

Council

CNL(07)6

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2006

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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 2006, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Twenty-Third 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 2006*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NASCO held its Twenty-Third Annual Meeting in Saariselkä, Finland. The arrangements for the meeting, made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on behalf of the European Union, were excellent and very much appreciated by the Organization.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council was held during the period 5-9 June 2006, 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 two inter-government organizations, and seventeen non-government organizations, attended the meetings.

‘Next Steps’ for NASCO

- (a) *Overview of progress with decisions taken in Vichy*

- 2.2 At the Council’s Twenty-Second Annual Meeting in 2005, a Strategic Approach for NASCO’s ‘Next Steps’ (CNL(05)49) had been adopted. The Council had wished to move quickly to implement the recommendations from the ‘Next Steps for NASCO’ Working Group but had recognised that while some recommendations could be adopted for immediate implementation, others would require further consideration. The Council reviewed and welcomed the progress made since the last Annual Meeting. The Council reviewed options for improving cooperation with other international organizations on issues of mutual interest.

- (b) *Report of the ‘Next Steps for NASCO’ Task Force*

- 2.3 The Council had previously recognised that the decisions concerning two central themes of the ‘Next Steps’ Strategy, i.e. implementation, commitment and accountability and transparency and inclusivity, would require further consideration prior to their implementation. It had, therefore, established a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Mr Gudmundur Helgason (Iceland) to further develop recommendations in relation to these two aspects of the Strategy. The Council reviewed the Task Force report and, in the light of the information presented, the Council decided:

- (1) to adopt the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation of Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’ as contained in the Task Force report;

- (2) to set up an *ad hoc* Review Group and a proposed schedule of activities for the coming year;
- (3) to adopt the Task Force's recommendations in relation to NGO participation at NASCO's meetings as outlined in the Task Force report. The Secretary was asked to amend the Conditions for Attendance by Observers at NASCO meetings accordingly;
- (4) to hold further stakeholder consultation meetings in 2009, but a final decision on this will be taken in the light of any advice from the Public Relations Group on this topic;
- (5) to support the approach for further improving cooperation with other inter-governmental organizations;
- (6) to establish a Public Relations Group to advise on implementation of the PR issues identified in the Next Steps process. This Group would include representatives of the Parties and the NGOs and PR professionals. The Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed.

Special Session: Reports by the Parties or relevant jurisdictions on progress in implementing NASCO's agreements

- 2.4 This Special Session provided the Parties with an opportunity to compare experiences in development of their Implementation Plans and to receive feedback on the progress to date. During this Special Session, presentations were made by Canada, the European Union (Finland, Ireland, Sweden, United Kingdom - Scotland, England and Wales), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the USA. There were no presentations by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and a number of European Union Member States. Draft Implementation Plans were tabled by Canada, European Union (Finland), European Union (Ireland), European Union (UK – England and Wales), European Union (UK – Scotland), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the USA. The final plans should be submitted by October 2006 for review during November 2006 – March 2007.

Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers of Transgenics

- (a) *Amendments to the Williamsburg Resolution*
- 2.5 At its 2003 Annual Meeting the Council had 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, CNL(03)57. In adopting the Williamsburg Resolution the Council had recognized that it was a “living document” that could evolve in future. In 2004 the Council had adopted a new definition of “transgenic” and had amended the Guidelines for Action on Transgenic Salmon. The Council had also adopted Guidelines for Stocking Atlantic Salmon. In 2005, the

Council had agreed that the Memorandum of Understanding between Canada and the US with regard to introductions and transfers be appended to the Resolution.

- 2.6 Following adoption of the Williamsburg Resolution concerns had been raised by the salmon farming industry that due process had not been followed in its development. Comments on the Williamsburg Resolution had been received from the International Salmon Farmers' Association (ISFA) and the Council had asked that the Secretary develop a response to these comments in consultation with the Parties, which had been sent to the President of ISFA on 8 November 2005. Subsequently at the meeting between the ISFA and the NASCO Secretariats, ISFA had indicated that it could accept the proposals from NASCO with some exceptions. Details of the proposed changes to the Williamsburg Resolution, taking into account the comments from ISFA, the responses from NASCO, and the discussions at the meeting between ISFA and the NASCO Secretariat, were presented. The Council agreed to these changes and asked that the Secretariat issue the revised Resolution as a brochure.

(b) *Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry*

- 2.7 In accordance with the decision of Heads of Delegations, a meeting between representatives ISFA and the NASCO Secretariat was held in Brussels on 9 May 2006. The report of the meeting was presented. The Council agreed to the recommendation in the report to hold a full Liaison Group meeting over one and a half days immediately prior to the Boston Seafood Show (11-13 March 2007). The Council also agreed to the proposals for follow-up action in the light of the Trondheim and Bergen meetings, and asked that the Secretary liaise with the President of ISFA in developing the agenda for the meeting.

