



Agenda item 5.2
For decision

Council

CNL(17)7

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2016

- 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 2016, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Third Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

CNL(17)7

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Government of Germany, through the European Union, NASCO held its Thirty-Third Annual Meeting in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council was held during 7 - 10 June 2016 under the Presidency of Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway). Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), eight Intergovernmental Organisations, fourteen accredited Non-Governmental Organisations and from the International Salmon Farmers' Association 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 2016 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. These responses were compiled and tabled. 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 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. Mr Rory Saunders (USA) was appointed as Chairman of the Review Group.

(b) Theme-based Special Session: Addressing Impacts of Salmon Farming on Wild Atlantic Salmon: Challenges to, and Developments Supporting, Achievement of NASCO's International Goals

2.5 The Council held a Theme-based Special Session entitled '*Addressing impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon: challenges to, and developments supporting, achievement of NASCO's international goals*'. The over-arching 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.

2.6 The NGOs tabled a paper entitled 'Salmon farming: the continuing damage and required solutions'. Following the Meeting, the Steering Committee prepared a report of the Theme-based Special Session.

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

(c) Stock Classification

2.8 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. A Working Group had been established, *inter alia*, to develop 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 and to recommend changes to the NASCO Rivers Database to implement the recommended classification system.

2.9 The report of the Working Group was presented. The new classification system, as proposed by the Working Group, combined both a Conservation Limit Attainment Score and an Impacts Assessment Score. This classification system was adopted and the Parties/jurisdictions agreed to update the information held in the Rivers Database, using the new stock categories, no later than 31 December 2017 and earlier where

feasible. Information for all fields in the Rivers Database will be updated or completed. A 'State of the Salmon' report could then be prepared for consideration at the 2018 Annual Meeting.

- 2.10 Norway reported on its National Quality Norm for Wild Salmon. 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.

(d) International Year of the Salmon

- 2.11 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 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.

- 2.12 A report on liaison with NPAFC regarding the IYS was presented, including 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.

- 2.13 The Council expressed broad acceptance of the Outline Proposal, 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 recognised 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.

- 2.14 The Council agreed that the Secretary should consult the Parties and NGOs shortly after the 2016 Annual Meeting requesting that they confirm their representative on the North Atlantic Steering Committee. Mr Dan Morris (USA) 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 to be held at the 2017 Annual Meeting and allowing for an exchange of information on planned IYS activities.

- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 The Council noted that the success of the IYS will depend on the involvement of, and co-operation with, a wide range of partners and the approach to its implementation would, therefore, need to be flexible, inclusive and adaptable.
- 2.18 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.
- (e) 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**
- 2.19 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).
- 2.20 The Council welcomed the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations and 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, at the 2017 meeting under the collective agreement.
- (f) Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management**
- 2.21 The Council had 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 2015/16.
- (g) Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry**
- 2.22 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.

- 2.23 ISFA thanked the Council for the opportunity to contribute to the Annual Meeting, but expressed disappointment that, 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 by ISFA. ISFA also noted that many of the points raised by NGOs could have been raised with individual jurisdictions away from the meeting. However, ISFA's biggest concern was that the industry is developing rapidly and these advances had not been reflected in the presentations. ISFA suggested that it should have been involved in planning for the session. ISFA indicated that there is an assumption in NASCO Parties that there is a high natural mortality of salmon, but there is a lack of understanding of the factors responsible. Studies in Scotland have confirmed that predation levels are high and the ICES advice indicates that exploitation in rivers is a significant source of mortality and some jurisdictions have not introduced adequate controls. ISFA 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 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.
- 2.24 The NGOs indicated how much they had appreciated the Theme-based Special Session and that the intervention from ISFA confirmed the NGOs' frustration with the salmon farming industry which is in denial about impacts on the wild fish. That is why the NGOs had raised their concerns at the Theme-based Special Session. The NGOs fully accept that there are many issues facing wild salmon, but salmon farming has been proven to have impacts. The NGOs 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.
- 2.25 The European Union expressed appreciation for the Theme-based Special Session that had facilitated an open and transparent dialogue and noted that it looked forward to receiving the report from the Steering Committee summarising outcomes and highlighting best practices that can be taken forward. The European Union questioned whether bilateral discussions, as suggested by ISFA, would have been as productive and asked that the new technological developments referred to by ISFA 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.
- 2.26 The Council agreed to retain this agenda item for its 2017 Annual Meeting.
- (h) Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**
- 2.27 A report on the management of the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon was presented.
- (i) Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area**
- 2.28 There were no applications to conduct scientific research fishing in the Convention area during 2015.

