



Agenda item 4.2
For decision

Council

CNL(19)07

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2018

- 1. Introduction**
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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 2018, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

*Report on the Activities of the
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2018*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Government of the United States of America, NASCO held its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting in Portland, Maine, USA. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Council was held during 12 – 15 June 2018 under the Presidency of Mr Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)). Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), four Inter-Governmental Organizations and eighteen accredited Non-Governmental Organizations participated in the meeting.

Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans

- 2.2 The primary purpose of the Annual Progress Reports (APRs) is to provide details of: any changes to the management regimes for salmon and consequent changes to the Implementation Plans (IPs); actions that have been taken under the IPs in the previous year; significant changes to the status of stocks and a report on catches; and actions taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.
- 2.3 The 2018 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by a Review Group. This was done to ensure that Parties / jurisdictions had provided a clear account of progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their IPs, together with the information required under the Convention. The Review Group had provided details of its evaluation of progress on each action in a table at the end of its review, highlighting any shortcomings. The Parties / jurisdictions were asked to address these shortcomings in their 2019 APRs. The report of the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Review Group was presented at a Special Session of the Council during which there were wide-ranging discussions.

Report of the Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of Reports

- 2.4 Given that 2019 will be the last year of reporting under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plan cycle, the Council established a Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of these Reports at its 2017 Annual Meeting. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group were as follows:
- (a) review the Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress, CNL(12)44, and advise on any changes required to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle in order to ensure that reports are meaningful and that unnecessary burden is avoided;

- (b) review the templates for preparation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports, CNL(12)42 and CNL(12)43, and advise on any changes to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle, including options for including reporting under the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery;
- (c) propose a schedule for the development and review of Implementation Plans and submission and review of Annual Progress Reports.
- 2.5 The report of the Working Group was presented. The Working Group had noted that the purpose of developing Implementation Plans is to demonstrate, in a clear and transparent way, the actions that are being taken to implement NASCO agreements to ensure fairness and balance between the measures being taken through binding regulatory measures for the salmon fisheries conducted by the Faroe Islands and Greenland and the conservation measures being taken by other Parties / jurisdictions. The goal of achieving fairness and balance was a key element of the ‘Next Steps for NASCO’ process and is consistent with Article 9 of the NASCO Convention. In 2013, the Council had sought to improve the reporting process in the light of shortcomings identified in the first reporting cycle, rather than considering changes to the Convention (as was recommended by the External Performance Review Panel that evaluated the work of NASCO in 2012). While the second reporting cycle showed considerable improvements over that first cycle, the Working Group noted that the Council had highlighted the need for further improvements. The Working Group agreed and felt that there must be substantial improvements in the quality, transparency, completeness and timeliness of reporting in the third cycle.
- 2.6 The Council agreed that, although the Working Group had made significant progress in improving on the second reporting cycle, there were still improvements required to the Guidelines and templates before it could accept them as the basis for the third reporting cycle.
- 2.7 A way forward was agreed as follows:
- Parties and jurisdictions would provide clear and explicit feedback on the improvements they felt were necessary;
 - the Secretary would condense this feedback to produce a clear statement of work, to be sent to the Parties for their confirmation;
 - the Chair of the Working Group, the Secretary and an NGO co-Chair would form a small group to consider the statement and to make further refinements to the output of the Working Group. The intention was for this second review to be completed by the end of July 2018, if possible.
- 2.8 The second review was completed by the end of July. Responses to the clear and explicit feedback on the necessary improvements received from the Parties and jurisdictions were provided, together with a revised set of documents (Guidelines, Implementation Plan and Annual Progress Report templates).
- 2.9 The Secretary worked with the Heads of Delegations by correspondence and the final documents were agreed in early October. The agreed Guidelines document, CNL(18)49, and the Implementation Plan template, CNL(18)50, were distributed on 11 October.
- 2.10 The Council agreed to appoint the full complement of members to the IP / APR Review Group.