- 2.8 The Council noted that ISFA had proposed that a representative of WWF (US) be admitted as an NGO representative to future Liaison Group meetings. The Council also noted that the NASCO representatives, while welcoming this change of attitude, had suggested that it would be appropriate for the Chairman of NASCO's NGOs to be the representative on the Liaison Group, together with a representative of WWF (US). The Council supported this approach, and asked the Secretary and Chairman of the Liaison Group to liaise with ISFA on this matter.

(c) *Reports on Trondheim and Bergen meetings*

- 2.9 Reports were presented on the Liaison Group Workshop 'Wild and Farmed Salmon – Working Together' and the ICES/NASCO Symposium 'Interactions between aquaculture and wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fish species: Science and Management, Challenges and Solutions'. These meetings had been held in 2005 in Trondheim and Bergen, respectively. Norway indicated that the ICES/NASCO Symposium had provided a platform for future efforts to minimise impacts of aquaculture and there had been new initiatives in Norway to minimise escapes.

International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB)

- 2.10 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. The Council reviewed the report of the Fifth Meeting of the Board. The Board had updated its inventory of research related to salmon mortality in the sea, had received advice from its Scientific Advisory Group, and had developed and adopted a proposal for the way forward to promote the SALSEA programme and its realisation. This included the establishment of a Steering Committee, obtaining professional expertise to produce the case for support and a marketing package, seeking some early buy-in and contributions and requesting the Parties to ensure that access to vessel time is given a higher priority for 2008/2009 to realise SALSEA. The Board had also considered a number of finance and administrative issues.

Impacts of Acid Rain

- 2.11 Reports on acid rain were presented by Canada, the US and Norway.

New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management

- 2.12 In accordance with the Strategic Approach for NASCO's Next Steps, this item had been included on the agenda for the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting and ICES had been requested to provide relevant information. The Russian Federation reported on a continuing programme to study by-catch of salmon post-smolts in pelagic fisheries in the Norwegian Sea. The results of this study indicated that the by-catch of post-smolts and adult salmon is low. Reference was made to the need to raise public awareness of the threats from *G. salaris* and to continue to make progress through the Liaison Group on the issue of genetic impacts from farmed fish.

Report of the Working Group on Bio-economic Modelling

- 2.13 At its last meeting, the Council had agreed that a Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting should be held to consider the development of a bio-economic model. The intention is to schedule a TWG meeting in 2007 following preparations by the participants.

Progress with Development of the Database of Salmon Rivers

- 2.14 During 2004/2005, the US had developed a web-based database based on the inventory format proposed in the NASCO Plan of Action for Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat. Following testing, this database had been made available for data entry by NASCO's Parties and in 2004 the Council agreed that:

- the Parties should update the original NASCO salmon rivers database information annually (via the expanded web-based database) to correct errors and inaccuracies and to ensure the specific information conformed to the new

format. It was recognised that this process should not involve a significant amount of time and effort;

- the Parties should consider using the database to report basic salmon habitat and habitat impact information;
- as data and resources permit, the Parties should enter generalised juvenile and adult salmon production data; although such data entry would be optional, it would be of benefit to the database.

2.15 In 2006, the Council agreed that the database should be transferred to the NASCO website. A report on progress was presented. The transfer of the database is now complete and, after re-design of the appearance of the web pages, the database is available for data entry by the Parties. The Council encouraged the Parties to undertake the tasks identified above as resources permit.

St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

2.16 A report on the sampling programme at St Pierre and Miquelon in 2005, information on the regulatory framework for managing the fishery and details of licences issued and catches was made available to the Council. In this document the French authorities indicated that they have continued to pursue the commitment made with regard to gathering scientific information on salmon stocks at St Pierre and Miquelon and with regard to management and conservation efforts. It is the intention to put in place a procedure with a view to reducing the number of permits granted and hence reduce progressively the catches made on fragile North American stocks. The Council welcomed the continuing cooperation from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon). The Secretary was asked to convey appreciation to the French authorities for their continuing cooperation and to continue to invite them to participate in future NASCO meetings.