(j) Scientific Advice

2.29 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2017.

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

2.30 ICES presented information 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 on 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; and new opportunities for sampling salmon at sea. Relevant information had also been presented in the Summary of Annual Progress Reports.

(l) Election of Officers

2.31 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.

(m) Reports on NASCO's Activities

2.32 The Council adopted a Report to the Parties on the Activities of the Organization in 2015.

2.33 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).

2.34 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below).

2.35 The report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board was presented. Details of tagging and tracking work undertaken by the Atlantic Salmon Federation were presented.

2.36 The Secretary made a report on a number of administrative and procedural matters. There were no changes to the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions. All contributions for 2016 had been received, and there were no arrears. No new information relating to IUU fishing by non-NASCO Parties had been obtained; liaison with NPAFC and NAFO on this matter is on-going.

(n) Observers

2.37 The Council was advised that Der Atlantische Lachs (Germany) and Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland had been granted observer status to NASCO. In total, NASCO

currently has 37 accredited NGOs.

(o) Other Business

- 2.38 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of US\$2,500 was Mr Maxim Mamaev of Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation.
- 2.39 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 it was hoped a contract would 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. The European Union 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. It was hoped that this funding arrangement might continue in future years.
- 2.40 Canada reported 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 of Canada, including six new scientists to work on Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species in Eastern Canada. A new Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the salmon science community and maximise the support it provides to salmon conservation programmes. Canada referred to the desirability of links with those working on salmon in the North-East United States.
- 2.41 The Council accepted an invitation from the European Union to hold its Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting in Varberg, Sweden during 6 - 9 June 2017. The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting in the United States of America during 12 - 15 June 2018.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany, during 7 - 10 June 2016 under the Chairmanship of Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada).

(a) Review of the 2015 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2015 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Commission was advised that catch and release fishing for salmon in Canada exceeded 60% of the entire recreational fishery in 2015. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) provided updated numbers for both professional (8) and recreational (70) licensed fishermen and agreed to provide this information earlier in 2017.

(b) The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.3 The United States asked if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) intended to carry out a fishery in 2016 and, if so, what the management regime would be. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) responded that some of the professional fishermen are retiring, leading to the lower number of licensees in 2015, and a projection of 8 - 11 licences in future. The Commission was advised that the total number of professional licences will not exceed 11. In addition, there had been good dialogue with recreational fishermen and the number of recreational licences in St Pierre and Miquelon can be capped at 70. Discussions were also ongoing about limiting the number of salmon per fisherman and shortening the season to the period from mid-May to mid-July.
- 3.4 The Commission was advised that in the West Greenland Commission, the Members have evaluated management controls in the West Greenland salmon fishery using the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery, and are exploring their application by other Parties. The United States thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for sharing new information about limiting the fishery and sampling, and noted that it looked forward to science-based management of the fishery.
- 3.5 The United States asked if logbooks are required in the St Pierre and Miquelon fishery, and, if so, whether these could provide information on catch per unit effort and whether all participants in the fishery are contacted about sampling. The Commission was advised that all salmon are recorded, including size and weight, that France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) could provide information next year on catch per unit effort and that sampling is done at the point of landing.
- 3.6 Canada noted that it remains concerned about the commercial aspect of the fishery, even though it is small, and encouraged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to reconsider this aspect. Canada noted support for the suggestions by the United States to extend the six tenets evaluations to St Pierre and Miquelon and the North American Commission. Canada urged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join the North American Commission and, while the fishery is small, noted that it would consider this to be a desirable change.

