

Council

CNL(05)39

***Working Group Meeting or Special Session on Unreported Catches
(Tabled by Norway)***

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Norway suggests making the necessary preparations for a Working Group meeting or short Special Session at the next Annual Meeting on the issue of unreported catches. In such a meeting Parties and countries could present the methods they currently used and discuss their experiences. We believe this would be of interest to all NASCO Parties.

Norway has, throughout NASCO's history, been among those countries reporting the highest estimates on unreported catches both in nominal terms and as a proportion of reported catches. This situation is still more or less the same; even so, unreported catches have steadily been reduced, due to significant efforts both by the authorities and the private sector in order to improve catch report return rates and the accuracy of catch reports.

In 1999 Norway conducted a major review on methods used and data available in order to make the best possible estimates of unreported catches. Since then, only minor adjustments have been made. We therefore notified the Council during last year's meeting that we intended to gather experts in this field in order to conduct a new review and explore the basis and need for revisions of current methods and estimates.

Subsequently a Working Group meeting was arranged this spring, where experts from the authorities, scientists and the most relevant NGOs participated. The conclusions were that although our total estimate seems to be very high, there was not sufficient knowledge or data to improve current estimates. Therefore it was impossible to provide a sufficient objective basis to make major changes in our overall estimate or even for certain elements. Furthermore, the Working Group concluded that there was a need to conduct new studies and surveys in order to get a better knowledge basis.

Bearing in mind the importance of this issue and the fact that there might be important lessons to be learned across jurisdictions, Norway therefore suggests making necessary preparations for a working group meeting or a short Special Session at the next Annual Meeting. Parties and countries could then present the current methods they use and discuss their experiences on this issue. We believe this would be of interest to all NASCO Parties. Catch statistics are, after all, one of the most important management tools used in salmon management by many countries, and used in models to estimate pre-fishery abundance.