Catch Statistics and their Analysis

2.17 The official catch returns by the Parties for 2005, and historical data for the period 1960-2005, were presented. Information provided by the Parties on unreported catches was tabled. This indicated that in 2005 the unreported catches were between 584-807 tonnes compared to a preliminary reported catch of 2,117 tonnes. The Council welcomed this information which presented the data in a transparent manner. The Council recognised the importance of a further exchange of information among the Parties on unreported catches and agreed to hold a Special Session on this topic at its Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting. The Secretary was asked to develop a proposal for this Special Session and liaise with the Parties on the arrangements.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

2.18 Reports on scientific research fishing conducted since the last Annual Meeting were presented by Canada and Norway.

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

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

Scientific Advice

- 2.20 The report of the ICES Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM) was presented. The Council reviewed a discussion document on the options for amending the form and nature of the request for scientific advice in the event that multi-annual regulatory measures are agreed. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES to be presented in 2007. The priority should be to develop the framework of indicators and to provide the catch advice.
- 2.21 The Council asked the Secretary to liaise with ICES regarding the new MoU. Whilst it was generally acceptable, there was one element missing which was to cover the situation where NASCO did not ask for catch advice. The Council felt that ways should be explored to obtain information brought to the Working Group by the Parties without the peer review process and without the associated costs, which could usefully release funds to the SALSEA programme. The Council reiterated its appreciation of ICES' work, particularly on the catch advice. There was no doubt that advice would always be needed but not necessarily every year.

Election of Officers

- 2.22 The Council unanimously re-elected Dr Ken Whelan (European Union) as President and Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland) as Vice-President.

Other Issues

- 2.23 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.24 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below).
- 2.25 The Council adopted a report to the Parties on the activities of the Organization in 2005.
- 2.26 Since the last Annual Meeting of the Council, one new non-government organization, Stop Salmon Drift Nets Now (Ireland), had been granted observer status. In addition, the Atlantic Salmon Federation (US and Canada) and WWF (US) had been readmitted as observers following their acceptance of the conditions. The Council welcomed these observer organizations.
- 2.27 The winner of the \$2,500 Grand Prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Roald Somby, Alta, Norway.
- 2.28 The Council accepted an invitation from the US to hold its Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting in Bar Harbor, USA, during 4-8 June 2007. The Council decided to hold its Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting during 2-6 June 2008 in Edinburgh or elsewhere at the invitation of a Party.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Saariselkä, Finland, during the period 5-9 June 2006 under the Chairmanship of Mr George Lapointe (USA).

Review of the 2005 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2005 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. Canada referred to its continuing efforts to manage the Labrador Aboriginal food, social and ceremonial coastal fishery. The catch of multi-sea-winter salmon had been reduced by 20% in 2005 through a combination of the timing of the fishery, mesh size and the use of log books. Current negotiations were aimed at further reducing the exploitation of multi-sea-winter salmon in this fishery and gathering additional catch data. The Commission agreed a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2007.

Review of the 2006 Salmon Management Measures

- 3.3 Canada and the US presented reports on Atlantic salmon management measures and research activities.

St Pierre and Miquelon Fishery

- 3.4 Information was presented on salmon fishing activities and the scientific monitoring programme for salmon at St Pierre and Miquelon. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) reaffirmed its commitment to reduce the licences and catch levels for this fishery and acknowledged the need for additional genetic information on the fish harvested.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.5 Under the MoU signed between Canada and the US in 2005, the Parties agree to share information should decisions be made that potentially affect the other Party. There had been a meeting of the two Parties with discussions that included aquaculture issues such as mandatory reporting of losses.

Election of Officers

- 3.6 The Commission unanimously re-elected Mr George Lapointe (USA) as Chairman and Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada) as Vice-Chairman.

Other Issues

- 3.7 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Harrison C Noyes, Mystic, Connecticut, USA.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Saariselkä, Finland, during the period 5-9 June 2006 under the Chairmanship of Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway).

Review of the 2005 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission reviewed the 2005 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Commission agreed a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2007.

Risk of Transmission of Gyrodactylus salaris in the Commission Area

- 4.3 The Commission reviewed the report of its Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris*. The Group had met in Oslo in March 2006 and had provided an excellent forum for cooperation and sharing of information on this very damaging parasite. Information presented to the Working Group indicated that the annual economic losses caused by the parasite in Norway had been estimated at approximately £25 million and the additional annual cost of treating the parasite was estimated to be about £3.7 million. The Working Group had considered information from the European Commission which indicated that the level of Community protection against the importation of *G. salaris* has not been diminished under the new EU Fish Health Directive. The Working Group had concluded that this would only be the case if the existing Additional Guarantees were permanently adopted under the new Directive rather than being subject to review. One of the major outputs of the Working Group meeting was the preparation of guidelines for establishing contingency plans for the treatment, containment and eradication of *G. salaris*. Furthermore, the Working Group had considered the implications of the Biocides Directive (98/8/EC) for the treatment of *G. salaris*. Following clarification about protection measures in the draft EU Fish Health Directive, and on the conditions governing imports of live rainbow trout from Finland to Russia, the Commission adopted the recommendations in the Working Group report.