(c) Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.7 The United States and Canada presented reports summarising the number of disease incidences, the number of breaches of containment and any introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area.
- 3.8 The United States suggested that, in future, the two annual reports be exchanged for review so they can be finalised in advance of the meeting. Canada agreed to having earlier consultation to allow the papers to be made public in advance of the Annual Meeting. The NGOs noted that it would be helpful to have the reports submitted ahead of time to allow them to fully engage in the discussion of the reports. The NGOs also asked if disease reporting could be more detailed than by province, for example, by bay.
- 3.9 The United States noted that, while not in Canada's annual report, Canada had indicated that it is considering farming Norwegian triploid stock and enquired about the process,

timeline and guarantees for quality control. The representative of Canada made the following statement:

Two Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) registered companies owned by Norway-based Grieg Newfoundland Aksjeselskap have proposed an Atlantic salmon aquaculture project to construct a hatchery and establish eleven marine farm sites in Placentia Bay, NL. The project has a number of firsts for the NL aquaculture industry including: the first salmon aquaculture in Placentia Bay, the first use of triploid (sterile) fish since triploid rainbow trout and Atlantic salmon production in the early 2000s, and the first use of an European-origin strain of triploid salmon. The project requires multiple federal and provincial government approvals, leases, permits, and licences to import eggs, obtain aquaculture site licences, and begin operations. If all approvals are secured in 2016, hatchery construction would commence in 2016 and the first marine farms would be stocked in spring 2018 or spring 2019. The project was registered for environmental assessment by the NL Department of Environment and Conservation. A provincial decision on that process and whether additional information is required in the form of an Environmental Preview Report or Environmental Impact Statement has been deferred until the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans makes a decision on the importation and use of European-origin triploid strains in marine cage aquaculture in NL. The federal-provincial NL Introductions and Transfers Committee (NLITC) assessed genetic and ecological risks associated with use of triploid European-origin salmon under the National Code on the Introduction and Transfer of Aquatic Organisms. A science-based peer review of the NLITC risk assessment was undertaken in May 2016 through the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat. Both assessments will be published by the Secretariat and used to develop advice and recommendations for consideration by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

- 3.10 The NGOs noted that this development would be in the area where wild salmon are threatened and asked if the risk to the wild stocks is being taken into account. Canada indicated it was not possible to provide further details during the Meeting, but the question would be raised with the Province to see if it would be a part of their assessment.

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

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 Canada provided information on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon. This Ministerial Committee was established to look into declines of Atlantic salmon populations, particularly southern stocks of the Maritime Provinces. The Ministerial Committee had developed sixty-one recommendations and Canada is working on an Action Plan to implement the recommendations. The recommendations

do not identify the reasons for the decline, but a number of actions have already been implemented, including a move to obligatory catch and release fishing in the DFO Gulf Region that continued in 2016. The United States noted the similarities between Canada's Ministerial Advisory Committee and the United States 'Species in the Spotlight' initiatives and indicated that this is a tribute to the like mindedness of Canada and the United States and something to keep in mind in moving forward with the International Year of the Salmon. The NGOs commended Canada on the Ministerial Advisory Committee and asked about the expansion of monitoring of rivers in Labrador that might form part of the Action Plan. Canada advised the Commission that specific details could not be provided yet, but that CAN\$40million per year has been committed for increased funding for oceans and freshwater science in Canada, including hiring of 6 new biologists and researchers to work on Atlantic salmon.

(e) Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

3.14 The Commission was advised that information on the sampling programme had been provided in both the ICES report and in the paper on the Labrador Subsistence Food Fishery (see paragraph 3.12 above). The representative of the United States welcomed the anticipated improvement in the sampling programme and reiterated that while no US-origin fish have been observed in recent years in the Labrador Subsistence Food Fishery, the United States remained attentive to this issue, given the possibility for interceptions.

(f) Election of Officers

3.15 The Commission re-elected Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada) as its Chairman and Mr Patrick Keliher (USA) as its Vice-Chairman.

(g) Other Business

3.16 The winner of the Commission's prize US\$1,500 in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Mark Steeves, Moncton, Canada.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

4.1 The Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany, during 7 - 10 June 2016 under the Chairmanship of Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union).