International Year of the Salmon

- 2.11 The Council held a Special Session on progress on planning for the International Year of the Salmon (IYS). A presentation was given highlighting progress made with planning for the IYS and a question and answer session ensued.
- 2.12 Following the question and answer session, and after some discussion, the Council agreed:
- that the Symposium Steering Committee, originally formed to organize an international scientific symposium to launch the IYS, be retasked to deliver a concluding symposium in 2022 and that members of the Committee be agreed by the 2020 Annual Meeting. To enable this, £25,000 would be ring-fenced from the IYS budget to support the delivery of the 2022 symposium;
 - that Parties and jurisdictions would support and facilitate the launch of the IYS by approaching Ministers and Community Leaders to take part in announcing the IYS across the hemisphere at the end of October 2018. The Secretariat would draft a letter from the President to be used by the Parties and jurisdictions to facilitate this;
 - that, given the focus on outreach by NASCO, the NASCO website should be updated using IYS money (approximately £15,000). It was the intention that the redevelopment of the website would be completed by the Secretariat by the first quarter of 2019;
 - that NASCO launch a twitter feed to push information out to partners, Parties, jurisdictions and NGOs so it can be shared with their established social media followings, bearing in mind that this will have a life longer than the IYS;
 - that in order to support Parties, jurisdictions and NGOs with outreach, the Secretariat would develop infographics on wild Atlantic Salmon and photo stories on the topic of ‘salmon and people’. In addition to these being valuable content for use with a variety of media, they will also form part of the State of Salmon report ensuring it is accessible to a wide audience. This content will also be valuable for the NASCO website redevelopment;
 - that the IYS budget would cover the State of Salmon report, identified as a major NASCO output in the IYS;
 - a spending plan for the IYS budget would be prepared by the NASC for agreement by the Parties;
 - Parties / jurisdictions would provide reports on IYS activities to the NASC in 2017, 2018 and 2019;
 - the proposed Programme for the 2019 IYS Symposium to be held in Tromsø.
- 2.13 The Council noted the importance of encouraging researchers to engage in research related to the five themes of the IYS, and, where appropriate, involving researchers from the Pacific in projects and activities. The Council also recommended that the IASRB should be involved in considering any IYS research activities proposed by scientists in the Pacific region relevant to the North Atlantic area.
- 2.14 The Council encouraged the sharing of information on the freshwater environment, using the IYS to highlight the issues faced by wild Atlantic salmon there.

Review of the Procedures Relating to the Work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group

- 2.15 In 2017, the Council asked the Secretary to prepare a review of the procedures relating to the work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB) and its Scientific Advisory Group (SAG). This review was presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting. The IASRB had also considered this matter and had recommended that the Chair of the IASRB should propose new Rules of Procedure and clarify the Terms of Reference for the IASRB and the SAG, in consultation with the Secretary, members of the IASRB and current and past Chairs of the SAG. The European Union stated that it would welcome the opportunity for the Parties to input into the drafting process. Given that the work would be undertaken inter-sessionally, Council requested that this agenda item be retained on the 2019 Council Agenda.

Progress in Implementing the ‘Action Plan for Taking Forward the Recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’, CNL(13)38

- 2.16 The Council received an update on progress in implementing the 2013 ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’. The Council welcomed the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations.
- 2.17 The Council agreed that the process to consider conducting the second External Performance Review of NASCO should commence in 2019, with a view to holding the review in 2021. A document outlining the process for the review will be prepared by the Secretary and presented to the Council in 2019.

Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management

- 2.18 Three new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon had been reported in 2017 / 18.

Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.19 In 2013, the Council had agreed that an item should be retained on its Agenda entitled ‘Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry’, during which a representative of the International Salmon Farmers’ Association (ISFA) would be invited to participate in an exchange of information on issues concerning impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon. ISFA were unable to attend the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting or table a paper.
- 2.20 The Council was advised that the Guidance on Best Management Practices to address impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon stocks, agreed jointly by NASCO and ISFA, is not on the ISFA website. Council asked the Secretary to approach ISFA to request respectfully that they publish the document on their website.

Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.21 A report on the management and sampling of the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon was presented. In 2017, the President had written to France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) expressing NASCO’s concerns and encouraging France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to become a member of NASCO. The French authorities had responded to say that they wished to retain observer status to NASCO and committed to providing NASCO with information on the fishery and taking NASCO recommendations on catch taken by communities dependent on fishing into account.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.22 There were no applications to conduct scientific research fishing in the Convention area during 2017.

Scientific Advice

- 2.23 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2019.

