey species, the possibility of by-catch in pelagic fisheries, and environmental issues that may affect salmon and salmon fisheries are addressed;
- consider the need for further liaison with the World Trade Organisation and other appropriate organizations in relation to potential conflicts between measures to protect wild Atlantic salmon and international trade agreements;
- review ways to enhance cooperation with other international organizations on relevant matters, e.g. World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Oslo and Paris Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR).