

Council

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Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2005

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Note: This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 2005. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Twenty-Second Annual Meetings of the Council and regional Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

*Report on the Activities of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2005*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NASCO held its Twenty-Second Annual Meeting in Vichy, France. Unusually, the arrangements for the meeting were provided by one of our Non-Government Organizations, Fondation Saumon. Their excellent work was very much appreciated by the Organization.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council was held during the period 6-10 June 2005, under the Presidency of Dr Ken Whelan (European Union) and Vice-Presidency of Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland). Representatives of all the Parties, an observer from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), observers from four inter-government organizations, and fifteen non-government organizations, attended the meetings.

'Next Steps' for NASCO

- 2.2 To mark NASCO's Twentieth Anniversary, the Council had established a Working Group on the 'Next Steps for NASCO' with the aim of developing and strengthening the Organization to ensure that it continues to be a world-class regional fisheries organization over the next twenty years. As part of the Working Group's deliberations, consultation meetings had been held with stakeholders in Europe and North America and the feedback received had been taken into account by the Working Group in developing its recommendations. Furthermore, in order to allow stakeholder involvement in the discussion of the Working Group's report, an Open Session was held in Vichy to which all participants at the consultation meetings were invited. The Working Group had developed a vision for NASCO and had suggested that future activities of NASCO be framed in the form of a Strategic Approach highlighting the actions required for realising the vision.
- 2.3 The Council adopted this Strategic Approach for NASCO's 'Next Steps', CNL(05)49, recognising that some decisions were for immediate implementation and others would require further consideration to effect their implementation. In order to further develop the latter decisions, the Council established a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Mr Gudmundur Helgason (Iceland) to report to the Council in advance of its Twenty-Third Annual Meeting. The NGOs expressed their support for the 'Next Steps' process, applauded its outcome to date, stressed the need for continuing transparency and inclusiveness, and emphasised their commitment to working in partnership with NASCO.

- 2.4 The following statement from the Atlantic Salmon Federation and the World Wildlife Fund was read to the Council:

“ASF and WWF thank NASCO and all Parties for the transparent and inclusive manner in which this year’s Annual Meeting has been conducted. We also note that NASCO’s ‘Next Steps’ Working Group has proposed a number of new measures that would further enhance transparency and provide new opportunities for stakeholder participation in NASCO’s work. ASF and WWF strongly support these proposed changes, which the Parties have committed to further develop intersessionally. We also applaud NASCO for its serious treatment of the recommendations contained in ‘NASCO’s future: A Vision Statement’, commissioned by ASF and WWF in 2004. In recognition of these steps by NASCO, and in keeping with the spirit and cooperation that they reflect, WWF and ASF intend to apply for accredited NGO status in advance of next year’s Annual Meeting.”

The Precautionary Approach to Salmon Management

Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries

- 2.5 To assist NASCO’s Contracting Parties and the relevant authorities in applying the Precautionary Approach to the management of North Atlantic salmon fisheries, the Council had adopted a Decision Structure in 2002 and had requested that this be widely applied by managers in cooperation with stakeholders on salmon rivers. A report on progress in implementing the Decision Structure, based on the returns by the Parties, was presented. The presentations from a Special Session on Management of Homewater Fisheries, held in 2004, were made available to all delegates.

Habitat Protection and Restoration

- 2.6 The NASCO Plan of Action for Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat, adopted by the Council in 2001, aims to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon through the establishment and implementation, by the Parties and their relevant jurisdictions, of comprehensive habitat protection and restoration plans. In order to measure and improve progress in meeting the objective, the Parties and their relevant jurisdictions had agreed to establish inventories of salmon rivers. The Parties reported on progress on establishing and implementing habitat plans and on the establishment of inventories. A report on the development of a database of salmon rivers was presented.

The Williamsburg Resolution

- 2.7 In 2003 the Council adopted the Resolution by the Parties to the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean to Minimise Impacts from Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics on the Wild Salmon Stocks, the Williamsburg Resolution. In adopting the Williamsburg Resolution the Council had recognized that it was a “living document” that could evolve in future in the light of experience with its implementation, consultations, improved scientific

understanding of the impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics on the wild stocks and developments in measures to minimise them.

