



Agenda item 5.3
For decision

Council

CNL(16)8

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2015

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Council**
- 3. North American Commission**
- 4. North-East Atlantic Commission**
- 5. West Greenland Commission**
- 6. Finance and Administration Matters**

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 2015, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Second Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

CNL(16)8

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Government of Canada, NASCO held its Thirty-Second Annual Meeting in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council was held during 2 - 5 June 2015 under the Vice-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), six Inter-Government Organisations and nine accredited Non-Government Organisations participated in the meeting.

(a) 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 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by a Review Group in order to ensure that 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. Where there were shortcomings, 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. 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.
- 2.4 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 submitted 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 were asked to address this in future APRs. The Review Group 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.

(b) Theme-based Special Session: Maintaining and improving river connectivity with particular focus on impacts of hydropower

2.5 The Council had been made aware 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. Accordingly, the topic of the 2015 Theme-based Special Session was ‘Maintaining and improving river connectivity, with particular focus on impacts of hydropower’. The objectives of the Session were to review and share best practice on the approaches being taken to:

- balance the pressures to refurbish existing and install new obstructions against the potential impacts on river connectivity, with particular reference to hydropower developments;
- mitigate the impacts of existing obstructions, including hydropower schemes, on salmon populations; and
- evaluate the benefits and costs of removing dams and other obstructions.

2.6 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 was appointed to work with the Secretary in developing a Programme and Objectives for the session.

(c) Working Group on Stock Classification

2.7 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 with the following Terms of Reference:

- 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;
- develop recommendations to address the time period the stock indicators cover (e.g. annual, averaged over five years), the frequency of updates, how the absence of any data will be reported and 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; and
- recommend changes to the NASCO Rivers Database to implement the recommended classification system.

2.8 The Working Group’s interim report was presented. 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 affecting a stock and represent the severity of those with a numerical code. Such impacts could include, *inter alia*, hydropower development, genetic threats from aquaculture escapees and excessive and/or selective harvest. There will be opportunities to use other factors to assist with category assignment if no conservation limit has been established for a particular river. Each stock category will have a unique colour assigned to it for use in the web-based Rivers Database map. More details will 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 so as to submit its recommendations to the Council prior to the 2016 Annual Meeting.

(d) 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

2.9 The Council received an update on progress in implementing the 2013 Action Plan. 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).

2.10 The Council welcomed the progress that had been made and asked that a further update on progress be made at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

2.11 The Council was advised that although 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, 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. The Council asked that the Secretary 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.

(e) Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management

2.12 The Council had previously requested Parties/jurisdictions to notify the Secretariat of any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon.

None had been reported in 2014/15.

(f) Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.13 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 indicated that it did not have any issues that it wished to raise with the Council at the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting. The item will be retained on the Agenda for the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting.

(g) Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.14 A report on the management of the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon was presented. 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, given the depleted state of salmon stocks and the need for harvest controls in the fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon. The United States supported the statement by Canada and expressed concern about the continuance of the fishery without agreement within NASCO. The United States 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. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that reporting to NASCO on the management of the fishery would continue as would the scientific sampling programme and there would be further discussions in Paris, in conjunction with St Pierre and Miquelon, about future participation in NASCO’s work.

(h) Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.15 There had been no applications to conduct scientific research fishing in the Convention area during 2015.

(i) Scientific Advice

- 2.16 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Secretary was asked to liaise with ICES on some possible changes to the format of the ACOM report (see paragraph 6.6 below).

- 2.17 The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2016.

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

- 2.18 ICES had been requested to provide relevant information. This included new opportunities for sampling salmon at sea, new opportunities for collecting information on salmon by-catch in pelagic fisheries and an update on sea lice investigations in Norway. Relevant information had also been presented in the Summary of Annual Progress Reports.

(k) International Year of the Salmon

- 2.19 In 2014, 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 the resource 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 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 asked 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.

(l) The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB)

- 2.20 The report of the IASRB was presented. In 2014, the Board had endorsed the need for an international telemetry programme and had adopted a Resolution encouraging the development of a large, international, collaborative telemetry project building on local initiatives. To take this forward, a Telemetry Workshop had been held at the end of 2014. The Workshop had developed outline project plans for future telemetry-based studies to estimate and partition marine mortality. The Board was updated on proposals for the International Year of the Salmon and recognised that there were some clear synergies between NPAFC's proposed IYS and the Board's international telemetry programme. The Board recognised the high value of the SALSEA brand and the strong impact of NASCO as the international forum for consultation and cooperation on wild Atlantic salmon and reaffirmed its commitment to an international telemetry project under the SALSEA brand, named 'SALSEA - Track'. Specifically the Board agreed to support SALSEA - Track as a continuing commitment to understanding the factors affecting mortality of salmon at sea, to make funds available to prepare a vision statement for SALSEA - Track and to advance existing initiatives towards an integrated collaborative telemetry programme. The Board agreed that it would be important to raise funds and that Members of the Board should be consulted on this matter.

