

## **CNL(16)68**

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

***Steigenberger Hotel, Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany***

***7 - 10 June 2016***

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

- 1.1 The President of NASCO, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the meeting and introduced Dr German Jeub, Director General for EU Policy, International Cooperation and Fisheries in the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, who welcomed delegates to Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler (Annex 1). The President then made an Opening Statement (Annex 2).
- 1.2 Written Opening Statements were tabled by Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States (Annex 3).
- 1.3 A written Opening Statement was tabled by the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Committee (EIFAAC) (Annex 4).
- 1.4 A written Opening Statement was tabled on behalf of all the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 5).
- 1.5 Presentations were made by Mr Clemens Fieseler (European Union) on the Atlantic Salmon in Germany, CNL(16)55, and Dr Laura Gangi (International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine) on the Atlantic salmon in the Rhine, CNL(16)56.
- 1.6 The President expressed appreciation for these statements and presentations.
- 1.7 A list of participants is given in Annex 6.

#### **2. Adoption of Agenda**

- 2.1 The Council adopted its Agenda, CNL(16)53 (Annex 7).

#### **3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1 The Council re-elected Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway) as its President and Mr Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-President.

## **4. Financial and Administrative Issues**

### **4.1 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(16)5. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council took the following decisions:

- (i) to accept the 2015 Audited Accounts, FAC(16)2;
- (ii) to adopt a budget for 2017 and to note a forecast budget for 2018, CNL(16)62 (Annex 8);
- (iii) to confirm the appointment of Saffery Champness as auditors for the 2016 accounts;
- (iv) to ask that the President write to the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission 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;
- (v) to adopt the report of the Finance and Administration Committee, CNL(16)5.

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

### **5.1 Secretary's Report**

The Secretary made a report to the Council, CNL(16)6, on: the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention and membership of the regional Commissions; the receipt of contributions for 2016; 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; and any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon.

The Secretary reported that 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 2016 had been received, and there were no arrears. He reported that no applications had been made to conduct scientific research fishing under the NASCO Resolution during 2015.

There had been two applications for NGO status since the last Annual Meeting. Der Atlantische Lachs, based in Germany, has as its objective the reintroduction and protection of Atlantic salmon in central Europe. An application was also received from Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland. The objectives of Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland are to protect fisheries, fish stocks and the wider aquatic environment for the public benefit. Following consultation with the President, observer status had been granted to both organisations. NASCO now has 37 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 2015 – 31 March 2016. 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 salmon fishing activities that may be detected in their Monitoring, Control and Surveillance operations. A report on liaison with NEAFC and NAFO is contained in CNL(16)16.

## 5.2 **Progress Report on the Proposed International Year of the Salmon**

At its 2014 Annual Meeting, 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 the resource 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 had asked that the Secretary and the Head of the US Delegation, Mr Dan Morris, continue to liaise with NPAFC on arrangements for an IYS and to consider NASCO's possible involvement in, and contribution to, such an initiative.

A report on liaison with NPAFC since the last Annual Meeting regarding the IYS was presented by Mr Morris, CNL(16)7 (Annex 9). Annex 3 of that report included an Outline Proposal for an International Year of the Salmon (entitled 'Salmon and People in a Changing World'). It included a proposed rationale, vision, themes and timings for the IYS, together with details of its scope and a governance model and initial budgetary considerations.

The Council recognised that an IYS could provide a very good opportunity to raise awareness of the factors driving salmon abundance and the environmental and anthropogenic challenges they face and the measures being taken to address these.

The Council expressed broad acceptance of Annex 3 of document CNL(16)7, with the following provisional points of clarification:

- in view of the need to coordinate at different jurisdictional levels, the desire to ensure that the IYS is well-planned and as successful as possible and the potentially substantial workload involved, the Council would designate 2019 as the focal year. However, it recognises that some events may commence before and others continue after 2019. In particular, the Council's preference would be that the IYS International Symposium would be held in the autumn of 2018 so that the collaboration on science and management will be well established at the start of the focal year;

- the IYS Coordinating Committee will conduct its work in accordance with recommendations from the RFMO Steering Committees;
- the Council agreed that it would make a sum of £60,000 available for an IYS Special Fund to be established in accordance with Financial Rule 6.1. This sum is included in the 2017 Budget and could be carried forward until the expenditure is needed. The Fund will be used in accordance with a spending plan proposed by the North Atlantic Steering Committee and to be agreed by the Parties. The Council further agreed that any surplus funds available at the end of the 2016 financial year (and subsequent financial years) which are not needed for the Contractual Obligation Fund should be credited to the IYS Special Fund.

The Council agreed that the Secretary should consult the Parties and NGOs shortly after the 2016 Annual Meeting requesting that they confirm by 15 July 2016 who their representative will be on the North Atlantic Steering Committee. Mr Dan Morris was asked to chair this Committee.

The North Atlantic Steering Committee would be asked to develop recommendations for a half-day session on the IYS at the 2017 Annual Meeting and on IYS activities for 2018.

The Council agreed that the NASCO representatives on the IYS International Symposium Steering Committee would be the Secretary, a scientific representative nominated by the European Union and a manager nominated by Canada.

The Council agreed that the NASCO representatives on the Coordinating Committee should initially be Mr Dan Morris and the Secretary, but that further participation could also be agreed at a later stage.

The Council noted that the success of the IYS will depend on the involvement of, and cooperation with, a wide range of partners and the approach to its implementation would, therefore, need to be flexible, inclusive and adaptable.

The Council expressed its appreciation to NPAFC for inviting NASCO to join it in this important initiative that could support salmon conservation and restoration efforts and stimulate new research.

### **5.3 Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2015**

In accordance with Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention, the Council adopted a Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2015, CNL(16)8.

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

The President announced that the winner of the 2016 Grand Prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Maxim Mamaev, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation. The winning tag was applied to an autumn run female salmon on the Falls Creek beat of the Ponoï River and was recaptured on the Hourglass beat of the Ponoï River. The fish was subsequently released. The Council offered its congratulations to the winner.

## 5.5 **Scientific Advice from ICES**

The representative of ICES presented the report of the Advisory Committee (ACOM), CNL(16)9 (Annex 10). The ICES presentation is available as document CNL(16)64.

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

The Report of the Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board, CNL(16)10 (Annex 11), was presented by its Chairman, Mr Rory Saunders (USA). A presentation on tagging and tracking work undertaken by the Atlantic Salmon Federation was presented by Mr Dave Meerburg (NGOs), CNL(16)63.

## 5.7 **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). The Working Group was asked to, *inter alia*, 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. It was also asked to recommend changes to the NASCO Rivers Database to implement the recommended classification system. The Group had conducted its work through correspondence and had also met during the 2015 Annual Meeting. The Chairman of the Working Group presented the Group's report, CNL(16)11 (Annex 12).

The Council adopted the new classification system as proposed by the Working Group and asked that the information currently held in the Rivers Database be sent by the Secretary to the Parties/jurisdictions in Excel spreadsheet form for updating. The Council recognised that updating this information would be a substantial undertaking and agreed that the Parties/jurisdictions should be asked to complete the update using the new stock categories by 31 December 2017. However, the Council encouraged Parties/jurisdictions to provide the information earlier where feasible, to allow earlier updating of the Rivers Database. Information for all fields in the Rivers Database should be updated or completed. A 'State of the Salmon' report could then be prepared for consideration at the 2018 Annual Meeting.

The representative of Norway reported to the Council on its National Quality Norm for Wild Salmon, CNL(16)19. The experience in Norway is that an approach based only on conservation limits will not adequately classify the status and well-being of salmon stocks.

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

The Chairman of the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC), Dr Paddy Gargan (European Union), presented a draft request to ICES for scientific advice. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES, CNL(16)12 (Annex 13).

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

### **6.1 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 2016 APRs are contained in documents CNL(16)21 to CNL(16)38, with supplementary information from Canada provided in CNL(16)40. A summary of the 2016 returns (CNL(16)14) was presented.

The 2016 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by the Implementation Plan/Annual Progress Report Review Group 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. The Chairman of the Group, Mr Ted Potter (European Union) presented its report, CNL(16)13 (Annex 14), 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(16)20 (Annex 15). There were wide-ranging discussions during the Special Session and these are contained in CNL(16)59 (Annex 16).

The Council accepted the recommendations of the Review Group for changes to the reporting template and appointed Mr Lawrence Talks (European Union) to serve on the Review Group.

### **6.2 Theme-based Special Session: ‘Addressing impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon: challenges to, and developments supporting, achievement of NASCO’s international goals’**

At its Thirty-Second Annual Meeting, the Council had 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 Mr Willie Cowan (European Union), Ms Kimberly Damon-Randall (Chair) (USA), Dr Paddy Gargan (European Union), Ms Heidi Hansen (Norway) and Mr Paul Knight (NGOs) was appointed to work with the Secretary in developing a Programme and Objectives for the session.

The Steering Committee had decided that the title of the 2016 Theme-based Special Session should be ‘*Addressing impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon: challenges to, and developments supporting, achievement of NASCO’s international goals*’. A Programme for the session had been developed, CNL(16)15 and subsequently updated (CNL(16)39). The overarching objective for the session was to facilitate an exchange of information relating to protecting wild Atlantic salmon

stocks from impacts of salmon farming and to promote sustainable salmon farming practices by:

- reviewing the latest scientific information on the impacts of salmon farming on the wild salmon stocks, with particular focus on the impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon;
- reviewing progress and sharing best practice on approaches, including regulatory frameworks, to implement effective sea lice management at salmon farms;
- reviewing progress and sharing best practice on approaches, including regulatory frameworks, to ensure that 100% of farmed fish are retained in both freshwater and marine production facilities; and
- reviewing new developments that could facilitate achievement of NASCO's international goals for sea lice and containment including technology development (e.g. cage design and closed containment), rearing strategies, access to a broad suite of therapeutants, biological controls, monitoring regimes, training and recapture efforts.

The NGOs tabled a paper entitled 'Salmon Farming: the continuing damage and required solutions', CNL(16)54. A report of the Theme-based Special Session will be prepared by the Steering Committee. The Council agreed to hold a half-day Theme-based Special Session during its 2017 Annual Meeting on the theme of risks and benefits to Atlantic salmon populations from hatchery and stocking activities. A Steering Committee, comprising representatives to be nominated by Canada, the European Union, Norway and the NGOs will be appointed to work with the Secretary in developing a Programme and Objectives for the session.

### 6.3 **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(16)16 (Annex 17). 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); and
- 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 Council agreed that the NASCO Secretary should accept the invitation from the Secretary of NEAFC to make a presentation on the work of NASCO and its IASRB, including concerns about by-catch.

#### 6.4 **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 Atlantic 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. ISFA were represented at the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting by Professor Phil Thomas and Mr Knut Hjelt.

Professor Thomas thanked the Council for the opportunity to contribute to the Annual Meeting and the German hosts for the arrangements made. He noted that his comments were made on behalf of the salmon farming industry generally. He expressed disappointment since, while the Theme-based Special Session had been well-intended and there were some excellent presentations, the balance of the session had not been as envisaged. He expressed disappointment with the usual annual cycle of opportunity for NGOs to score points off jurisdictions and many of the points raised could have been raised with individual jurisdictions by telephone rather than at the meeting. The biggest concern is that the industry is developing rapidly and these advances had not been reflected in the presentations. He suggested that ISFA should have been involved in planning for the session. He also indicated that there is an assumption in NASCO Parties that there is a natural mortality of salmon that is high, but there is a lack of understanding of the factors responsible. He indicated that reference had been made to high predation levels and this had been confirmed through studies in Scotland. Furthermore, he indicated that it is clear from the ICES advice that exploitation in rivers is a significant source of mortality and some jurisdictions have not introduced adequate controls. He stressed that any salmon farming development application must take into account its relationship with wild fish. In summary, ISFA is supportive of NASCO but not the process and he suggested that the proposed celebration of the wonders of wild salmon should be matched by one for farmed salmon which is crucial as a production system with a low carbon footprint and that nobody now needs to catch wild fish for food.

The representative of the NGOs indicated how much the NGOs had appreciated the Theme-based Special Session. He indicated that the intervention from ISFA just confirmed the NGOs' frustration with the salmon farming industry which is in denial about impacts on the wild fish, and that that is why the NGOs came to the Theme-based Special Session where they can express their concerns. He stressed that NASCO is a wild salmon conservation organisation. The NGOs fully accept that there are many issues facing wild salmon, but salmon farming has been proven to have impacts. He indicated that until the industry comes to the table willing to find solutions, which exist, then the NGOs will continue to support similar sessions at NASCO.

The representative of the European Union expressed appreciation for the Theme-based Special Session that had facilitated an open and transparent dialogue and she looked forward to receiving the report from the Steering Committee summarising outcomes and highlighting best practices that can be taken forward. She questioned whether bilateral discussions would have been as productive. She referred to ISFA's



statement about new technological developments and asked that these be brought to the attention of NASCO under this agenda item. Over the last 20 years, the European Union has spent considerable sums on research to improve technology and address the various challenges of the aquaculture sector, but not all had been presented because of a lack of time.

The Council agreed that this item will be retained on the Agenda for its 2017 Annual Meeting.

#### **6.5 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 annually and ICES had been requested to provide relevant information, which is contained in document CNL(16)9. Information had been provided on:

- ocean migration and feeding areas of DST tagged Icelandic hatchery smolts;
- changing trophic structure and energy dynamics in the Northwest Atlantic: implications for Atlantic salmon feeding at West Greenland;
- diseases and parasites (red vent syndrome and UDN);
- progress with implementing the Quality Norm for Norwegian Salmon Populations;
- progress in development of reference points for Atlantic salmon in Canada that conform to the Precautionary Approach;
- review of proposed smolt to adult supplementation (SAS) activity in the Northwest Miramichi River, Canada;
- progress in stock assessment models - Embedding Atlantic salmon stock assessment within an integrated Bayesian life cycle modelling framework; and
- new opportunities for sampling salmon at sea.

Relevant information is also presented in the summary of Annual Progress Reports, CNL(16)14.

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

In 2014, the Council agreed 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 and that Parties/jurisdictions be requested to advise the Secretariat of any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon. None had been provided.

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

A report on the Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery, CNL(16)17 (Annex 18), was presented by the representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon). This report was also considered in the North American Commission.

## **6.8 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.

## **7. Other Business**

- 7.1 The representative of the European Union informed the Council about potential funding of €600,000 that the European Union could be providing to NASCO in 2017 for research projects focussing on sea lice models and telemetry. This funding would ideally be used during 2017 or 2018 and hopefully a contract will be in place by the end of 2016. Under its rules, the European Union can only contribute 80% of the cost of any specific project but several EU Member States/jurisdictions have signified that they will explore ways to complement this funding. She indicated that this was good news given the discussions on the IYS and an expression of the European Union's commitment to improving understanding of various challenges facing wild Atlantic salmon. She hoped that this funding arrangement might continue in future years.
- 7.2 The representative of Canada referred to new investment in the science sector in Fisheries and Oceans Canada of CAN\$40million. As a consequence, 135 new scientists are to be hired to work in Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific regions, including six new scientists to work on Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species in Eastern Canada. He referred to a new Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the salmon science community and maximise the support it provides to salmon conservation programmes. He referred to the desirability of links with those working on salmon in the North-East United States.
- 7.3 A Closing Statement was tabled by the representative of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (Annex 19).

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

- 8.1 The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting in Varberg, Sweden during 6 - 9 June 2017.
- 8.2 The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting in the United States of America during 12 - 15 June 2018.

## **9. Report of the Meeting**

- 9.1 The Council agreed the report of its meeting.

## **10. Press Release**

- 10.1 The Council agreed a Press Release, CNL(16)67 (Annex 20).

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 21.