

## CNL(15)54

### *Report of the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization*

*Hotel North 2, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Canada*

*2 - 5 June 2015*

#### **1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 In the absence of the President, the Vice-President of NASCO, Mr Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) opened the meeting. Mr Richard Nadeau, Head of the Canadian Delegation to NASCO welcomed delegates to the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of NASCO. He indicated that it was a pleasure for Canada to welcome delegates to the beautiful location of Happy Valley – Goose Bay for such important discussions. Mr Carl McLean, Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Nunatsiavut Government, welcomed delegates to Labrador, wished them an enjoyable stay and productive meeting and indicated that salmon is an important component for food security in the aboriginal food fishery. Mr Jamie Snook, Mayor of Happy Valley – Goose Bay made a welcoming address (Annex 1). Mr Craig Taylor, Director Northern Region, Northern Fisheries and Aquaculture, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, welcomed delegates on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and wished them a productive meeting and stated that he hoped they would enjoy the surroundings and meeting local people. The Vice-President thanked the Canadian hosts for their welcoming addresses and then made an Opening Statement (Annex 2).
- 1.2 The representatives of Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America made Opening Statements (Annex 3).
- 1.3 An Opening Statement was made by the representative of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) (Annex 4).
- 1.4 An Opening Statement was made by the representative of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) (Annex 5).
- 1.5 An Opening Statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 6).
- 1.6 The Vice-President expressed appreciation to the Parties and to the observer organisations for their statements and closed the Opening Session.
- 1.7 A list of participants at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is given in Annex 7.

## **2. Adoption of Agenda**

2.1 The Council adopted its Agenda, CNL(15)47 (Annex 8).

## **3. Financial and Administrative Issues**

### **3.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee**

The Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee, Mr Raoul Bierach (Norway), presented the report of the Committee, CNL(15)5. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council took the following decisions:

- (i) to accept the 2014 audited accounts, FAC(15)2;
- (ii) to ask that the Vice-President of NASCO write to the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission with regard to the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations, and in particular concerning the OSPAR Commission's Draft Recommendation on Furthering the Protection and Conservation of the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR Maritime area;
- (iii) to adopt a budget for 2016 and to note a forecast budget for 2017, CNL(15)19 (Annex 9);
- (iv) to appoint Chiene + Tait of Edinburgh as auditors for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 accounts, or such other company as may be agreed by the President, Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee and Secretary;
- (v) to authorise the Secretary to contribute a further sum of up to £10,000, subject to budgetary considerations, from the 2015 budget towards the film 'Atlantic salmon – Lost at Sea'.
- (vi) to adopt the report of the Finance and Administration Committee, CNL(15)5.

## **4. Scientific, Technical, Legal and Other Information**

### **4.1 Secretary's Report**

The Secretary made a report to the Council, CNL(15)6, on: the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention and membership of the regional Commissions; the receipt of contributions for 2015; applications for observer status to NASCO; applications to conduct scientific research fishing; fishing for salmon in international waters by non-NASCO Parties; NASCO's public relations work; the FAO FIRMS partnership; the possibility of organising an International Year of the Salmon that is being discussed within the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC); and any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon.

He reported that no applications had been made to conduct scientific research fishing in accordance with the NASCO Resolution during 2015. There had been no changes to the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions. All contributions for 2015 had been received, and there were no arrears.

There had been one application for NGO status from the Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA) since the last Annual Meeting. The objectives of FASTA include encouraging and promoting measures designed to improve fish stocks. Following consultation with the President, observer status had been granted to FASTA. NASCO now has thirty-five organisations with accredited observer status.

The Secretary reported that the Norwegian and Icelandic coastguards had again been contacted to obtain details of airborne surveillance flights over the area of international waters north of the Faroe Islands, but that no information had been provided for the period from 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015. No new information has been obtained from ports or about landings and transshipments over the last year to suggest that there has been any fishing for salmon by vessels from non-NASCO Parties. The External Performance Review Panel had concluded that NASCO had demonstrated that it had responded quickly to address IUU fishing in areas beyond fisheries jurisdiction by vessels registered to non-Parties. However, it felt that NASCO should consider enhancing its current surveillance efforts by requesting the cooperation of NEAFC and NAFO in reporting on any suspected IUU fishing activities for salmon that may be detected in their Monitoring, Control and Surveillance operations. A report on liaison with NEAFC and NAFO is contained in CNL(15)15.