(m) Other business

- 2.21 The Council adopted a Report to the Parties on the Activities of the Organization in 2014.
- 2.22 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize was Mr Eirik Monge of Vigrestad, Norway.
- 2.23 The Council had previously accepted an invitation from the European Union to hold its Thirty-Third Annual Meeting in Germany during 7 - 10 June 2016. The Council was advised that the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting would be held in Bad-Neuenahr in Germany. The Council agreed to hold its Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting during 6 - 9 June 2017 at a location to be decided.
- 2.24 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).

- 2.25 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below).
- 2.26 The Council was advised that the Foyle Association of Salmon and Trout Anglers (FASTA) has been granted observer status to NASCO. In total, NASCO currently has 35 accredited NGOs. 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 2015 had been received, and there were no arrears.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Canada, during 2 - 5 June 2015 under the Chairmanship of Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada).

(a) Review of the 2014 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2014 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. In response to a question from the United States concerning the coastal fishery in Canada that accounts for 6% of the total fishery, Canada indicated that catch was reduced due to lower abundance of salmon and noted that many fishermen had switched to fishing for striped bass. The United States asked if the lack of US-origin salmon observed in the fisheries at Labrador and St Pierre and Miquelon was due to sampling levels or something else, and noted its desire for additional sampling in future. ICES noted that some incidental catch may be possible, but the data showed none. In response to a question from the NGOs, ICES stated that there is no firm answer as to why the relative abundance in the north is better than in the south, but it may be the result of climate change. The NGOs asked what percentage of the catch in Labrador is tested for genetic composition. ICES noted the sample size is relatively small. In response to a further question from the NGOs, Canada indicated that while the English River in Labrador is meeting its conservation limit, the other 3 monitored rivers are not.

(b) The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that there had been a decline in catches in 2014 compared to 2013 and an increase in licenses, and that the increase to 12 licenses in 2014 is seen as the maximum as this is the number of artisanal fishermen in St Pierre and Miquelon. In 2015, the number of professional licenses decreased to 8. The increase in 2014 was due to fishermen who fish for other species requesting an additional permit for salmon. In 2014, 70 recreational licences were issued and there had been more inspections in 2014. In response to a question from Canada, France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that a higher number of licenses does not necessarily mean more effort and that they would be in a better position next year to provide more information on the use of licenses. It is expected that the data would not show much variation in effort and that the amount of the catch is mostly due to variability of salmon abundance.
- 3.4 Canada noted the importance of collaboration in science and sampling and indicated that it has been encouraging France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO as a Party for many years and would continue to do so. Canada expressed

appreciation for the sampling and genetic analysis of the fish caught in 2014 but stressed the need to end the commercial fishery, as even a few tonnes sold at market are salmon that will not return to the rivers. The United States echoed Canada's statement and expressed appreciation for the continued participation in NASCO by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) as an observer at its Annual Meetings. The United States called on France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to end any commercial component of the fishery and to join NASCO and the North American Commission as a full Member.

- 3.5 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) renewed a commitment to report on the fishery and to work in cooperation with Canada. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that while its position remains unchanged, there is awareness of the status of the stock and the effect of the fishery, as well as the socio-economic importance of the fishery to many fishermen. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) also noted that there is an openness in Paris to join the Convention in the future, but that it would be contingent on guarantees that the fishery could continue. Canada expressed concern over the request to provide guarantees on the fishery, noting that France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) could benefit from the broader conservation of salmon and that if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) was a Member of NASCO, the North American Commission would work cooperatively in managing the salmon fishery. A firm commitment in terms of total catch would assure Canada that salmon will be able to reach its rivers and to set the basis to be able to evaluate the success of its own conservation efforts. The United States echoed Canada's sentiments and expressed further concerns about the commercial aspect of the fishery, noting the United States' socio-economic interests in salmon, including the sacrifices of the Penobscot Indian Nation for the preservation of salmon and the United States' efforts to conserve salmon. The United States noted that if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) were to join NASCO, it would not necessitate the closure of the fishery, but rather a full consideration of the needs of the people balanced against the terms of the Convention and principles of NASCO. Canada asked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) how to best engage with the authorities in Paris to encourage France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that the authorities in Paris would need to consult the Préfet before acceding to the Convention and the Préfet in turn would consult the fishermen. It was noted that more time is necessary to educate and prepare the fishermen concerning the need to conserve Atlantic salmon. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) also noted that the amount of the catch that is sold is minimal, as most of the catch in St Pierre and Miquelon is for private consumption. Canada indicated that it would like to engage in a discussion on further conservation measures in St Pierre and Miquelon.

(c) Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.6 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. The United States indicated that there were no reportable instances in 2014, and noted that the incidence of Bacterial Kidney Disease reported in 2013 was resolved in 2014. There were no breaches of containment in aquaculture in the United States. The United States reported that there had been one import of 37,000 eggs of *Salmo trutta* (brown trout) to promote a sea-run fishery in

streams in Connecticut at the extreme southern limit of the historic range of the Atlantic salmon. Canada asked the United States to explain the process by which brown trout, a non-indigenous species, are introduced into waters that could be frequented by salmon. The United States noted that the protocols established by NASCO through the Williamsburg Resolution do not preclude the stocking of non-native salmonids in southern portions of the Commission area where such species already occur. It was noted that the importation was done in full consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, following its full legal authority and process that brown trout occur in the targeted streams and a rigorous fish health screening was conducted to certify that the fish had been disease free for generations. Finally, it was noted that the streams to be stocked do not flow into the Connecticut River, have never had salmon stocks and do not have suitable salmon habitat.

- 3.7 Canada reported one breach of containment involving small rainbow trout in Nova Scotia with no recapture efforts. Canada had two salmon imports: 60,000 Icelandic eggs were brought into Nova Scotia, which will be confined in a land-based facility and cannot be moved alive from the site without authorisation of Fisheries and Oceans Canada; and 50,000 Icelandic eggs were imported for research purposes and will be destroyed after the conclusion of the experiment. Canada reported 10 fin-fish disease instances in 2014 and indicated that they would make the information more accessible in the future. The NGOs noted that the website contained more recent data from 2015 and Canada indicated that future reports would include current statistics. The NGOs also asked about the observation of salmon escapees at a monitoring site in New Brunswick, given that no escape events had been reported. It was noted that while only escapes of 100 fish or more are legally required to be reported, Canada had agreed last year to report all escapes. Canada noted that while the provinces are responsible for reporting that data, they would verify with the provinces that information is reported appropriately.

(d) Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.8 The United States noted that in the analysis of the Labrador fishery in 2014, the sampling showed that no US-origin salmon were observed in 2012, 2013 or 2014. However, US-origin salmon have been observed in the area before and the fishery is located in an area where US-origin salmon would be expected to occur. The United States urged Canada to continue to conduct sampling, mindful of resource constraints. ICES reaffirmed that earlier studies, from 2006 to 2011, showed US-origin salmon in the fishery. Canada noted a recent decision to take at least 50 samples from several communities, which will increase the total number of samples taken. An additional 450 samples were also taken from Lake Melville. The NGOs welcomed the increase in sampling, noting its importance to understanding the fishery.

(e) 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', CNL(13)38, it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries. 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.

(f) Other Business

- 3.10 The winner of the North American Commission prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Norris D. Wolff, New York, USA.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Canada during 2 - 5 June 2015, under the Chairmanship of Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union).

(a) Review of the 2014 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES. The European Union asked for clarification as to whether data obtained from previous research programmes at the Faroe Islands could be useful in the ICES assessments depending on where they were collected. ICES indicated that all available data should be used. The NGOs noted the reference in the WGNAS report to an escape of 250,000 farmed salmon in the south of Ireland. It had been suggested that a large number of these fish would have died in the incident. The NGOs asked if an adequate monitoring programme had been in place to detect escapees in rivers. The representative of ICES indicated that this would be a matter for the Irish authorities to comment on.

(b) 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', CNL(13)38, it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries. The European Union, Norway and the Russian Federation tabled papers providing a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data, any updates to the Implementation Plan (IP) relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the Implementation Plan period to implement NASCO's agreements.

(c) Development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 4.4 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese fishery and had sought advice from ICES to inform its discussions. The elements needed for such a risk framework are: agreement on appropriate management units (MU); the management objectives for these units; a sharing agreement; and the season to which any TAC should apply (January to December or October to May). Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that it was not in a position to discuss the development of a Risk Framework and would prefer to have substantive discussions on this topic at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

(d) Regulatory Measures

- 4.5 The Commission adopted a new Decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2015/16 – 2017/18. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that by once again entering into a multi-annual measure that commits the Faroe Islands to manage any fishery in accordance with the scientific advice from ICES, the Faroe Islands has demonstrated its commitment to salmon conservation. No licenses for commercial salmon fishing at the Faroe Islands have been issued for many years and this policy will continue. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) encouraged other NEAC Parties to exercise similar restraint and commitment consistent with the objectives of the NASCO Convention and indicated that with a joint effort, the shared vision of an abundance of wild salmon should be achieved. 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.
- 4.6 Norway indicated that the present bilateral agreement with Finland for the Tana/Teno River (which entered into force in 1990) has led to a management regime that is clearly inconsistent with the requirements for sustainable salmon fisheries. It was further noted that the interests and fishing rights of the local population are an important issue for Norway. The negotiations have been on-going since 2012 and the original intention was that there would be a new agreement in place by 2015. In the light of this, the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment has indicated that Norway cannot accept the present management regime much longer and is now investigating whether or not the present bilateral agreement should be replaced with a national management regime for the Norwegian part of the river to apply from 2017. However, much has been achieved in the negotiations so far and Norway's primary goal remains to have a new bilateral agreement in place in 2017. The European Union advised the Commission that Finland has the same concerns as Norway and that there is a strong commitment to reach agreement for modern management measures consistent with NASCO Guidelines and that national measures, even if consistent with NASCO Guidelines, would be less desirable than a new bilateral agreement.
- 4.7 Norway and the Russian Federation provided an update on cooperation on salmon issues of mutual interest in Finnmark County and the Murmansk region. In a meeting in April 2015, Norway and the Russian Federation agreed to recommend a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning cooperation on management and monitoring of, and research on, wild salmon stocks in Finnmark County and the Murmansk region. This MoU establishes a joint Working Group consisting of two managers and two scientists from each country. The Working Group will consider all relevant issues, including evaluation of management in the light of NASCO's Guidelines. The MoU was expected to be signed before Autumn 2015. Possible new measures aimed at reducing catches of salmon originating in Russian rivers will be considered as part of an on-going process for new regulatory measures in all Norwegian salmon fisheries from 2016. The Russian Federation will be involved in the process.

(e) Risk of Transmission of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area

- 4.8 The Commission was advised that efforts to eradicate *G. salaris* will be continued as planned in Norway. The infected rivers in the Skibotn region in the county of Troms will be treated for the first time during 2015. It was noted that the parasite had

reappeared in the Rana River in 2014, ten years after it was treated and five years after it was declared free of the parasite, and necessitated an *ad hoc* treatment in 2014 in accordance with a contingency plan. This treatment would be repeated in 2015. The planning of the fish barriers in the Driva region is in its final stages, and construction should commence in the winter of 2015 - 2016. The Commission was advised that the barriers are planned to be in effect from the 2017 season. The Drammen region is the only region where a plan to combat the parasite is not yet in place due to the size of the river and brackish water in the fjord which might allow the parasite to survive for a considerable amount of time. To investigate possible strategies to deal with those problems and ways to eradicate the parasite, a Working Group has been established to report on its findings in 2017.

- 4.9 The Commission asked that the Secretary prepare a background document on the 'road map' and reporting arrangements in relation to *G. salaris* for consideration at the next Annual Meeting.

(f) Other Business

- 4.10 The Commission appointed Dr Konstantin Drevetnyak (Russian Federation) to the Standing Scientific Committee.
- 4.11 The winner of the Commission's US\$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Hennin Normark of Fyn, Denmark.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Canada, during 2 - 5 June 2015 under the Chairmanship of Mr Ted Potter (European Union).

(a) Review of the 2014 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 2014 fishery at West Greenland and considered the scientific advice from ICES. It was noted that a report on the 2014 fishery had been presented at the inter-sessional meeting of the Commission.
- 5.3 An update on the 2014 fishery at West Greenland was presented including the findings of a telephone survey of fishermen who participated in the 2014 fishery. The United States noted that not all fishermen had been contacted as part of the telephone survey undertaken in Greenland and asked whether it would be correct to make an extrapolation to estimate the catch by those who had not been contacted, indicating a potential additional 8-16t catch from that part of the fishery. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that this was a correct assumption. The United States suggested that with 58t of reported catch and an additional 12.2t reported during the phone survey, an assumed 8-16t catch by those fishermen that had not been contacted and an assumed 10t unreported catch, and taking into account that the survey did not account for private consumption, the total catch for the fishery in 2014 might have been 90-96t. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that this was not a correct assumption as some of the catch that had not been reported by fishermen would have been reported by factories.

(b) Report of the Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission

5.4 The report of the inter-sessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission was presented. The Commission agreed that all jurisdictions of the Parties to the Commission should apply the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery to their fisheries and Terms of Reference were agreed for an *Ad hoc* Working Group to develop recommendations on the process and timescale.

(c) Progress Report on the Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland

5.5 At the 2015 inter-sessional meeting of the Commission, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had presented a Draft Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the Salmon Fishery in Greenland. In the light of the discussions at that meeting, a revised plan had been agreed by the Commission. It was agreed that in addition to a telephone survey of licensed fishermen in 2014, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) would report at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Commission on progress on the following actions:

- (1) all salmon fishermen will require a licence and will be categorised as either licensed professional fisherman or licensed non-professional fishermen; only licensed professional fishermen will be authorised to sell salmon;
- (2) only designated fish factories will be authorised to accept landings of salmon, and fishermen should be advised that landing of salmon at non-authorised factories is not permitted. Fish factories will report landings no less frequently than on a weekly basis;
- (3) supervisors at the large open air markets will report all salmon offered for sale on a weekly basis;
- (4) reports of all catches, including zero catch reports, will be required within 1 month of the end of the salmon fishing season, at which time fishermen may apply for a licence for the following season;
- (5) failure to report catches as specified in (4) will result in no licence being issued for the following year(s), even in the case of zero catch;
- (6) it will be a condition of the licence that fishermen should allow samplers to take samples of their catches upon request; and
- (7) information will be provided to fishermen and supervisors at open air markets about the sampling programme and the findings of the programme to date through the members' magazine of the Fishermen and Hunters Organization (KNAPK) and press releases.

5.6 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that: a Working Group had been convened to make changes to the Executive Order to implement actions (1) and (4); the requirement for authorisation of fish factories that land salmon was already in place (2); the Greenland Government was presently in dialogue with its municipalities regarding reporting of salmon offered for sale at the markets (3); and that conditions will be added to licences for the 2015 season to implement (5), (6) and (7), with information regarding the sampling programme to be made available to fishermen via a new brochure (see paragraph 5.7 below).

Additionally, the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture agreed to undertake the following: provide additional information on the dependency of communities in Greenland on the salmon fishery before the 2015 Annual Meeting; consider delaying the opening date of the fishing season to 1 September for the 2015 fishery; and evaluate the costs and benefits of conducting a pilot carcass tagging project in one or more communities in conjunction with other Members of the Commission who may be able to provide information on the application of carcass tagging. The Commission was advised that the Working Group was currently in discussion about potentially delaying the opening of the West Greenland salmon season, whilst the evaluation of the pilot carcass tagging project had not yet been commenced as making changes to the Executive Order had taken priority. The Commission was also advised that any fisherman found with salmon without the appropriate licence would be fined proportionate to the nature/scale of the offence e.g. number of fish in their possession.

- 5.7 As there have been some difficulties in recent years in obtaining samples of salmon harvested in the fishery at West Greenland, a brochure on the West Greenland Sampling Programme and why it is important to allow samples to be taken had been developed and was presented to the Commission.
- 5.8 An Updated Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland was adopted by the Commission.
- (d) Up-dated report on the socio-economic importance of the salmon fishery in West Greenland**
- 5.9 The inter-sessional meeting had discussed a document tabled by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) at the *Ad hoc* Working Group meeting entitled 'Economic and Social Impacts of Salmon Fishery and Landings in Greenland'. Article 9 of the Convention requires that the interests of communities dependent on salmon fisheries are taken into account, and at the inter-sessional meeting the importance of clarifying the socio-economic aspects of the fishery and individual communities was stressed as part of the basis for agreeing a limit on the fishery.
- 5.10 The United States had noted that while the report was helpful, it was also vague and noted that it would be important to substantiate the conclusions of the report about the socio-economic importance of the salmon fishery if the report is to form part of the basis for a new regulatory measure. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that clearly establishing the socio-economic importance of the salmon fishery was difficult because various activities utilising living marine resources were, in combination, socio-economically important for small communities in Greenland, making it challenging to extract information relating to the importance of the salmon fishery in particular. However, it was noted that it was important to understand how dependency on the salmon catch had changed over the last 15 years and whether and how this justifies the increases in catches over that period. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had agreed to provide additional information before the 2015 Annual Meeting on the dependency of communities in Greenland on the salmon fishery.

- 5.11 An updated report was presented to the Commission providing further information on the settlements which fished for salmon and their reliance on the fishery etc., based on case studies of two settlements that land salmon.
- 5.12 The United States noted that it should be an aim to consider information from the report in the context of NASCO guidance on managing fisheries, considering socio-economics alongside scientific information, as required under the NASCO Convention, to develop a rationale for managing salmon fishing in Greenland that is consistent with the Convention and asked whether there is a standard definition of a Greenland ‘small settlement’ when considering which communities are reliant upon salmon. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that poor fishermen should be able to fish for salmon throughout Greenland including in cities, and that management would need to cover all such fishermen regardless of location.
- 5.13 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that the term ‘subsistence’ applied to small settlements where hunting and fishing was for survival and to secure food for the winter. The Chair asked for clarification as there are differences between fishing to generate income or to secure a food supply, which may vary between locations. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that this applies to all small settlements in Greenland. Canada noted that selling in markets is subtly different to selling to factories, but in both situations fishermen are selling fish to generate income. The European Union noted that only a small number of people appear reliant on the salmon fishery to make a living, and that fishing to allow all people in Greenland to enjoy salmon, as stated in the report, would imply that fishing is not only for subsistence. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was asked why the quota was not met in 2012 and 2013, and whether this indicates salmon are not as abundant in the fishery as some perceive them to be.
- 5.14 Canada indicated that a balance had been struck between the exploitation of various living resources by native communities in Canada, with trading cod for char between communities creating dietary diversity and helping to limit subsistence consumption of salmon. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was asked whether cod consumption could be promoted in Greenland to limit reliance on salmon. It was noted that the situation was complicated in Greenland as a fisherman/hunter needs to generate income to procure and maintain his equipment. Canada stated income generation should not necessarily mean making money from endangered salmon stocks, and that all parties must play their part in conserving this shared resource.
- 5.15 The United States emphasised the need to develop a rationale for the West Greenland salmon fishery consistent with the various NASCO documents and noted that focusing only on fishing in small communities might be inappropriate if other aspects could be important for food security.

(e) Regulatory Measures

- 5.16 At the inter-sessional meeting, the Chairman had tabled a Framework for a Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017. The United States asked whether there was agreement regarding the dependence of Greenlandic communities on salmon, and considered that the Commission may be moving towards discussion of a regulatory measure in spite of a

lack of consensus on this, and without sufficient clarity regarding the basis for agreeing a regulatory measure, for example taking such factors as the Precautionary Approach into account as necessary. The European Union noted that there is not much uncertainty in the science and there have been no catch options at West Greenland for several years, and that it is therefore unlikely that the Precautionary Approach requires consideration.

- 5.17 The Chair asked for clarification regarding consideration of a delay to the opening of the salmon season (to September) which may allow for a similar tonnage harvest that exploited considerably fewer fish, given their rapid growth rate. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that changing the season time was still being considered as part of wider changes to the Executive Order, and explained that, as such, it would not need to form part of a regulatory measure agreed by the Commission. The NGOs emphasised the potential importance of varying the season length and that this could amount to a 15-20% reduction in numbers of fish caught.
- 5.18 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that the ban on exporting salmon would remain.
- 5.19 The United States stated their support for work to inform implementation of spatial and temporal harvest restrictions to protect vulnerable stocks. The Chair noted that a mechanism for progressing this needs to be agreed.
- 5.20 The United States emphasised the importance of a means to monitor Greenland's progress in moving to full management control/accountability for the fishery and noted that the telephone survey was a good initiative. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that Greenland had committed to making such improvements to its fishery management.
- 5.21 The European Union, United States and Canada reemphasised their offer of sharing knowledge with Greenland to improve management of the West Greenland salmon fishery. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that Greenland would be keen to work with them on any such opportunities.
- 5.22 The Chair noted that there was a desire within the Commission for a clearer catch limit for the West Greenland fishery than the indicative levels in place under previous regulatory measures, providing for full catch accountability alongside the improvements in management and reporting that were being taken forward under the Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland and asked Commission Members for their views on what an appropriate catch limit might be. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested a three-year multi-annual measure with an annual catch limit of 45t covering all catches in West Greenland. The United States stated that it was not able to accept a 45t quota given the scientific advice for a zero catch, but emphasised that it remained willing to work with Greenland to set a catch limit. The United States also emphasised the importance of the 'payback condition' in the regulatory measure which would ensure that any quota set would be the absolute maximum catch for any given year. Canada also expressed reservations regarding a 45t quota, but expressed its support for Greenland looking to commit to an absolute total catch, and to taking the steps it has agreed to meet its commitment. Canada also emphasised its ongoing commitment to share its knowledge and experience of managing subsistence fisheries

