

Agenda item 6.3
For decision

Council

CNL(08)14

Progress Report on Implementing a Public Relations Strategy for NASCO

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Progress Report on Implementing a Public Relations Strategy for NASCO

1. One of the themes of the Strategic Approach for NASCO's 'Next Steps' was the need for the Organization to better promote its work and achievements. Last year the Council received a report, CNL(07)16, from its Public Relations Group which had been asked to develop a clear public relations strategy aimed at enhancing NASCO's profile and ensuring the most effective publicity. In the light of the Group's findings the Council decided that, in the first instance, it would upgrade and improve the websites of NASCO and the IASRB and would develop a model 'State of the Salmon Stocks' document which would be easy to comprehend and attractively produced. The Council had also asked that the Parties provide details of educational programmes concerning wild Atlantic salmon for inclusion in a database of such programmes. This document summarises progress to date with these initiatives to enhance NASCO's profile.
2. During the year, there has been greater publicity for NASCO's work concerning salmon at sea. First, there was a joint one-day meeting organised with the Atlantic Salmon Trust that was held in Edinburgh on 17 October 2007. Second, the launch of the SALSEA-Merge project in Killybegs, Ireland on 16 May. Both events attracted considerable media attention. The Faroese, Norwegian and Canadian research cruises later this year and other work under the SALSEA Programme may also provide good opportunities for media coverage.

Improving the websites

3. The PR Group recommended that the Organization's websites should be our major medium and that in re-designing these the focus should be on making them more attractive to users, more informative and useful to stakeholders with improved links to other organizations. Efforts should also be made to increase the visibility of both websites by registering them with appropriate search engines. In the case of the NASCO site it was recognised that inclusion of the rivers database was a step forward and that the database of educational programmes should be included.
4. We have now completed the re-design of the website of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board, www.salmonatsea.int. We have improved its appearance through a more contemporary design, greater use of photographs, more background information on the problems facing salmon at sea and detailed descriptions of the SALSEA Programme and progress to date, in particular with the SALSEA-Merge project and the North American SALSEA initiatives. The number of links has also been increased. It is still a work in progress and it will be expanded and developed further as the SALSEA-Merge and North American initiatives progress. Additional background information and further links will be included. With regard to increased visibility for the site, we have taken technical advice so as to achieve this. Separate searches using 'salmon research' and 'SALSEA' resulted in the IASRB's

website being listed first out of up to 600,000 sites. We have received a number of favourable comments on the new site.

5. Work has now commenced on re-designing the NASCO site. This will be a larger undertaking although we intend to use a similar layout and design. We intend to structure the site around the key challenges identified in the Strategic Approach for NASCO (CNL(05)49) so as to provide the background to the issues and the actions being taken by NASCO and its Parties. Our aim is to have this site completed in the Autumn. We would very much appreciate photographs of salmon rivers, salmon fishing methods, research facilities and field work, and of the life stages of salmon etc for inclusion on the site. All material used will be acknowledged.

Education Programmes

7. We have received information from the following Parties and jurisdictions:
 - Canada
 - EU (France, Ireland and UK)
 - USA
8. A database of these programmes has been created and it will be made available on the new NASCO website. Information on a total of 25 programmes has been provided although for some only the programme's name is currently available. Some information was provided on higher education courses in fisheries management and aquaculture. This information has not been included to date but it can be added if the Council feels that it is appropriate to do so.

State of Salmon Stocks Report

9. The Public Relations Group had proposed to the Council that a new report, to replace the biennial report, should summarise in a clear and succinct manner the scientific advice concerning status of stocks, provide details of any existing, new or emerging threats to the resource, highlight the measures being taken by NASCO, its Parties and their relevant jurisdictions and accredited NGOs to conserve salmon, and provide details of any new research initiatives. It was further suggested that this should be an annual report that is well presented (including information presented in a pictorial and graphical form) that would be made available on the website for downloading. The Group believed that it would be cost-effective to make this annual report available on the website although it recognised that hard copies would be needed for media packs. The Group considered that the launch of this annual state of the salmon report should be newsworthy and attract media interest and could be the centrepiece of the PR strategy.
10. It is clear from views expressed to the Secretariat that there are some different opinions about the format of this report. While some appear to favour a relatively short paper others have referred to the 172 page booklet prepared by WWF in 2001 entitled 'The Status of Wild Atlantic Salmon: A River by River Assessment' as being a model to follow. The Secretariat is asked to develop a model 'State of the Salmon Stocks' document and it would assist us in that role if the Council could provide further guidance on the preferred format. The PR Group had suggested that this be an annual report which would perhaps suggest that a shorter format would be more appropriate. Turning to the elements that might be included these might be as follows:

(a) ***Status of Wild Atlantic salmon stocks***

This should be a brief, easily understandable summary of the current ICES advice and/or information provided in the Implementation Plans and the Annual Reports on these Plans. It should be free of scientific jargon (or clearly explain any terms used). This can lead to over-simplification but there would be liberal use of graphs and/or tables.

(b) ***Threats to the resource***

This section would draw on the information provided in the Implementation Plans. It could also draw on information on new or emerging threats as this is now an item on the Council's agenda with an annual request to ICES for information. Some threats, such as increased marine mortality, apply around the North Atlantic, while others may be specific to certain countries or regions.

(c) ***Overview of Management***

This section could summarise the management responses being taken or proposed both by NASCO and its Parties to address the threats identified in section (b). It would draw heavily on the information in the Implementation Plans, the Focus Area Reports and the Annual Reports. It could be structured along the lines of the Implementation Plans with information on management of fisheries; habitat protection and restoration; and impacts of aquaculture and there could be greater focus on each of these in different years in accordance with the cycle of FAR reporting.

(d) ***Ongoing Research***

This section could draw heavily on the IASRB's inventory but also on the information provided by ICES.

(e). ***Socio-Economic Values***

This section would summarise, again in easily understood terms, what is known about the social and economic values to society of the wild stocks. We already have a breakdown of the nature of all these values and the Working Group on Socio-economics has started the task of establishing an international data resource on social and economic information

11. The above five elements could form the basis for the "State of Salmon Stocks" report. These are very much initial ideas and we would welcome feedback from the Council both on the format and contents before proceeding further. If the Council agrees, a draft based on the information available to the Secretariat, could then be prepared and circulated over the winter with a view to updating it in the light of next years advice from ICES so that it can be made available to the media around the time of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting.

Conclusions

12. On these PR initiatives we need to resolve the role of our NGOs. Their experience on the PR Group was invaluable and we have had joint PR initiatives with them since. I am aware from their Chairman, Chris Poupard, that they are able and willing to assist NASCO in this regard and in being more proactive in planning PR opportunities. It may be that there should be an informal network, perhaps including the NGO representatives who served on the PR Group and the Secretariat, which could communicate as necessary on all of the issues above and be proactive in identifying media opportunities.
13. Our experience with a pilot PR exercise conducted in the UK in 2005/2006 was that while media coverage undoubtedly did increase public awareness of NASCO's work, some articles in the popular press were inaccurate and focussed only on particular aspects where there might be conflict, such as the impacts of aquaculture. There will, therefore, be a need to ensure that messages such as Press Releases are supported by factual material on the organization's website. International Organizations like NASCO need to foster and maintain a reputation for factual and non-sensational publicity. Many elements of the popular press do not respond to this approach and our audience is probably best reached through excellent websites and more specialist journals, publications and symposia.

Secretary
Edinburgh
27 May 2008.