

CNL(08)33

Council

***Focus Area Report on Protection, Restoration
and Enhancement of Salmon Habitat***

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The first phase of the Next Steps process focused on the development of Implementation Plans by the Parties. The *Ad Hoc* Review Committee that met in March 2006 reviewed these plans for uniformity with the Council's Guidelines for their preparation NSTF (06)10, and assessed how well the plans would lend themselves to evaluation in relation to NASCO's Resolution and Agreements.

Under the 'Next Steps' process, Focus Area Reports (FARs) (as described in NSTF(06)10) are intended to provide an in-depth assessment of measures, as reflected in Implementation Plans, to implement NASCO Agreements, Resolutions, and Guidelines. The FARs provide the basis for review of the current management approach and proposed actions and to assess their efficacy in addressing the overall objectives of NASCO and in particular, to conserve, restore and enhance salmon stocks.

The 'Next Steps' process identified three focus areas: Fisheries Management, Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat, and Aquaculture and associated activities. The Fisheries Management Focus Area Review was conducted in 2007/2008 and the second focus area is scheduled for 2008/2009. The second focus area selected is protection, restoration and enhancement of salmon habitat.

The primary relevant NASCO document is the "Plan of Action for the Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat", CNL(01)51. This Plan of Action identifies that NASCO's overall objective is to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat. Furthermore, Contracting Parties have agreed that they and their relevant jurisdictions should seek to:

- Protect the current productive capacity of the existing physical habitat of Atlantic salmon; and
- Restore, in designated areas; the productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat which has been adversely impacted.

Focus Area Report on Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Salmon Habitat

Each Party or Jurisdiction will prepare a Focus Area Report by December 31, 2008, to provide an in-depth assessment of progress made and/or planned to address the elements identified within the Plan of Action. The proposed structure and contents of the Focus Area Report are as follows:

1. Introduction: Provide an overview of salmon rivers within the jurisdiction, with a map.
2. Describe the current status of salmon habitat and specify, to the extent possible, the quantity and quality of salmon habitat (historic and current).

3. Describe the process for identifying and designating priority/key habitat areas or issues to be addressed.
4. Describe the activities and approaches used to share and exchange information on habitat issues, and best management practices, between relevant bodies within the jurisdiction.
5. Description of Plans: Describe work undertaken and/or planned to establish comprehensive salmon habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement plans, and the extent to which these plans:
 - a. Identify impacts and potential risks to the productive capacity;
 - b. Include procedures for implementation, in a timely fashion, of corrective measures;
 - c. Place the burden of proof on proponents of an activity which may have an impact on habitat;
 - d. Address how the risks and the benefits to the Atlantic salmon stocks are weighed with the socio-economic implications of any given project;
 - e. Consider the effects of habitat activities on biodiversity in the area affected; and
 - f. Take into account other biological factors affecting the productive capacity of Atlantic salmon populations.
6. Overview of Ongoing Habitat Activities: Summarize ongoing or planned habitat work to demonstrate progress in implementing the salmon habitat protection, restoration and enhancement plans identified above in item 5. Where possible, quantify the extent to which habitat has been restored or enhanced, or describe other criteria used to evaluate progress.

The *Ad Hoc* Review Group for the Focus Area Review on Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Salmon Habitat

The *Ad Hoc* Review Group shall:

1. Review and analyze the Focus Area Reports on Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Habitat.
2. Prepare a report which includes the following:
 - a. Identification of common challenges in the FARs;
 - b. Identification of common management and scientific approaches to challenges, as reported in the FARs;
 - c. Compilation of recommended best practice with the intention of increasing the collaborative learning aspect of the ‘Next Steps’ Process; and
 - d. Recommendations and/or feedback for each FAR where additional actions may be helpful to ensure consistency with the “Plan of Action for the Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat.”

The procedure the *Ad Hoc* Review Group will use to accomplish its work is as follows:

1. Meet in February 2009 to review the Focus Area Reports submitted, collaborate to highlight questions and/or issues to be sent back to the Parties/Jurisdictions by March 1, 2009. These answers should assist the *Ad Hoc* Review Group in preparing their report as outlined in item 2 above. Responses would be due from the Parties/Jurisdictions by April 1, 2009.
2. Provide a draft report, as described in item 2, by May 15, 2009 for circulation to contracting Parties prior to the annual meeting.
3. Present an overview of the draft report at the Special Session at the 2009 Annual Meeting, and facilitate a discussion on the five areas identified above in item 2. Parties and jurisdictions will not be expected to present their FAR during the Special Session, but may be asked to present information at the request of the *Ad Hoc* Review Group.
4. Following the Special Session, prepare a final report for submission to the President by August 31, 2009.

Composition of the *Ad Hoc* Review Committee

- a. The Parties to NASCO – 3 persons (to the extent possible reflecting balance among the membership and appropriate expertise);
- b. The Standing Scientific Committee – 1 person;
- c. Accredited NGO representatives – 2 persons (ideally one NGO from Europe and one from North America)

For 2008/2009, it was agreed that the persons representing NASCO would be Tony Blanchard (Canada), Paddy Gargan (EU), Sergei Prusov (Russian Federation) and Rory Saunders (USA). The NGO representatives will be nominated before 31 December 2008.

The Secretary should act as *Ad Hoc* Review Group Coordinator. The individuals appointed by Parties should act in the interests of NASCO and in a personal capacity, specifically not representing their Party.

2. Schedule of Work

December 31, 2008	Parties submit Focus Area Reports
January 2009	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Review Group members review FARs
February 2009:	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Review Group meets to finalise review of FARs

March 1, 2009:	Questions and Issues sent back to Parties/Jurisdictions on their FARs
April 1, 2009	Reponses due back from the Parties/Jurisdictions to Review Group
April 2009:	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Review Group conducts review of responses to see if questions were addressed and prepares draft report to the Council and for discussion at the Special Session
May 15, 2009:	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Review Group provides draft report to the Secretariat for distribution prior to the annual meeting
June 2009:	Special Session
August 31, 2009	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Review Group submits final report to the President

Annex: Text from the Habitat Plan of Action

NASCO, its Contracting Parties and their relevant jurisdictions should measure and improve progress in meeting this objective by:

- Establishing inventories of rivers for the protection and restoration of salmon habitat (See Annex 2);
- Regularly reporting on, and updating, these inventories;
- Identifying and designating priority/key habitats for improvement; and
- Sharing and exchanging information on habitat issues and best management practice.

Contracting Parties to NASCO and their relevant jurisdictions should establish comprehensive salmon habitat protection and restoration plans that aim to:

- Identify potential risks to the productive capacity and develop procedures for implementation, in a timely fashion, of corrective measures;
- Place the burden of proof on proponents of an activity which may have an impact on habitat;
- Balance the risks and the benefits to the Atlantic salmon stocks with the socio-economic implications of any given project;
- Maintain diversity;
- Take into account other biological factors affecting the productive capacity of Atlantic salmon populations, including predator-prey interactions.

In developing and implementing these inventories and plans, NASCO, its Contracting Parties and their relevant jurisdictions should seek to:

- Protect the current productive capacity of the existing physical habitat of Atlantic salmon;
- Restore, in designated areas, the productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat which has been adversely impacted.