with Greenland. The European Union stated that it was not satisfied with a 45t quota but, like the United States and Canada, acknowledged the positive spirit and cooperative approach shown by Greenland. The importance of continuing to take steps to improve monitoring and control in the fishery was emphasised and the European Union offered its support in this respect. The European Union acknowledged that there is an internal consumption fishery at West Greenland, but suggested that the starting point for a catch limit should be the average over the last 15 years rather than the 45t suggested by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland). Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the suggestion of 45t was far lower than the 1,500t quota that the fishermen in West Greenland had themselves suggested.

- 5.23 A Multi-Annual Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017 was adopted by the Commission. It was noted, however, that the measure does not include a catch limit as the Commission Members could not reach agreement on an appropriate level. Nevertheless, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) committed to establishing a 45t catch limit for each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

(f) Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.24 The Commission adopted a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2015. This internationally coordinated sampling provides valuable biological data to the ICES stock assessments that inform science-based management decisions for the West Greenland fishery.
- 5.25 The United States suggested that the Sampling Agreement should reflect the work of the Commission in other areas, such as the regulatory measures adopted for Greenland and the Updated Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the Salmon Fishery at West Greenland, and that a Working Group may need to be convened to explore this further. The United States also noted that developments in these areas at the Annual Meeting represent a change in the baseline regarding what was agreed at the inter-sessional meeting in February and that they would like the potential to be considered for the sampling programme to collect both genetic data and fishery data that would support knowledge development contributing to full accountability in the West Greenland fishery.

(g) Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.26 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', CNL(13)38, it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs). 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 (IP) relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the IP period to implement NASCO's agreements. The Commission was advised that the United States has no mixed-stock fisheries and had tabled a paper 'Efforts to conserve Atlantic salmon in the United States'. In response to a question from the United States, Canada confirmed that 6% or less of Canada's fisheries were in the coastal environment.

(h) Other Business

- 5.27 It was agreed that consistent with paragraph 9 of the multi-annual regulatory measure, there would be a ‘review’ of the measure before the 2016 Greenland salmon season, in order to assess progress on the implementation of control measures and look at the catch/landing information for the 2015 season and results of any extra processes for validating the information reported, e.g. further telephone surveys. The Commission agreed to hold an inter-sessional meeting in or around February/March 2016 in order to undertake such a review and review the implementation of related reporting and accountability measures.
- 5.28 The winner of the Commission’s US\$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr James Larsen, Kangaamiut, Greenland.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council under the Chairmanship of Mr Raoul Bierach (Norway).

(a) Audited Accounts

- 6.2 The Audited Accounts for 2014 were presented. The Committee was advised that Chiene + Tait had completed the audit effectively and the accounts had been issued to the Parties by 15 February 2015 as required. During 2014, the loan to NASCO from the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board had been repaid, the Working Capital Fund was at its ceiling level and the Contractual Obligation Fund continued to be re-built and immediate obligations were able to be met. The fund is expected to reach its ceiling by 2017. The Committee noted that the improvement seen in the Organization’s financial position in 2013 had continued during 2014 and it recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2014 Audited Accounts.
- 6.3 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the appointment of Chiene + Tait of Dublin Street, Edinburgh, as auditors for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 accounts, or such other company as may be agreed with the Secretary in consultation with the President and Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee. The Secretary indicated that he would seek three quotes for the audit work for the next three year period.

(b) Relationship with ICES

- 6.4 The MoU with ICES had been renewed for a further period of three years from 2013 on the understanding that, during this period, there should be no increase in costs above the rate of inflation in Denmark. The possibility of receiving the advice earlier than the date specified in the MoU (10 May) had been raised with ICES and the 2015 advice had been made available before this date. The Committee recognised that the MoU with ICES was working well and agreed that it should continue for a further three years from 2016.
- 6.5 In 2014, the Committee had noted that one of the aims in moving to multi-annual advice had been that, in years when catch advice is not needed, broader questions of relevance to salmon conservation might be included in the request to ICES. However, it had been

noted that because of the need to maintain the time-series of data, limited additional time might actually be made available to the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) in years when there is no request for catch advice. The Secretary had consulted the Chairman of the WGNAS about the time available at its meetings in non-advice years. It was noted that:

- the annual data collation exercise and updating of time-series to provide annual feedback on the status of stocks is relatively time-consuming and since WGNAS continues to report on stock status the ‘savings’ in non-catch advice years are relatively modest;
- WGNAS has also had additional work to do in recent years in developing the Faroes risk framework and a number of *ad hoc* questions (e.g. reporting on impacts of exotic salmonids; by-catch; stock classification; reviewing management objectives; etc.); and
- issues under the ‘threats and opportunities’ question typically constitute a substantial component of the report in relation to salmon in the North Atlantic.