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

- 2.24 ICES presented information on: the presence of *G. salaris* in the Russian Federation and mortalities of salmon in Russian rivers in 2017; disease reports from Sweden; the consequences of poor juvenile recruitment in UK (England and Wales) in 2016; interactions between striped bass and Atlantic salmon in eastern Canada; pink salmon observations in the North Atlantic area in 2017; progress with implementing the Quality Norm for Norwegian salmon populations; advances in genetic stock identification and mixed-stock fishery analysis; progress in stock assessment models; a conceptual framework for evaluating some of the key factors driving marine mortality in Atlantic salmon; sampling, data and archiving of biological scale samples; and progress with establishing scale archive / biochronology repositories. ICES also provided updates on: Red Vent Syndrome; *G. salaris* eradication efforts, sea lice investigations and management in Norway; and opportunities for investigating salmon at sea, including the International Ecosystem Summer Surveys of the Nordic Seas, by-catch of salmon in the Icelandic mackerel fishery, environmental DNA testing, PIT tag screening programmes and tracking and acoustic tagging studies. Relevant information had also been presented in the Summary of Annual Progress Reports.

Election of Officers

- 2.25 The Council re-elected Mr Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its President and elected Mr Serge Doucet (Canada) as its Vice-President.

Reports on NASCO's Activities

- 2.26 The Council adopted a Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2017.
- 2.27 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.28 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below). On the recommendations of the Finance and Administration Committee, the Council agreed: to support the redesign of the NASCO website using monies from the IYS fund if agreed by the NASC, or, if necessary, monies from the Working Capital Fund; to establish a password protected area on the NASCO website to facilitate the sharing of documents among NASCO Parties that are either sensitive or before they have been finalised; and to improve accessibility of FAC documents to the NASCO Parties by posting them on the public part of the NASCO website in advance of the Annual Meeting.
- 2.29 The Council received the report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board.
- 2.30 The Secretary made a report on a number of administrative and procedural matters. There were no changes to the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the

Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions. All contributions for 2018 had been received and there were no arrears. No new information relating to IUU fishing by non-NASCO Parties had been obtained; liaison with NEAFC and NAFO on this matter is ongoing.

Observers

- 2.31 The Council was advised that the Downeast Salmon Federation (USA), the Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers Ireland (European Union – Ireland) and the North Atlantic Salmon Fund US (USA) had been granted observer status to NASCO. This brought the total to 41 NASCO accredited NGOs.

Other Business

- 2.32 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of £1,500 was Mr Ilya Sherbovich of Moscow, Russian Federation.
- 2.33 The Council had previously accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting in Norway. The meeting will be held during 5 – 7 June 2019. The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting in the Faroe Islands during 2 – 5 June 2020.
- 2.34 The Council agreed that the President should write to the relevant authorities in Iceland to express the desire of the NASCO family to respectfully consider them to rejoin the Organization. The Council stated its desire to see them rejoin in 2019, the focal year of the International Year of the Salmon.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Portland, Maine, USA during 12 – 15 June 2018, chaired by Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada).

Review of the 2017 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2017 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. In response to a question from the United States regarding potential management measures to minimise future captures of U.S.-origin fish in the Southern Area, ICES noted that the captures of U.S.-origin fish in the 2017 sampling were separated in time, so a seasonal management approach would be unlikely to address the issue. A geographic movement of the nets could be effective at reducing the risk to U.S.-origin fish. Canada indicated that the fisherman who had harvested the U.S.-origin salmon had been identified and the government was working with the fisherman to move the nets further inshore to avoid those fish and to increase monitoring of the fishery. The NGOs noted concern at the level of sampling in the Labrador fishery, at around 3% to 5% of the aboriginal food fishery, compared to other sampling regimes such as Greenland (approximately 20%) and St Pierre and Miquelon (12%). It was suggested that more intensive sampling effort could reveal more U.S.-, or other, origin fish being harvested in the fishery. ICES responded that more sampling in the Labrador fishery would be beneficial, particularly in the Northern Area. The NGOs also expressed concern about the continuation of a mixed-stock fishery in the Southern Area given the conservation status and that U.S.-origin fish were captured in the area.

The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) presented a report on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery. The Commission was

advised that a limit of 80 recreational licences had been set and that the fishing season had been shortened to end on 21 July. The number of professional licences remained at a total of eight. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had reflected on the letter from NASCO requesting that they join NASCO but would not pursue membership at that time. The reported catch in the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery was 2.8 metric tonnes and it was difficult to estimate the undeclared catch. Sampling had been carried out in the fishery in 2017.