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

- 4.4 At its 2003 meeting, the Commission had agreed to a proposal for a pilot project involving simulated escapes of tagged farmed salmon in countries with salmon farming. In April 2006, 680 large tagged farm salmon were released on the west coast of Scotland and in mid-May 600 large tagged farmed salmon were released from a site in Norway. These fish, which averaged 5kg in weight, are expected to mature in autumn 2006. Two tags from the Norwegian experiment had been recovered in the area of release and further recoveries are expected during the summer and autumn in the salmon fisheries. More detailed results from the project will be presented at the Commission's Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting. ICES had designed the experiment with two phases, an initial pilot project and a more extensive project involving the release of larger numbers of farmed salmon. It was noted that large releases may create greater difficulties for participation in the project for some countries.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.5 The Commission adopted a Decision regarding the Faroese salmon fishery for 2007 with possible application in 2008 and 2009 provided that ICES develops a framework of indicators that is accepted by the Commission as a means of identifying any significant changes in the multi-annual advice. Under this Decision the Commission decided not to set a quota for the Faroe Islands salmon fishery on the basis that the Faroe Islands will manage any salmon in accordance with the advice from ICES regarding the stocks contributing to the Faroese salmon fishing in a precautionary manner and with a view to sustainability, taking account of relevant factors, such as socio-economic needs.

Election of Officers

- 4.6 The Commission unanimously re-elected Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway) as Chairman. The Commission elected Mr Kaj Mortensen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-Chairman.

Other Issues

- 4.7 The winner of the Commission's \$1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Gjermund Frisvoll, Eresfjord, Norway.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Saariselkä, Finland, during the period 5-9 June 2006 under the Chairmanship of Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada).

Review of the 2005 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 2005 fishery at West Greenland and considered the scientific advice from ICES. A report on the 2005 fishery at West Greenland was tabled. The Commission adopted a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2007.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.3 The Commission adopted a regulatory measure for the fishing of salmon at West Greenland for 2006 with possible application in 2007 and 2008 provided that ICES develops a framework of indicators that is accepted by the Commission as a means of identifying any significant changes in the multi-annual advice. Under this measure the 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 annually, and there will be no commercial export of salmon.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.4 The results of the sampling programme at West Greenland in 2005 were presented. The Commission agreed a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2006.

Election of Officers

- 5.5 The Commission elected Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada) as Chairman, and Mr Alan Gray (European Union) as Vice-Chairman, both to serve for two years.

Other Issues

- 5.6 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Nikatius Kielsen, Qaqortoq, Greenland.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council under the acting Chairmanship of the Vice-Chairman, Dr Boris Prischepa (Russian Federation).

Relationship with ICES

- 6.2 The Council had previously agreed that NASCO's present MoU with ICES would be renewed until the end of 2006. In addition, NASCO had agreed in 2004 to pay a share, annually, of the stipend to the Chairman of the ACFM. ICES had developed a new draft MoU to apply from 2007. The main changes in this MoU were the inclusion, in the elements for which NASCO is charged, of this share of the stipend for the Chairman of the ACFM. The second change was the inclusion of a contribution to ICES' quality assurance programme, which results in an increase in NASCO's payment of approximately £6,000 per annum. A third change was that the MoU will be reviewed every three years whereas the previous MoU was for a fixed three-year period. The Committee agreed that one aspect that needs to be addressed in the new MoU is the situation in which NASCO agrees multi-annual regulatory measures and decides not to request advice from ICES in a particular year. The Secretary indicated that he had written to the General Secretary of ICES to advise him that NASCO's interpretation of the MoU is that if NASCO decides not to request advice from ICES in a particular year, no payment would fall due under the MoU.
- 6.3 The Committee accepted the inclusion of the costs of the quality assurance scheme in the MoU but agreed to review the arrangements in light of consultations between the Secretary and ICES with respect to these costs.
- 6.4 Following some proposed minor amendments, which the Secretary was asked to resolve with ICES, the Committee agreed to recommend adoption of the MoU by the Council.

2007 Budget

- 6.5 The Committee decided that the period for building the Working Capital towards the target of £200,000 set by the Council should be extended from 2008 to 2010 to reduce the immediate financial burden on the Parties.
- 6.6 The Committee considered the implications for the NASCO budget of multi-annual regulatory measures and multi-annual requests for advice to ICES and noted that the Council had previously agreed to continue to budget for the payment to ICES and in the event that there is no request for scientific advice from ICES, any sum saved would be allocated to the Working Capital Fund.
- 6.7 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2007 Budget and Schedule of Contributions.

Audited Accounts

- 6.8 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2005 audited accounts and the re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers of Queen Street, Edinburgh, as auditors for the 2006 audited accounts, or such other company as may be agreed by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee. The Secretary was asked to consider the pros and cons of changing auditors and to report back to the Committee at its next meeting.

Election of Officers

- 6.9 The Committee unanimously elected Dr Boris Prischepa (Russian Federation) as Chairman and Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland) as Vice-Chairman.

Secretary
Edinburgh
11 April 2007