Last year, the Council was advised that the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) was considering organising an International Year of the Salmon (IYS). The Council had recognised that this may be a very good opportunity to raise awareness of the salmon globally, the issues facing them and the considerable efforts being made to conserve and restore them and had asked that the Secretary liaise with the NPAFC Secretariat and report back on any developments. A representative of NPAFC, Mr Mark Saunders, attended the 2015 Annual Meeting and made presentations to the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB), its Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and the Council. The Council agreed to ask the Secretary and the Head of the US Delegation, Mr Dan Morris, to continue to liaise with NPAFC on arrangements for an IYS and to consider NASCO's possible involvement in, and contribution to, such an initiative.

#### **4.2 Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2014**

In accordance with Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention, the Council adopted a Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2014, CNL(15)7.

#### **4.3 Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize**

The Vice-President announced that the winner of the \$2,500 Grand Prize was Mr Eirik Monge, Vigrestad, Norway. The winning tag was of Norwegian origin and had been applied to a hatchery smolt released in the river Imsa in April 2013. It was recaptured in Fuglestadelva, Rogaland, Norway on 16 August 2014, weighing 1.1kg. The Council offered its congratulations to the winner.

#### 4.4 **Scientific Advice from ICES**

The representative of ICES presented the report of the Advisory Committee (ACOM), CNL(15)8 (Annex 10). The Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee indicated that ICES had asked NASCO for feedback on the format of the advice. The Committee had asked that the Secretary liaise with ICES on some possible changes to the format of the ACOM report. The representative of the European Union highlighted a number of additional changes to the format of the advice.

#### 4.5 **Report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board**

The Report of the Meeting of the Board, CNL(15)9 (Annex 11), was presented by its Chairman, Mr Raoul Bierach (Norway).

#### 4.6 **Report of the Working Group on Stock Classification**

In 2014, the Council had recognised the value of a consistent and uniform approach to presenting information on stock status for use with the rivers database and had established a Working Group (comprising Raoul Bierach (Norway), Gérald Chaput (Canada), Stephen Gephard (USA) (Chairman) and John McCartney (European Union)) with the following Terms of Reference:

1. Recommend a classification system to be used by jurisdictions to indicate stock status relative to conservation limits, or where these have not been established other reference points or indicators of abundance.
2. Develop recommendations to address the following:
  - a. What time period the stock indicators cover (e.g. annual, averaged over five years);
  - b. Frequency of updates;
  - c. How the absence of any data will be reported; and
  - d. How other relevant information to describe stock status can be taken into account in relation to NASCO's goals for salmon management, e.g. biodiversity and harvestable surplus.
3. Recommend changes to the NASCO Rivers database to implement the recommended classification system.

The Chairman advised the Council that there had been inter-session exchanges by correspondence and the Group had met during the Annual Meeting. An interim report was presented verbally to the Council. The Chairman indicated that the Group had considered that a system based exclusively on Conservation Limits would be overly simplistic. A second category was, therefore, added that requires the local agency to assess the various impacts that are affecting a stock and represent the severity of those impacts with a numerical code. Such impacts could include hydropower development, genetic threats from aquaculture escapees, excessive harvest, selective harvest and many other things. The Working Group will provide a spreadsheet into which the Parties will be requested to enter the names of their rivers as well as their Conservation

Limit range and the Impact Assessment Score and the spreadsheet will automatically assign the stock into a Stock Classification Category, of which there will be seven (the same number as exists currently) for the rivers database. It should be noted that the Impact Assessment Code will not be able to elevate a stock to a lower risk category than dictated by its Conservation Limit. It can only lower a stock to a higher risk category if there are factors that warrant such a move. There will be opportunities to use other factors to assist with category assignment if there is no Conservation Limit calculated for a particular river. Each stock category will have a unique colour assigned to it for use in the web-based Rivers Database map.

There are more details to be developed, including guidance for Parties when assigning scores to their rivers. It is the intent of the Working Group to work on the additional details inter-sessionally prior to the 2016 Annual Meeting so as to submit a proposal to the Council for its consideration at that meeting.

#### **4.7 Report of the Standing Scientific Committee**

The Acting Chairman of the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC), Dr Paddy Gargan (European Union), presented a draft request to ICES for scientific advice. Upon the recommendation of the Committee, the Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES, CNL(15)11 (Annex 12).

### **5. Conservation, Restoration, Enhancement and Rational Management of Atlantic Salmon under the Precautionary Approach**

#### **5.1 Special Session: Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans**

The primary purpose of the Annual Progress Reports (APRs) under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans is to provide details of: any changes to the management regime for salmon and consequent changes to the Implementation Plans; actions that have been taken under the Implementation Plans 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.

The 2015 APRs are contained in documents CNL(15)21 to CNL(15)38 and CNL(15)40. A summary of the 2015 returns (CNL(15)13) was presented. As in 2014, the 2015 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by a Review Group. The purpose of the evaluation was to ensure that jurisdictions had provided a clear account of progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their Implementation Plans, along with the information required under the Convention.

Mr Ted Potter (European Union) presented the report of the Implementation Plan/Annual Progress Report Review Group, CNL(15)12 (Annex 13), during a Special Session of the Council. Where shortcomings had been identified in the APRs, the Review Group had developed questions which were sent to the jurisdictions with a request that they provide written responses prior to the Annual Meeting. These responses are contained in CNL(15)18 (Annex 14). There were wide-ranging discussions during the Special Session and these are contained in CNL(15)51 (Annex 15).

The Review Group had highlighted that evaluating the progress made on actions was very difficult when the descriptions of the planned actions in the IP were vague or imprecise. It had also indicated that APRs should not rely on links to information on the internet but should provide a brief, stand-alone summary of the progress made. The Review Group had also noted that a number of the 2015 APRs had provided similar information to that provided in 2014. Overall, the Review Group had considered that the most common fault with the information provided on progress with actions was a lack of quantitative information on what has been achieved and/or what the results have been and all Parties/jurisdictions had been asked to address this in future APRs. The Review Group had also highlighted that timely reporting was essential if the evaluations were to be fair and balanced. The Council asked that the Secretary highlight these issues when requesting the 2016 APRs. The Council asked that the Review Group meet for two days to undertake the evaluations of the 2016 APRs.

## 5.2 **Theme-based Special Session: ‘Maintaining and improving river connectivity with particular focus on impacts of hydropower’**

At its Thirty-First Annual Meeting, the Council had asked the APR Review Group to identify a topic for a half day Theme-based Special Session to be held during the 2015 Annual Meeting and develop a Programme. The Review Group had noted that several IPs and APRs had highlighted threats and management challenges posed by obstructions, including hydropower facilities, to both upstream and downstream salmon migration. While progress in improving river connectivity had been reported, including closure of some hydropower stations and dam removal projects, concerns had been expressed about the increase in applications for ‘run of the river’ hydropower installations in salmon rivers in response to the need to meet renewable energy targets. The Review Group had, therefore, agreed that the topic of the 2015 Theme-based Special Session should be ‘Maintaining and improving river connectivity, with particular focus on impacts of hydropower’. A Programme for the session had been developed, CNL(15)14. The objectives of the Session were to:

1. Balance the pressures to refurbish existing and install new obstructions against the potential impacts on river connectivity, with particular reference to hydropower developments;
2. Mitigate the impacts of existing obstructions, including hydropower schemes, on salmon populations;
3. Evaluate the benefits and costs of removing dams and other obstructions.

The report of the Theme-based Special Session is contained in document CNL(15)56. The Council agreed to hold a one-day Theme-based Special Session during its 2016 Annual Meeting on the theme of developments in relation to minimising the impacts of farmed salmon on wild salmon stocks. A Steering Committee, comprising Ms Heidi Hansen (Norway), Dr Paddy Gargan (European Union), Mr Willie Cowan (European Union), Mr Paul Knight (NGOs) and a representative from the United States) was appointed to work with the Secretary in developing a Programme and Objectives for the session.

**5.3 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.**

In 2013, the Council had adopted an ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’ (CNL(13)38). The Secretary reported on progress in implementing the recommendations in the Action Plan, CNL(15)15 (Annex 16). The recommendations in the plan relate to:

- actions which had been implemented or planned at the time the ‘Action Plan’ was developed and for which there was a need to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes (section 1);
- new actions developed in response to the recommendations contained within the External Performance Review Report and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO (section 2);
- actions to strengthen NASCO’s work on the management of salmon fisheries (section 3).

