

CNL(18)41

Summary of discussions during the Special Session on the Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports (APRs) under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans

Bill Hicks (Salmon and Trout Conservation UK): stated that he had two points to make regarding the very important tables that form part of Annex 2 of the Review Group's report. He hoped that his comments might make the tables more 'user-friendly' for those not familiar with the IP process. Firstly, he noted that the first column referred to an 'Action' number, such as F1 or F2, but there was no description of the Action and the table must be read in conjunction with the IP to find out what the Action referred to. He suggested that a short 'tag' description be added so that it was immediately obvious what the Action referred to and whether it was of interest to the reader. Secondly, he stated that it might be helpful to highlight in the second column whether or not progress was evaluated as being satisfactory. He recognised that the third column explains why progress is unsatisfactory but felt that it may be more transparent to highlight whether or not it was satisfactory in the second column.

Rory Saunders (United States of America / Chair of the Review Group): thanked Mr Hicks for his suggestions and stated that it would be worthwhile to keep a note of them for future Review Groups.

Kim Damon-Randall (United States of America): congratulated EU – UK (Northern Ireland) for their updated IP and the new actions in their APR. She noted that this is an important step as it helps to ensure that the IP process really attains the objective of being transparent.

Torfinn Evensen (Norske Lakseelver): referred to Action A1 of the Norwegian APR regarding how sea lice affect wild salmonids. He asked what options there are for growth in fish farms if the sea lice are impacting negatively on wild salmonids and whether the limit values for effects are in accordance with the National Quality Norm for Wild Salmonids?

Heidi Hansen (Norway): replied that, according to the traffic light system, if estimated mortality related to sea lice is below 10%, a 6% increase in production will be allowed. If the estimate of mortality is between 10% and 30%, no general increase in production is allowed. If estimated mortality is higher than 30%, a mandatory reduction of 6% of the production is enforced. While the mandatory reduction was not enforced in the first round, the intention is that it will be enforced from 2019 and onwards where estimated mortality is over 30%. Both the Quality Norm and traffic light systems are quite new and are being implemented for the first time. She recognised that there does appear to be a discrepancy between the two systems, but the issues need to be worked on and resolved for the two systems to function well together.

Andrew Graham-Stewart (Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland): stated that it was clear that the Review Group was not impressed by EU – UK (Scotland)'s APR. The Group had used the wording 'it is not clear how this Action furthers NASCO's goals specifically in the protection of wild salmon' on no less than 12 occasions. He indicated that his question related to what he saw as a bizarre and important omission from Scotland's APR: there was no mention of the new sea lice policy announced by the Scottish Government at NASCO's 2016 Annual Meeting. That policy had been agreed without consulting wild fish interests. The policy's extremely high upper limit of 8 lice per farmed fish, which is intended to trigger an Enforcement Notice, is considerably higher than those used in other countries, including countries with no wild salmon stocks. He further noted that this limit is frequently exceeded, by as high as 29 lice, yet only one Enforcement Notice has been issued to-date and there have

been no enforced harvests. He felt that the new policy undermines the considerably lower limit in the industry's own Code of Good Practice, yet in 2016 it was launched with great fanfare as progress towards the international goal for sea lice. The recent Scottish Parliamentary Inquiry concluded that the *status quo* was not an option and that new and effective regulations are required. He asked if the Scottish Government could therefore confirm that the Scottish Government is committed to the international goals agreed by NASCO and the International Salmon Farmers Association of 'no increase in sea lice loads or lice induced mortality of wild salmonids attributable to the farms' and that, consistent with the findings in the Parliamentary Inquiry and in order to meet its international obligations, the Scottish Government will immediately implement strong actions to protect wild salmonids from the impacts of sea lice and escapes from salmon farms, including Actions in its 2019 Implementation Plan?