- 3.4 The United States noted the commitment expressed by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) in a recent letter indicating that it would take NASCO recommendations on catch taken in its fishery into account. The United States asked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to provide information on the steps taken, or to be taken, regarding the management of the St Pierre and Miquelon fishery that were viewed by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) as responsive to NASCO. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that a cap on the number of professional licences would be set at nine and the number of recreational licences would be reduced from 80 over time. Licences were retained for a fisher's lifetime, after which it was proposed that they would not be reissued to new fishers.
- 3.5 Canada asked whether France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had considered setting limits on the number of salmon that a fisher can retain. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted that there were limits on mesh size, net size and the length of the fishing season. The NGOs provided examples of other jurisdictions that limit the number of salmon that can be retained by recreational fishers and urged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to consider implementing a limit. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that discussions are ongoing to consider a ceiling on the number of fish that could be caught in the fishery, but these discussions had not yet been concluded.
- 3.6 The United States urged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to reconsider joining NASCO as the competent international organization for the rational management of Atlantic salmon, especially given the mixed-stock interceptory fishery known to take a wide variety of stocks, including some that are identified by ICES as suffering from reduced reproductive capacity.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.7 The United States and Canada presented reports summarising the number of disease incidences, the number of breaches of containment and any introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area.
- 3.8 The NGOs noted that the Atlantic Salmon Federation had been monitoring the fishway on the Magaguadavic River in New Brunswick for more than 20 years and that the river used to support returns of over 1,000 salmon. In 2017, no wild salmon returned to the river, although 17 farmed salmon were documented over a short time period and a number of farmed salmon were also detected at counting fences in Southern Newfoundland. The NGOs noted that, in the past, documentation of 17 escaped salmon in the Magaguadavic River would have been the result of a reportable escape event in the Bay of Fundy. However, the table in Canada's document did not include any report of an escape event from New Brunswick or Newfoundland. The NGOs asked about the quality of reports from the industry and why the Canadian document did not include a reportable escape event for New Brunswick that could account for those 17 salmon in 2017. Canada indicated that enquiries about the quality of industry reports should be

directed at the industry. The Commission was advised that DFO was aware of the observations of escaped farmed salmon in the Magaguadavic River and Newfoundland and was working with the New Brunswick Aquaculture Containment Liaison Committee (which includes DFO Maritime Region, New Brunswick provincial officials, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, Atlantic Canada Fish Farmers Association, Fundy Baykeeper and the New Brunswick Atlantic Salmon Council) on improving management options moving forward. Under the New Brunswick regulation and code of containment, it is not necessary to report escapes of fewer than 100 fish. Canada suggested that such low-level escapes could be the source of the escaped farmed salmon observed in some rivers.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 3.9 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs).
- 3.10 Canada presented a paper which provided a description of the Labrador Subsistence Food Fishery, including information on the management, stock status, the most recent catch data and the sampling programme, as well as the origin and composition of the catches. The NGOs noted that the coastal fishery in southern Labrador, which targets mixed stocks, had been increasing over time and that the tonnage in the 2017 coastal fishery (9.1 tonnes) was the highest on record. Some of the stocks captured in the coastal fishery were not attaining their conservation limits. Canada indicated that it will continue to work with the Indigenous groups in Labrador through the annual food, social and ceremonial fisheries negotiation process on ways to reduce the amount of coastal activity and to mitigate the interception of non-Labrador / non-Canadian fish. Discussions were ongoing to consider moving some of the fishing activity from the coast to Lake Melville. Additional funding had been provided to the NunatuKavut Community Council to enhance sampling in its food, social and ceremonial fishery in 2018.

Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.11 The Commission was advised that information on the sampling programme had been provided in both the ICES report and in the paper on the Labrador subsistence food fishery (see paragraph 3.10 above).
- 3.12 In response to a question from the United States on how Canada planned to address ICES recommendations to improve sampling in the Labrador fishery, Canada noted that sampling was carried out by community members and community officers and was apportioned to the different fishing areas. Canada was considering how sampling could be improved spatially and temporally but had no specific proposals to share.

Other Business

- 3.13 The Commission elected Mr Patrick Keliher (USA) as its Chair and Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada) as its Vice-Chair.
- 3.14 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Tim Doherty, New Brunswick, Canada.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in

Portland, Maine, USA during 12 – 15 June 2018, chaired by Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union).