- 2.8 At the 2005 Liaison Group meeting (see paragraph 2.9 below) the industry had agreed to provide comments to the Council on the Williamsburg Resolution. The comments provided by the International Salmon Farmers' Association (ISFA) were tabled but no comments had been received from the salmon farming industry in Scotland or Russia. The Council asked the Secretary to develop a response to these comments in consultation with the Parties, and transmit it to the President of ISFA. It was agreed that any changes to the Williamsburg Resolution should be agreed inter-sessionally by the Parties. The Council agreed that the Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Canada, which is intended to reconcile differences between the methods used by these countries to authorise introductions and transfers, should be appended to the Williamsburg Resolution. A report on progress in implementing the Williamsburg Resolution, based on the return by the Parties, was presented.

Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.9 A report of the meeting of the Liaison Group with the North Atlantic salmon farming industry, which had been held in Leuven, Belgium, on 26 April 2005, was presented by its Chairman, Ms Mary Colligan (USA). Progress reports on implementation of action plans on containment of farmed salmon had been made available to the Liaison Group. These reports were seen as a considerable step forward compared to previous years, although some reports still lacked some of the detail requested. A report had also been made to the Liaison Group on arrangements for a Workshop entitled 'Wild and Farmed Salmon – Working Together' to be held in Trondheim, Norway, on 9 August 2005. The Liaison Group had welcomed this initiative. The industry also provided comments on the report of the Workshop on Marking of Farmed Salmon (see paragraph 2.10 below). In light of the Liaison Group report, the Council expressed its disappointment at the salmon farming industry's continuing unwillingness to admit NGOs to the Liaison Group. The President agreed to write to the President of ISFA referring to the 'Next Steps' process and encouraging the industry to consider its position with regard to NGO participation.

Workshop on Mass Marking of Farmed Salmon

- 2.10 Under the Williamsburg Resolution it is stated that tagging or marking could be used in order to facilitate the identification of farmed salmon in the wild and their separation from wild fish, to determine the source of escapes and to assess the interactions of escaped farmed salmon with the wild stocks. The need to evaluate the effectiveness of marking methods, their feasibility for large-scale marking and their costs was recognised. The report of a workshop to assess the current and developing methods of marking farmed Atlantic salmon was presented. The workshop was hosted by the European Union, on behalf of the Scottish Executive, and held in Edinburgh during 6-8 December 2004. The workshop had come to the view that while many possible methods are available for marking fish, some methods are not suitable for mass marking, some require further development and others can provide very limited discriminating power. Of the methods evaluated, CWTs and otolith marking are most suitable for mass marking. Genetic identification methods have

potential for marking farmed salmon but further development is needed. All methods involve significant costs and the greater the discrimination power that is required the higher the cost. The workshop recommended that further investigations should be carried out to improve the accuracy of estimates of the number of fish in cages and the extent of trickle losses during routine operations, and that the NASCO Parties should cooperate so as to plan and undertake such assessments. The workshop had suggested that progress in relation to these further assessments be reviewed through the reporting procedures in the Williamsburg Resolution and at the Liaison Group meetings.

Social and Economic Values Related to Atlantic Salmon

- 2.11 The wild Atlantic salmon has many aspects to its value, including those associated with recreational, commercial and subsistence fisheries. In addition, however, there are values associated with the existence of the salmon itself which, although difficult to assess, are so widespread that they may greatly exceed the values associated with the fisheries. A report on the use by the Parties of the Council's Guidelines for Incorporating Social and Economic Values in Decisions under the Precautionary Approach was presented. The US advised the Council that the proposed meeting of a Technical Working Group to develop a bio-economic model had been re-scheduled for 2006.

Stock Rebuilding Programmes

- 2.12 A stock rebuilding programme has been defined by the Council as an array of management measures, including habitat improvement, exploitation control and stocking, designed to restore a stock to above its conservation limit. In 2004, the Council adopted Guidelines on the Use of Stock Rebuilding Programmes in the context of the Precautionary Management of Salmon Stocks. A report on the returns made by the Parties on application of these guidelines was presented.

Unreported Catches

- 2.13 The Secretary summarised the returns by the Parties, which indicate that in 2004 unreported catches were estimated to be between 593 and 761 tonnes. The Council welcomed this information which presented data on unreported catches in a transparent manner.