Jeff Gibbons (European Union – UK (Scotland)): thanked Mr Graham-Stewart for his wide-ranging question. He clarified that the Scottish Parliamentary Inquiries had not yet concluded and noted that the Scottish Government was awaiting the outcome of the second part of the process before determining how to respond to emerging recommendations. He indicated that the Cabinet Secretary had made it abundantly clear that the challenges facing the sector in Scotland are not acceptable and the *status quo* cannot remain in place. He has put in place various actions, not least a recently published 10-year Farmed Fish Health Strategy which will begin to push the sector to address the number of emerging and future issues that they face. This includes a commitment to review the sea lice compliance policy in July 2018 when it will have reached its annual birthday. The concerns being raised both by the Parliamentary process and by some of the NGOs, including Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland, regarding not only the intent of that policy but also the measures that are taken when there are breaches, will be considered at that point. He also noted that eleven warning letters, one advisory letter and one Enforcement Notice have been issued and stated that this can be measured in two ways: either there are significant issues or the policy has enforced some radical change in the sector. He further indicated that the policy was designed for the management of the health and well-being of fish on the farm, and not for wild salmon and that the Code of Good Practice was a different piece of policy, purely related to treatments for farmed fish. He noted that the Scottish Government is clearly committed to its international goals and reiterated that the Cabinet Secretary has clearly stated that the *status quo* is not acceptable. He further stated that a number of additional measures will be undertaken once the Parliamentary Inquiries are concluded and the recommendations are known.

Michael Stinson (Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers): noted from Action A1 of the Irish APR that 20,000 salmon escaped from an aquaculture facility in 2017. The following paragraph of the APR notes that in August 2017, anglers in the west of Ireland began to catch salmon of presumed farm origin. Later genetic analysis of 34 of these fish revealed they were of Norwegian genetic ancestry, not from Irish wild populations or ranched or mitigation strains. He asked if the authorities had identified the source of the fish that were captured in the west of Ireland and whether they were from the 20,000 which escaped in the 2017 incident, or another separate escape. He further noted that the APR states that the Action is on-going but asked what exactly was being done by the authorities with regard to the escapes in 2017.

Cathal Gallagher (European Union – Ireland): thanked Mr Stinson for his question. He noted that, in relation to the origin of the escaped farmed salmon that were captured in the Western River Basin District in 2017, it had not been possible to identify the individual farms involved genetically. However, the reported average weight of the escapees from the large escape event was significantly less than the fish recovered in the Western River Basin District. This indicates that they were at a different stage in the production cycle and were therefore not

the same fish. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the competent authority for the regulation of aquaculture and would be best placed to offer views on what measures have been taken or can be taken, and this will be pursued with them.

Liss-Ellen Ramstad (Sami Parliament Norway): referred to the progress report regarding the River Tana in which it was reported that the revised regulatory regime (as agreed by Norway and EU – Finland), which was designed to reduce exploitation by 30%, was implemented in 2017. She wished to draw attention to some socio-economic issues and stated that the States had failed to report that the agreement will restrict traditional family fishing in the river by as much as 80%. She asked if Norway and Finland would consider also reporting on how regulatory measures affect traditional Sami fishing and also asked NASCO Parties to consider implementing the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Tapio Hakaste (European Union – Finland): replied that the APR states that the aim of the measure is to reduce fishing mortality by 30%, and they have tried to focus the timing of the reduction very precisely so that it will protect the weakest of the approximately 30 salmon stocks in the Tana. He noted that the Tana main stem is actually a mixed-stock fishery, and there is very precise knowledge of when each of the different stocks migrate through the main stem and this is combined with catch data. He indicated that the regulatory measures have been established in such a way that they are effective for the weaker stocks. This means that they are mostly targeted at the beginning of the fishing season, which in turn means they are also targeted at the traditional fishery which occurs at the beginning of the fishing season. During the negotiation process, the aim at all times was to ensure that any new regulations would help the recovery of fish stocks while at the same time enabling the continuation of the traditional fishing methods, albeit with limited fishing times. This was one way of reducing the effect on the traditional fishery. He further noted that there is strong evidence that there should be large-scale reductions in the fishery, yet the regulations have been established to allow recovery of the weakest stocks over 2 salmon generations, which is about 15 years. This decision was also made to reduce the effect on the traditional fishery and to ensure that the traditional fishery could continue during the recovery period. Other options may have allowed a more rapid recovery, but it was important to the traditional fishery to have this long recovery period and this is another way in which a lot of concern has been shown for the traditional fishery. Finally, he referred to the comment that the traditional fishery had been reduced by up to 80% during the recovery period and he indicated that this was not correct. The reductions were made using knowledge and data held on the actual fishery, and the actual effect of different fisheries on mortality. While there have been rather long times when the traditional fishery has been possible, fishing times have been shortened for different gears and this reduction is based on actual fishery data and not on certain dates in the calendar each year.