Review of the 2017 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 4.3 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on MSFs. The European Union, Norway and the Russian Federation tabled papers providing a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.
- 4.4 The European Union stated that several of the remaining EU mixed-stock fisheries are exploiting identified stocks for which conservation limits are being met. There had been a reduction in the mixed-stock fishery catches from 500 t approximately a decade ago, to 50 t currently. The aim is for mixed-stock fishery catch to be under 10 t in the next few years.
- 4.5 The NGOs expressed appreciation for the decision to phase out salmon fishing with nets in European Union – UK (England and Wales). The NGOs also expressed understanding for the reasons given for postponing the implementation of the measure, however they noted the importance of implementing it as soon as possible, and at the latest in 2019. The Commission was advised that a substantial proportion of the total catch from salmon fishing with nets in North-East England is composed of salmon destined for Scotland and, therefore, the implementation of the measure was not only in the interest of European Union – UK (England and Wales). The NGOs also underscored the importance of undertaking research in remaining sea-trout fisheries where salmon are released back to the sea, in order to identify the percentage of fish which survive to spawn in their natal rivers.
- 4.6 The Commission was advised that restricted mixed-stock fisheries were in operation in most fjords and along the Norwegian coast. In several fjords and coastal regions, mixed-stock fisheries have not been permitted for many years due to low target attainment. The total salmon catch in coastal net fisheries in 2017 had increased by 8% from 2016. Mixed-stock fisheries were still most extensive in Finnmark County where the catches increased by 23% compared to 2016. No in-season measures were considered necessary in mixed-stock fisheries in 2017. As a new tool in fisheries management, rules for mandatory continuous reporting of catches in the sea fisheries are in progress. In the 2017 fishing season, around 100 fishermen tested a digital solution for voluntary continuous reporting. From 2018 electronic reporting of catches is available to all fishermen engaged in coastal net fishing.
- 4.7 A joint statement was made on behalf of Norway and the European Union concerning the status of work with implementing the bilateral agreement between Norway and Finland on the fisheries in the Teno river. Fisheries in the river include mixed-stock fisheries. The agreement entered into force in 2017.
- 4.8 The Commission was advised that salmon mixed-stock fisheries have been conducted in the Murmansk and Archangelsk regions in the White Sea only and that the coastal salmon fisheries in the Barents Sea were closed completely in the late 1950s. Coastal

catches in the White Sea decreased from over 100 t in the 1980s to 20 t in recent years. In 2017 the declared catch was 13 t, the lowest in the time series.

- 4.9 A joint statement was made on behalf of the Russian Federation and Norway on the work conducted under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fisheries (the Russian Federation) on co-operation on management and monitoring of, and research on, wild Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk Region (the Russian Federation), which was signed on September 30, 2015.

Development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 4.10 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese salmon fishery.
- 4.11 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) in principle accepted the ICES Risk Assessment Framework for the next cycle of ICES advice, but noted that this would not prejudice a future framework for the sharing of quotas.
- 4.12 In response to a suggestion from the Chair, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) agreed to discuss the possibility of an inter-sessional meeting of the Commission on this matter with the relevant Faroese Ministry.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.13 The Commission adopted a new Decision Regarding the Salmon Fishery in Faroese Waters in 2018 / 2019, 2019 / 2020 and 2020 / 2021. The Commission agreed that the same procedure for applying the Framework of Indicators (FWI) as used during the previous multi-annual Decision would apply during the new measure.

Report of the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the North-East Atlantic Commission Area

- 4.14 The report of the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* was presented. Updates on several aspects of research on and monitoring of *G. salaris* were presented by Norway, European Union – Sweden, European Union – UK (England and Wales) and European Union – UK (Scotland). Norway continued to treat its rivers to eradicate *G. salaris* with success. Nine more rivers were declared *G. salaris* free in 2017 and seven rivers were still known to be infected. All 16 rivers flowing into the Kattegat on the Swedish west coast are now infected with the parasite. There are indications that the natural movement of salmonid fish may enable *G. salaris* to spread north from southern Swedish rivers through the Skagerrak, as heavy winter rainfall can freshen the coastal waters to the extent that it may not be fatal to the parasite, as was previously thought.
- 4.15 At its 2017 meeting, the Working Group had developed a revised ‘Road Map’, GSWG(17)13 for adoption by the Commission. At the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Commission, the European Union was unable to adopt the revised ‘Road Map’ as there had been inadequate time to consult and it was not clear if some recommendations were consistent with EU Animal Health regulations. It was therefore agreed that the Working Group would consider the need for revisions to the recommendations to ensure consistency with NASCO Parties’ animal health legislation at its 2018 meeting. To this end, the European Union proposed to provide comments to the Working Group in relation to the revised ‘Road Map’ ahead of the Group’s 2018 meeting.
- 4.16 The European Union had not been able to provide comments by the time the Working Group met and the Group therefore recommended that the revised ‘Road Map’