International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB)

- 2.14 The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board was established by the Council in 2001 to direct and coordinate a programme of research to identify and explain the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the possibilities to counteract this mortality.
- 2.15 The report of the Fourth Meeting of the IASRB was presented by the Chairman of the Board, Mr Jacque Robichaud. The IASRB had updated its inventory of research related to salmon mortality in the sea and had received advice from its Scientific Advisory Group. Expenditure on the 54 ongoing projects in the inventory amounted

to more than £5.7 million. In October 2004, the IASRB had organised a Workshop in Dublin to develop a major programme of research on salmon at sea, the SALSEA programme. This programme is a comprehensive mix of freshwater, estuarine, coastal and offshore elements, ensuring an overview of factors affecting salmon at sea. The IASRB had endorsed this programme and a major fund-raising exercise will be necessary to support the proposed research on oceanic distribution and migration and the further development of supporting technologies for the proposed research cruises (genetic stock identification, evaluation of sampling equipment and scale analysis of marine growth). The total cost of these elements is approximately £7.8 million, assuming two years of research cruises. The IASRB had therefore employed a firm of fund-raising consultants, Brakeley Consultants, to develop a strategy for raising these very substantial sums. They had indicated that they believed the IASRB had a good case, but that there would need to be a very significant commitment from the IASRB if an effective fund-raising campaign was to be undertaken. They had also suggested increasing partnerships with NASCO's NGOs. The Council supported the SALSEA initiative and recognised the importance of moving forward with the programme in cooperation with stakeholders. The President encouraged the Parties to consider how they might support the SALSEA programme, either through provision of ship time or by direct financial contributions to the IASRB.

By-catch of Atlantic Salmon

- 2.16 Concern had previously been raised within the Council about the possible by-catch of salmon post-smolts in fisheries for pelagic species of fish, particularly mackerel, in the North-East Atlantic. In 2003, the Council had decided that, consistent with the Precautionary Approach, it would encourage and seek appropriate funding for research on the distribution of salmon at sea, and the overlap between salmon at sea and pelagic fisheries; encourage pilot studies on technical adjustments to the deployment of gear in pelagic fisheries so as to minimise by-catch of salmon; review the results of this research at its 2005 Annual Meeting or at a Special Session; in the light of the findings of this research, request that the Parties, non-Parties and other Fisheries Commissions make adjustments (if appropriate) to fishing methods so as to minimise the by-catch of salmon; and continue to ask ICES to provide information on by-catch. The Russian Federation reported that studies into the by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries had continued in 2004 but that, in contrast to previous years, there had been no surveys and only five observers had been placed on pelagic trawlers during weeks 22-36. There had been no reports of post-smolts in the catch of pelagic fish.

Impacts of Acid Rain

- 2.17 Reports in relation to the impacts of acid rain were made by Canada, the European Union, Norway and the US.

Predator-Related Mortality

- 2.18 The President noted that assessment of the impacts of predation on salmon was a major element of the SALSEA programme and that the 'Next Steps' process could

lead to improved reporting on this issue. The Council decided to remove this item from future agendas but it could be reinstated at the request of a Party.

St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.19 A report on the sampling programme at St Pierre and Miquelon in 2004 was presented to the Council, together with information on the regulatory framework for managing the fishery and details of licences issued, and catches. The Council welcomed the continuing cooperation from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon).

Scientific Advice

- 2.20 The report of the ICES Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM) was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES to be presented in 2006. The Council asked the Standing Scientific Committee to develop a discussion document on options for amending the form and nature of the request for advice in the event that multi-annual regulatory measures are agreed.

Catch Statistics and their Analysis

- 2.21 The official catch returns by the Parties for 2004, and historical data for the period 1960-2004, were presented.

Measures Taken in Accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention

- 2.22 A report was presented on the returns made under Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.23 Reports on scientific research fishing conducted since the last Annual Meeting were made by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), EU (UK - Scotland) and Norway.

Other Issues

- 2.24 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.25 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below).
- 2.26 Reports were provided on: a meeting of Regional Fisheries Bodies held at FAO Headquarters in Rome; fishing for salmon in international waters; receipt of contributions for 2005; and on the proposed joint meeting with ICES, to be held in October 2005, on 'Interactions between aquaculture and wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fish species: Science and Management, Challenges and Solutions'.