6.6 The Committee recognised that despite on-going work related to assessment of stock status, ICES had been able to address additional questions in the request from NASCO. The Committee was advised that ICES had asked for feedback on the format of the advice. The Committee did not have any substantive proposals for changes to the format but requested that, for future ACOM reports, consideration be given to presenting the responses to questions from NASCO in the same format as the request, i.e. responses to questions relating to a specific Commission area should be presented in that section of the ACOM report, rather than in the section relating to the North Atlantic area.

(c) MoU with the OSPAR Commission

6.7 The MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission came into effect on 5 August 2013. It requires that:

- the OSPAR Commission and NASCO are invited to attend each other’s meetings of mutual interest;
- there is an exchange of information and coordination on matters relating to salmon conservation and protection of the marine environment in the North-East Atlantic; and
- the Secretariats will report to their organisations on actions taken pursuant to the MoU.

6.8 Since August 2013, NASCO had sent reports to the OSPAR Commission Secretariat and invited them to attend NASCO meetings. In 2014, the Committee had underscored that relevant information should flow to and from both organisations. On 7 May 2015, the Secretary of the OSPAR Commission sent NASCO a link to the OSPAR Commission reports and invited NASCO to attend the Annual Meeting of the OSPAR Commission in June 2015. This was welcomed by the Committee. This correspondence also included a Draft Recommendation relating to salmon which had been developed by OSPAR’s Biodiversity Committee at its meeting in March 2015. NASCO had not previously been consulted on this Draft Recommendation.

6.9 The Committee noted that in its current form, the Draft Recommendation fails to recognise the measures, agreements and practices developed and implemented by NASCO. The Committee therefore recommended to the Council that the Vice-President be requested to write to the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission indicating that while welcoming support for its work, NASCO, as the RFMO charged with conserving, managing and restoring salmon in the North Atlantic, would appreciate an opportunity for proper consultation and comment before adoption of the Draft Recommendation.

(d) Headquarters Property

6.10 The Committee was advised that a lease had been agreed with new tenants which entered into force on 5 January 2015 at an initial rent of £40,000 per annum, with service charges payable in addition. The lease is for all the accommodation that is not required by NASCO and is for a ten year period, with a tenant-only break option after three years and a mutual break option after 5 years. Over the period of the lease, there should be income from the property of around £550,000. There was a four-month rent-free period that ended at the start of May 2015. The new tenants had accepted the property in its present condition and a dilapidations settlement of £38,000 was negotiated from the outgoing tenants, which was credited to the Contractual Obligation Fund. The Committee welcomed the successful negotiation of this new lease.

(e) Consideration of the 2016 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan

6.11 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2016 Draft Budget and 2017 Forecast Budget. A five-year spending plan (2016 - 2020) was also provided for information.

(f) Review of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme

6.12 At its 2014 Annual Meeting, the Committee recognised that the Tag Return Incentive Scheme had brought benefits in terms of publicity for the work of the Organization and the need to return tags. As requested, the Secretary presented a brief review of the operation of the Scheme and, in the light of the information provided, the Committee decided not to make changes to its operation, but to undertake a further review of its operation at the 2018 Annual Meeting.

(g) Other Business

6.13 In 2012, the Council had agreed to contribute a sum of £5,000 towards the cost of filming at West Greenland for the film, 'Atlantic Salmon – Lost at Sea'. It was recognised that this film will be an excellent way of raising awareness of the challenges facing the salmon around the North Atlantic, the research programmes being undertaken and the wide range of measures that have been taken to conserve and restore them, including the international work of NASCO. The Secretary reported that due to a delay and uncertainty with one sponsor, a further sum of around US\$50,000 (£30,000) is now being sought to complete the post-production work. The Committee agreed that the Secretary should be authorised to make an additional contribution of up to £10,000

from the 2015 budget, subject to budgetary considerations and conditional on the remaining funding being found from other sources.

- 6.14 The Committee was advised that the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr Doug Twining (Canada) was no longer involved in NASCO matters. The Committee elected Mr Cal Wenghofer (Canada) as Vice-Chairman to serve the remainder of Mr Twining's term.

Secretary
Edinburgh
8 April 2016