GSWG(17)13 should be used as the basis of best practice going forward until the Commission could agree it formally, subject to any changes recommended by the European Union and agreed by the Commission. The Working Group also recommended that its 2018 meeting should remain the first in the three-year cycle of meetings (as agreed by the Commission at its meeting in 2017) and the Working Group should, therefore, reconvene in 2021 to review progress and recommend any required changes, with annual reporting on progress on the 'Road Map' in between. Further, the Working Group recommended to all Parties and jurisdictions that all action and contingency plans related to a putative outbreak of *G. salaris* be tested routinely to ensure their efficacy. In addition, the Working Group encouraged all Parties and jurisdictions to ensure that the threat of *G. salaris* is highlighted sufficiently within the new Implementation Plans, and that subsequent actions to prevent, contain and eradicate the parasite be developed.

- 4.17 At the 2018 meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission, the European Union raised two minor editorial issues for clarification in the 'Road Map' text which were unanimously agreed by all Parties. The European Union was then able to adopt the revised 'Road Map'.
- 4.18 The Commission agreed that the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* should meet again in 2021 with the following Terms of Reference:
- provide a forum for exchange of information among the Parties / jurisdictions on research on, and monitoring, control and eradication programmes for, the parasite *G. salaris*;
 - review progress in relation to the recommendations contained in the Commission's 'Road Map' including progress with the development and testing of contingency plans;
 - develop recommendations for enhanced co-operation on measures to prevent the further spread of the parasite and for its eradication in areas where it has been introduced.

Other Business

- 4.19 The Commission elected Mr Victor Rozhnov (Russian Federation) as its Chair and Mr Tommy Petersen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-Chair.
- 4.20 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Victor Koretsky of Murmansk, Russian Federation.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Portland, Maine, USA, during 12 – 15 June 2018, chaired by Mr Carl McLean (Canada).

Review of ACOM Report from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES.
- 5.3 The NGOs noted that the estimates of pre-fishery abundance for stocks contributing to the West Greenland fishery had been below or only slightly above conservation requirements for some years. ICES confirmed the NGO interpretation of this as meaning options for fishing were very limited in both Greenland and in homewaters.

Reports of the Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Commission

- 5.4 There had been three Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Commission in 2018: one in Copenhagen held in late February / early March; a conference call held in May and a further meeting in Portland immediately prior to the Annual Meeting.
- 5.5 During these meetings, the Commission had discussed the report on the West Greenland salmon fishery in 2017, elements that could be included in a new regulatory measure to apply from 2018 and potential improvements in monitoring and control in the fishery. ICES had agreed to make Working Papers related to the phone surveys conducted in 2014, 2015 and 2016 available through NASCO.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.6 At the Portland Inter-Sessional Meeting, the Commission had discussed a draft framework for a possible new regulatory measure for the West Greenland Atlantic salmon fishery. This draft was developed further through informal discussions between the Heads of Delegations.
- 5.7 At its 2018 Annual Meeting, the Commission reviewed the draft measure on a line by line basis. The draft proposed regulatory measure was agreed by Parties subject to minor typographical corrections. In response to the United States, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that the reporting requirements in paragraph 4 of the draft proposed regulatory measure, related to reporting on the outcome of the fishery, would include reference to the implementation of the monitoring and control and other provisions of the regulatory measure.
- 5.8 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that the sale of salmon by licensed professional fishers would now only be allowed at the open-air markets and it will not be permissible to sell to other institutions. The Commission therefore agreed to insert the word ‘only’ into the provision in paragraph 8 to clarify this.
- 5.9 The Commission agreed a new multi-annual regulatory measure to apply to the salmon fishery at West Greenland in 2018, 2019 and 2020.
- 5.10 The United States noted that although the 30 t quota is above the sustainable limit for the stock complex, the United States was encouraged by the strong monitoring and control measures agreed. These increased management and control measures would strengthen further the management of the fishery and provide all members of the Commission with increased confidence in the harvest level of fish. It would also provide ICES with the improved data needed to accurately assess the impacts of this fishery on the productivity of the stock complex. Better data equates to better science that would result in stronger management into the future.
- 5.11 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that work would begin to deliver the changes in time for the commencement of the 2018 fishery.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.12 The Commission adopted a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2018. This internationally co-ordinated sampling programme provides valuable biological data to the ICES stock assessments that inform science-based management decisions for the West Greenland fishery.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.13 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries. Canada and the European Union tabled papers providing a description of the MSFs still operating in their jurisdiction, the most recent catch data, any updates to the Implementation Plan relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the IP period to implement NASCO's agreements.
- 5.14 It was confirmed that sampling of the Labrador fishery in Canada was expected to continue and that funding was available to support the analysis of the 2018 and 2019 fishery samples.
- 5.15 The Commission was advised that the total EU salmon catch taken in MSFs was around 75 t, although there were very different interpretations of what constituted an MSF.