- 2.27 The winner of the \$2,500 Grand Prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Ilya Scherbovich, Moscow, Russia.
- 2.28 The Council adopted a report to the Parties on the activities of the Organization in 2004.
- 2.29 The Council accepted an invitation from the European Union on behalf of Finland to hold its Twenty-Third Annual Meeting in Ivalo, Finland, during 5-9 June 2006. The Council decided to hold its Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting during 4-8 June 2007 in Edinburgh or elsewhere at the invitation of a Party.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Vichy, France, during the period 6-10 June 2005 under the Acting Chairmanship of the Vice-Chairman, Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada).

Review of the 2004 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2004 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Commission agreed a request to ICES for scientific advice in 2006, which included a request for multi-annual catch advice for the period 2006-2008.

Review of the 2005 Salmon Management Measures

- 3.3 The United States presented a report on its Atlantic salmon management and research activities in 2004. A review of Canadian Atlantic salmon management measures for 2005 was presented.

St Pierre and Miquelon Fishery

- 3.4 The observer for France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) presented information on its salmon fishing activities and the scientific monitoring programme at St Pierre and Miquelon. The US expressed its support for the work being undertaken by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), highlighting the importance of the scientific monitoring which the US hoped would be continued and expanded. The Commission encouraged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to continue its cooperation with NASCO, including continued participation as an observer in NASCO's annual meetings.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.5 A report on the activities of the Scientific Working Group on Salmonid Introductions and Transfers in 2004/2005 was presented. In order to address the outstanding issues concerning the Commission's Protocols on Introductions and Transfers, the Commission agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) intended to reconcile the differences between the methods used by the US and Canada for the authorization of introductions and transfers. The Commission noted that the MoU addressed the

need to revise its protocols on introductions and transfers and recommended to the Council that the MoU be appended to the Williamsburg Resolution.

Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.6 Canada provided information on sampling in Labrador.

Other Issues

- 3.7 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Benjamin Azenedo Jr. of Niantic, Connecticut, USA.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Vichy, France, during the period 6-10 June 2005 under the Chairmanship of Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway).

Review of the 2004 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission reviewed the 2004 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. There had been no fishing for salmon at Faroes in the last four years. The representative of ICES confirmed that the correspondence between the Chairman of the Commission and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) had resulted in the information on disaggregated catches, which is needed to better assess by-catch, being provided to ICES. ICES also seeks information for earlier years to that provided and NEAFC Parties are working to provide this information and annual updates. The Commission adopted a request to ICES for scientific advice in 2006, which included a request for multi-annual catch advice for the period 2006-2008.

Risk of Transmission of Gyrodactylus salaris in the Commission Area

- 4.3 The Commission was advised that Mr Stian Johnsen of the Norwegian Food Safety Authority had been appointed as Chairman of the Commission's Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* and that the Group will meet before the Commission's Twenty-Third Annual Meeting. Norway referred to the 'Biocides Directive', 98/8/EC, a consequence of which will be a ban on the use of rotenone, a key tool in the eradication of *Gyrodactylus salaris*, from 1 September 2006. He indicated that Norway would be sending an application to the European Commission for an extended phase-out of rotenone and suggested that it would be helpful if other Parties or EU Member States were able to support the application. Norway agreed to advise the Commission when it has submitted its application to the European Commission so that the other Parties can consider appropriate action. Information on the status of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in community waters, and the efforts to control the transmission of the parasite, was presented by the European Union. The Russian Federation indicated that a survey concentrating on the Tuloma River, one of the largest rivers in the Murmansk region and the border river with Finland, had been conducted in 2004 and *Gyrodactylus salaris* had not been found. The Commission agreed that

information on *Gyrodactylus salaris* should be made available on the Organization's website.

Pilot Study to Improve Understanding of the Migration, Dispersal and Survival of Farmed Salmon

- 4.4 The Commission had previously decided to undertake a pilot study involving releases of 500 to 1,000 tagged, large farmed salmon in a number of countries in the Commission area so as to improve understanding of their migration, dispersal and survival. The pilot project had been postponed in 2004 and 2005 as several countries had experienced difficulties in participating in the project. Norway agreed to liaise with the Parties in the Autumn of 2005 with a view to implementing the project in 2006. The Chairman noted that it was the Parties' intention to conduct the pilot project as soon as possible.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.5 The Commission adopted a decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2006. Under this decision the Commission agreed not to set a quota for the Faroe Islands salmon fishery in 2006 on the basis that the Faroe Islands will manage any salmon fishery on the basis of the advice from ICES, in a precautionary manner and with a view to sustainability. Furthermore any such fishing will be limited in scope compared to the management measures agreed by NASCO in previous years and will be subject to close national surveillance and control.