Raoul Bierach (Norway): stated that Norway has a similar view to that expressed by EU – Finland. He added that as a NASCO Party, Norway is committed to basing its management on the best science available as he hoped everyone in the room would do. With regards to the discrepancy in the figures, the catch must be reduced. He indicated that to reduce the catch, it is necessary to consider how the fishery should be reduced in order to reach the goal of catch reduction. It is the catch reduction that is the focus, and sometimes it may be necessary to reduce the effort by more than 20% in order to achieve a 20% reduction in catch, as the catch is distributed differently throughout the season. During some parts of the season, when catch is low, the nets or days allowed must be reduced by more than 20% in order to achieve a 20% reduction in catch. He stated that the policy in Norway is, foremost, to try to conserve and restore the resource basis for Sami culture and, without the resource, it would not be possible to fish either. It is necessary to ensure carefully that the traditional ways of fishing can go on,

while at the same time rebuilding the stocks. He noted that overfishing for many years has caused this situation and we are now paying the price.

Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation): indicated that he had a question for Norway regarding Action A2 of their Implementation Plan. The Action concerns identifying methods for immediately identifying escaped salmon as a basis for action against ‘leaky’ sites. The progress report provided in the APR indicates that work is being done towards using rare earth elements and DNA testing to identify escaped salmon. Mr Sutton stated that he believed neither of those methods would provide immediate results and that there are other potential methods, such as external marking of fish or fin clipping, and asked whether other, more immediate, methods are being investigated and, if not, why not.

Heidi Hansen (Norway): thanked Mr Sutton for his question. She noted that Norway is not evaluating other methods. The industry is working on a system based on genetic identification methods. She stated that the Norwegian Environment Agency is aware that other methods such as fin clipping or Coded Wire Tags exist and agreed that this could simplify the removal of escapees from the rivers. She thanked Mr Sutton for his suggestions and agreed to pass the information on to the proper authorities.

Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation): indicated that he had a question for Canada regarding Action F2. He referred to an action describing a 3-year containment and eradication plan for invasive small mouth bass in Miramichi Lake. The APR indicates that the original plan was from 2010 – 2012, but 8 years into the plan bass are still in the lake and have not been eradicated. He noted that the progress report this year indicated that the government was working with stakeholders to develop a plan, but his understanding was that a plan had been developed and was more or less ready to go. It had been hoped that the plan would be put into place this summer but it is now too late so it is hoped it can be done in 2019. He indicated that he understood the delay was with Fisheries and Oceans. He asked what was causing the delay and what needs to be done to get the eradication plan in place for next summer?

Serge Doucet (Canada): thanked Mr Sutton for his question. He agreed that the efforts to date had not eradicated small mouth bass from Miramichi Lake, but they had contained it. He indicated that the current plan being proposed for eradication is being evaluated. It is hoped that a decision can be made very soon and stakeholders will be advised of the anticipated plan of action.