Other Business

- 5.16 The Commission re-elected Mr Carl McLean (Canada) as its Chair and Mr Stephen Gephard (USA) as its Vice-Chair.
- 5.17 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Qulutannuaq Møller, Greenland.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Council, chaired by Ms Kim Blankenkemper (USA).

Audited Accounts

- 6.2 The audited accounts for 2017 were presented. The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2017 audited accounts.
- 6.3 The Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000. The Contractual Obligation Fund had been utilised in 2017 and reduced to £3,557. However, with the incorporation of the 2017 year-end surplus, it had increased again to approximately £56,000. The Recruitment Fund balance had been reduced to £45,000 due to the recruitment of a new Secretary and Assistant Secretary. The IYS Fund balance was around £125,000, which included a £44,589 voluntary contribution from Canada.
- 6.4 The Committee noted that the Council had appointed Saffery Champness, Edinburgh Quay, Edinburgh, as auditors for the 2018, 2019 and 2020 audited accounts.

Relationship with ICES

- 6.5 The MoU with ICES had been renewed for a further period of three years from 2016 on the understanding that, during this period, there would be no increase in costs above the rate of inflation in Denmark.
- 6.6 The Committee asked that the Secretary continue to liaise with ICES on any issues that arise relating to the provision of advice under the MoU, request that the advice be made available as early as possible and begin the process of extending the MoU before its expiration in 2019.

MoU with the OSPAR Commission

- 6.7 The MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission came into effect on 5 August

2013. There continued to be good information exchange under the MoU.

- 6.8 The Contracting Parties of the OSPAR Commission are to report on the implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on furthering the protection and conservation of the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR maritime area by 31 December 2019 and every six years thereafter. Once the Contracting Parties to OSPAR make their reports to the OSPAR Secretariat, NASCO will receive any relevant information from OSPAR, which is likely to occur prior to the 2020 NASCO Annual Meeting. The FAC agreed that NASCO should continue to track this issue but that there was no specific action required of the Council.
- 6.9 The Chair reported that the OSPAR Secretariat had informed NASCO that a discussion had begun in OSPAR on the possibility of establishing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean, part of which occurs in the NEAC area. Given the distribution of Atlantic salmon and the potential limitations on fishing and / or other activities in any MPA that might be established, the Committee noted that it is in NASCO's interest to track the progress of the OSPAR Commission's discussions on this issue. The NASCO Secretary was asked to continue to liaise with the OSPAR Executive Secretary in this regard and, if needed, provide or direct OSPAR to any relevant information on distribution and fishing activities for salmon in the Atlantic Ocean. Depending on the progress of discussions in OSPAR, NASCO may need to consider more substantive engagement on this matter at a future meeting.