Other Issues

- 4.6 The winner of the Commission's \$1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Dimitry Kuzmin, Murmansk, Russia.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Vichy, France, during the period 6-10 June 2005 under the Chairmanship of Ms Patricia Kurkul (USA).

Review of the 2004 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 2004 fishery at West Greenland and considered the scientific advice from ICES. A report on the 2004 fishery at West Greenland was tabled by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland). The Commission agreed a request for scientific advice in 2006, which included a request for multi-annual catch advice for the period 2006-2008.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.3 The Commission adopted a regulatory measure for the fishing of salmon at West Greenland for 2005, under which the 2005 catch at West Greenland will be restricted to the amount used for internal consumption in Greenland which in the past has been

estimated at 20 tonnes. There will be no commercial export of salmon. Under this regulatory measure, the Parties agreed to explore the possibility of adopting a multi-annual measure at the Commission's 2006 Annual Meeting.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

5.4 A report on the sampling programme at West Greenland in 2004 was presented. It was noted that the salmon catch data for Greenland may be an underestimate and should be treated with caution, although these data were adjusted by ICES for modelling purposes. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that the temporal and spatial coverage of the fishery was now excellent but the results highlighted the fact that greater efforts needed to be made to improve catch reporting in Nuuk, where the majority of the fish available at local markets are sold. The Commission agreed a West Greenland Sampling Agreement for 2005. The objectives of this programme are to:

- Continue the time series of data (1969-2004) on continent of origin and biological characteristics of the salmon in the West Greenland fishery;
- Provide data on mean weight, length and continent of origin for input into the North American and European run-reconstruction models;
- Collect information on the recovery of internal and external tags;
- Collect information on fish diseases or other special samples as requested.

5.5 Canada, the European Union and the United States agreed to contribute to the cooperative sampling programme in 2005, and the Greenland Home Rule Government agreed to support the sampling programme.

Other Issues

5.6 The Winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Vittus Jeremiassen, Greenland.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council under the Chairmanship of Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway).

Relationship with ICES

6.2 A report on the continuing consultations with ICES was presented. It had previously been agreed that NASCO's MoU with ICES would be renewed until the end of 2006 and that during this period the price charged to NASCO by ICES for scientific advice will be adjusted only to take account of inflation in Denmark. The Committee stressed the need for continued stability in NASCO's payments to ICES through a fixed-rate payment adjusted only for inflation and asked that the Secretary liaise with

ICES, together with the other client Commissions, so as to develop a new MoU to apply for 2007.

- 6.3 During the annual meeting of ICES and its client commissions (MCAP meeting), a progress report had been made on ICES' policy of admitting observers to meetings of its Advisory Committees and selected Working Groups. There had been little interest in observer status at these meetings. ICES has no intention of extending observer status to the North Atlantic Salmon Working Group meetings but the Secretary was asked to report back to the Committee on any developments with regard to ICES' policy on observers in the light of future MCAP meetings. The Secretary indicated that he had raised with ICES the possibility that NASCO might seek multi-annual advice rather than scientific advice on an annual basis. The Chairman of the ACFM had indicated that such an arrangement might offer benefits in allowing the Working Group scientists more time to develop new approaches to providing the advice.

2006 Budget

- 6.4 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of a 2006 Budget and Schedule of Contributions. The Committee agreed that in light of the benefits from, and obligations to, the Headquarters Property, the ceiling of the Working Capital Fund should be increased to £200,000 with a view to reaching this limit in three years. The Committee agreed that a sum of £60,000 for Working Capital should be included in the 2007 budget. The Committee authorised the Secretary to utilise up to £10,000 of the Working Capital for public relations-related work in 2005.

Audited Accounts

- 6.5 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the audited accounts for 2004 and the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers of Queen Street, Edinburgh, as auditors for the 2005 accounts, or such other company as may be agreed by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee.

Secretary
Edinburgh
7 April, 2006