The Council welcomed the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations. The Secretary was asked to continue to liaise with NEAFC and NAFO in relation to IUU fishing by non-NASCO Parties and by-catch in pelagic fisheries. The Secretary was also asked to seek cooperation from ICCAT with regard to any information relating to IUU fishing for salmon by non-NASCO Parties. A further update on progress would be presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

**5.4 Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry**

In 2013, the Council 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. The regular meetings of the Liaison Group would not be continued, but, if a specific need arose, consideration could be given to convening a joint *Ad hoc* group. The Vice-President indicated that the Secretary had consulted the President of ISFA, Mr Trond Davidson, who had indicated that ISFA would be represented at the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting by Mr Murray Hill (Canada) but that it did not intend to raise any issues with the Council. The item will be retained on the Agenda for the 2016 Annual Meeting.

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

In accordance with the ‘Strategic Approach for NASCO’s Next Steps’, this item had been included on the Council’s Agenda and ICES had been requested to provide relevant information, which is contained in document CNL(15)8. This information included new opportunities for sampling salmon at sea, new opportunities for collecting information on salmon bycatch in pelagic fisheries and an update on sea lice investigations in Norway. Relevant information is also presented in the summary of Annual Progress Reports, CNL(15)13.

## **5.6 Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management**

In 2014, the Council agreed that Parties/jurisdictions be requested to advise the Secretariat of any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon and that future Theme-based Special Sessions be held on integrating socio-economic factors in decisions relating to habitat protection, restoration and enhancement and to aquaculture. An update on any new information provided is contained in the Secretary's Report (see paragraph 4.1 above). None had been provided.

## **5.7 Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

A report on the management of the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon, CNL(15)16 (Annex 17), was presented by the representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon). This report was also considered in the North American Commission.

The representative of Canada thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for the presentation and stressed the need for enhanced involvement of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) in NASCO as a full member. He referred to the depleted state of salmon stocks in Canada and the need for harvest controls in the fishery. The representative of the United States supported the statement by Canada and expressed concern about the continuance of the fishery without agreement within NASCO. He noted that while the catch had declined in 2014, compared to 2013, the number of permits had increased and if all fishermen had catches at the same level as the most successful then the total catch would have been large. There had been additional discussions concerning the fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon during the meeting of the North American Commission. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that the reporting to NASCO on the management of the fishery would continue as would the scientific sampling programme and there will be further discussions in Paris, in conjunction with St Pierre and Miquelon, about future participation in NASCO's work.

## **5.8 Reports on the Conservation Work of the Three Regional Commissions**

The Chairman of each of the three regional Commissions reported to the Council on the activities of their Commission.

## **6. Other Business**

6.1 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) made a closing statement (Annex 18).

6.2 The representative of the European Union thanked the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for the positive message in its closing statement and indicated that her delegation was pleased with the result achieved in the West Greenland Commission. This had involved a huge amount of work and the European Union acknowledged the strong commitment of Greenland to the measure adopted and she looked forward to working together with other members of the Commission in the future. The representative of Canada echoed the views expressed by the European Union and stressed that Canada is committed to working in cooperation



with Greenland. He acknowledged the hard work undertaken and expressed a willingness to work with Greenland in future. The representative of the United States thanked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for its closing statement and its commitment to the work of the Commission. He looked forward to working cooperatively with Greenland and the other members of the Commission in future.

## **7. Date and Place of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 In 2014 the Council had accepted an invitation from the European Union to hold its Thirty-Third Annual Meeting during 7 – 10 June 2016 in Germany. The representative of the European Union advised the Council that the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting would be held in Bad-Neuenahr, Germany.
- 7.2 The Council agreed to hold its Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting during 6 – 9 June 2017 at a location to be decided.

## **8. Report of the Meeting**

- 8.1 The Council agreed the report of its meeting.

## **9. Press Release**

- 9.1 The Council agreed a Press Release, CNL(15)53 (Annex 19).

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page XX, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of Council papers is included in Annex 20.