Consideration of the Need for Clarification of, or Amendments to, NASCO's Rules Relating to Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.10 In 2017, the FAC had considered a number of issues related to providing lump sum payments exceeding the level required under Staff Rule 8.2(b) to two retiring staff members. The Committee was advised that the question of providing an extra lump sum had also arisen in 2012 upon the retirement of the first NASCO Secretary. The 2017 discussion related to the retirement of the second NASCO Secretary and the Personal Assistant to the Secretary. At neither time was there clear guidance on which to base a decision, and NASCO struggled to find a way forward. In the end, the two retiring NASCO Secretaries received a lump sum payment of about 1/8th (rather than 1/12th) of their final years' gross salary and allowances for each year of service with NASCO and the Personal Assistant to the Secretary received about 1/6th.
- 6.11 Following this discussion, the FAC agreed that it would consider whether clarification or amendment to NASCO's rules relating to financial and administrative matters might be needed at its 2018 meeting. The Parties briefly discussed the pros and cons related to the discretion in the Staff Rules that allowed for an increase in the lump sum payment. Some Parties noted that, given the difficult decision-making regarding the discretionary lump sum payments in both 2012 and 2017, establishing a transparent, consistent and repeatable process would have value. In particular, it would bring predictability and certainty with regard to the lump sum issue that would allow for appropriate budgeting by NASCO and more effective retirement planning for Secretariat staff.
- 6.12 The members of the FAC noted that they were not prepared to recommend a way forward on this matter in 2018 but agreed that the issue should be considered further. In that regard, the Secretariat was asked to prepare a discussion paper in time for the 2019 meeting of the Committee. In support of that effort, several potential alternative approaches that could be included in a discussion paper were identified, as follows: (1)

changing Staff Rule 8.2(b) to increase the lump sum required for payment to a full-time Secretariat staff member upon retirement, from 1/12th after tax of the final years' gross salary and allowances for each year of service with NASCO to some higher proportion and eliminate the possibility for an additional, discretionary lump sum payment above that amount; (2) changing Staff Rule 8.2(b) to a higher proportion but still allowing a discretionary additional lump sum payment based on strict criteria that would be implemented as a bonus system; (3) retaining the current lump sum proportion but developing clear criteria to guide decision-making on providing an additional lump sum payment above 1/12th; (4) considering the establishment of a pension programme for Secretariat staff as the lack of such a programme has contributed to the need to provide an additional lump sum payment to retiring full-time staff.

- 6.13 The Committee noted that, whatever the outcome of the lump sum discussion, NASCO had a responsibility to its staff. One Party suggested that the current members of the Secretariat should be treated similarly to retired staff with regard to the lump sum issue.

Consideration of the 2019 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan

- 6.14 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2019 Draft Budget and 2020 Forecast Budget and noted a Five-year Budgeting Plan (2019 – 2023) which had been provided for information.
- 6.15 The Committee agreed, pending agreement by the North Atlantic Steering Committee (NASC), to recommend to the Council that the IYS Fund be accessed to support redesigning the NASCO website. Should the NASC not approve use of the IYS Fund for this purpose, the FAC agreed to recommend to the Council that the website redesign be funded out of the Working Capital Fund, which stood at its maximum level of £200,000. The FAC noted that, in this latter case, any budget surplus would, according to the rules, first be credited to the Working Capital Fund until it was rebuilt.
- 6.16 The FAC agreed that posting FAC documents on the NASCO website together with all other documents suitable for public consumption prepared for the meeting would improve the transparency of the Organization and facilitate the work of the Committee. The FAC asked the Secretary to begin implementing this change in procedure if acceptable to the Council. The FAC also considered that there would be utility in creating a password protected part of the NASCO website to post any documents, such as draft proposals, that were for members only. The FAC agreed to seek Council approval for the creation of a password protected portion of the NASCO website. Finally, the FAC considered that there may be other methods that could be used to facilitate the work of the Organization, including posting relevant meeting documents on the Cloud as is done by other RFMOs. The Secretary reported that some work in this regard was underway; however, technical difficulties had been encountered. Nevertheless, the FAC agreed that the Secretariat should continue exploring options for improving document sharing and access.
- 6.17 The potential implications of Brexit on future NASCO budgets were discussed. The FAC asked the Secretary to run calculations in time for the 2019 FAC meeting showing forecast budgets that both include and exclude the UK.
- 6.18 The Committee was advised that the Secretary had anticipated the possible costs associated with a potential second independent performance review of NASCO. Toward that end, the 2021 forecast budget included an additional £50,000 in the 'Audit and other expenses' category, which was a similar figure to the cost of the last

performance review.

Review of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme

- 6.19 In 2015 the Committee decided to undertake a review of the operation of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme in 2018. At its 2018 Annual Meeting, the Committee agreed that the scheme continues to work well and brings good publicity to the Organization. There were no suggestions to alter the scheme.

Election of Officers

- 6.20 The Committee re-elected Ms Kim Blankenbeker (USA) as its Chair and elected Dr Dennis Ensing (European Union) as its Vice-Chair.

Secretary
Edinburgh
8 April 2019