Noel Carr (Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers): noted that there are many applications for aquaculture licenses pending and appeals processes underway in Ireland, many from an applicant called Marine Harvest. In their opposition to these licenses, the Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers cited the new technology and approach discussed at the Hardanger fjord Conference where Norsk Industri and Marine Harvest agreed a road map in May 2017 which had very clear specific goals. He asked Norway what the schedule was, and were they currently on schedule.

Raoul Bierach (Norway): agreed that Marine Harvest had presented a very ambitious road map about one year ago. However, it was not something that the authorities have been involved in specifically. He indicated that this is an industry-driven initiative, by one of the big players: the biggest in Norway and probably in the world. He stated that he did not have any detailed information on how the plan was proceeding, as it is not something that is implemented in official Norwegian policies from either the authorities or the Parliament. He noted that it is a very good initiative and, from a wild fish perspective, it would be very good if they were able to reach the goals. However, he indicated that as he represented the wild fish management side, he did not have direct contact with the industry on a daily basis, so he is not very well informed

about how the plan is going. On a more general basis, he was aware that Marine Harvest is trying out both sterile fish in larger-scale production and have several technical trials of closed-containment concepts. As the road map is a private initiative and not something enforced by the authorities, it is not something that the authorities follow closely on a daily basis.

Dwayne Shaw (Downeast Salmon Federation): asked the United States how the prescriptions for fishways on the Union River are scheduled over a 15-year period for additional upstream passage in a situation involving an endangered species - a 'Species in the Spotlight' - and the International Year of the Salmon going forward. He asked if 15 years is considered adequate for the recovery of the species and how these fit into the APR.

Kim Damon-Randall (United States of America): noted that existing authorities are being used. The Endangered Species Act allows only specific things to be done. The authorities are being used to look at the impacts of all projects on wild Atlantic salmon and are trying to ensure that recovery is being worked towards at all times. She indicated that while this is not spelled out specifically in the APR, the APR does address fish passage improvements and the work that is being done across the entire Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic Salmon.

Paul Knight (Salmon and Trout Conservation UK): stated, having been involved in the APR Review Group for a few years, he had observed that quite a few of the APRs just do not provide the information required. He felt that the challenge is now to ensure that the Implementation Plans for the third cycle are correct so that they contain 'SMART' measures. He stated that the most important aspect of these measures would be that they are measurable and that their time is restricted. Then each APR could be used as a milestone along a general strategy towards an objective in 5 years' time, which would be much easier for the Review Group. Most importantly, the whole process would be open and transparent. He continued by referring to what was said in his Opening Statement to the Council: this not about the few, i.e. Greenland and the Faroe Islands, needing to show how they are protecting fish; it is about everybody. He stated that some Parties are not doing this and reiterated that aquaculture is one of the major issues for the next five years. He stated that those Parties and jurisdictions with aquaculture industries must show that they have a responsibility and a genuine commitment, which they signed up to at the NASCO table, to regulating those industries so that they do not impact upon wild fish. He urged the Parties to keep that in mind when discussing the third cycle of Implementation Plans.

Arnaud Peyronnet (European Union): apologised to the Review Group for the late submission of APRs from some EU jurisdictions which meant it was not possible for the Group to complete its work in reviewing these. He indicated that there had been issues with EU – Spain in particular. The information from the devolved regional administrations was not provided to Madrid in time for it to be sent to the Group. He reassured the Parties that this would be followed very closely in future to ensure that there would be timely submission. He also referred to the lack of submission of information from EU – France on aquaculture. In 2017, EU – France had clarified that there was no aquaculture taking place in France and this would be better defined in the next IP cycle.

Rory Saunders (United States of America / Chair of the Review Group): referred to the comment regarding aquaculture in EU – France and noted that the third theme area is aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics. not just fish farming. Therefore, jurisdictions with hatcheries, even conservation hatcheries, should have actions related to those issues.

Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) / President of NASCO): thanked the Review Group for its work and noted that the reports have a very important function in NASCO.