(a) Review of the 2015 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

4.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES. The European Union noted that there was information relating to by-catch of salmon around Iceland in the ICES presentation which was not contained in the ACOM report. ICES indicated that information had been presented in the ACOM report on 'New opportunities for sampling salmon at sea' which referred to by-catch in research surveys, but the information presented related to by-catch in commercial fisheries. The Commission was advised that the presentation used information from the report of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) and that future presentations would be based only on the ACOM report.

4.3 The NGOs asked if ICES had received any reports of by-catch in the blue whiting fisheries, as anecdotal information suggested this could be substantial. ICES indicated that other Working Groups within the ICES community are requested to provide information to the WGNAS on by-catch of salmon, but ICES would follow-up on this matter.

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

4.4 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 and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.

4.5 The European Union highlighted the measures taken by Sweden in 2014 and by Scotland in 2016 to phase out mixed-stock fisheries in coastal waters.

4.6 Norway indicated that in several Norwegian fjords and coastal regions, mixed-stock fisheries have not been permitted for many years due to low Management Target attainment. However, restricted mixed-stock fisheries are still operating in most fjords and along the coast. During the revision of the regulations for 2016 and onwards, the mixed-stock fisheries were further restricted in specific areas in western, central and northern Norway. The fishing season was extended in two minor fjord areas in parts of western Norway due to improvement of stock status in these areas. The Commission was advised that in Northern Norway, further restrictions were adopted. A reduction of fishing days for bend nets will come into force in the Varanger fjord from 2016 and corresponding regulations for the coastal region and the Tana fjord will come into force when a new agreement for the river Tana is put into effect. The total catch in the coastal net fisheries in 2015 was 233 tonnes, an increase of 9% from 2014. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning co-operation on management and monitoring of, and research on, wild salmon stocks in Finnmark County and the Murmansk region was signed by Norway and the Russian Federation in Autumn 2015. A Working Group has been established, has agreed to initially focus on work related to fisheries regulations, and has exchanged more detailed information on stock status, the current management regime and regulatory measures. Some areas for possible closer scientific co-operation have been identified. The work has already contributed to a better mutual understanding of salmon issues and management challenges. It was hoped that the first annual report from the Group would be released by the end of 2016. The new measures introduced for the Varanger fjord fisheries in 2016 are expected to reduce catches of salmon originating from Russian rivers.

4.7 The Russian Federation indicated that it welcomed the new management measures for mixed-stock fisheries introduced by Norway in 2016, and believes that the new regulatory measures will help to minimise interceptory harvests in the area of fisheries jurisdiction of one Party of salmon originating in the rivers of another Party. However, it would again like to bring mixed-stock fisheries in Northern Norway to the attention of Members of the Commission and Council. The results of the Kolarctic Salmon Project, presented at the Theme-based Special Session of the Council of NASCO in

2014, showed that the proportion of salmon of Russian origin harvested in Finnmark County, Norway, made up 18% of the total catch. Proportions of wild salmon originating from different regions showed remarkable differences in catches between municipalities. The Commission was advised that salmon of Russian origin made up 65% of the total catch taken in the Sør-Varanger municipality, with the highest proportion occurring at the beginning of the fishing season in June. Taking into account that the total Norwegian catch in the coastal net fisheries in 2015 was 233 tonnes, an increase of 9% from 2014 and of 21% from 2013, the Russian Federation again urged Norway to further restrict the interceptory mixed-stock fisheries in its northern coastal areas and adopt more restrictive regulations than those currently implemented.

4.8 Norway referred to negotiations between Finland and Norway for the Tana. As reported in the Annual Progress Reports, the negotiations are on-going and have been for a number of years. After meetings, including at a political level, at which the main elements of a new agreement were resolved, Norway had hoped to conclude the negotiations at a final meeting held prior to the 2016 Annual Meeting but Finland had withdrawn some basic elements which were previously agreed, leaving little hope that a new agreement will be in place in 2017. The negotiations are on-going, but Norway is preparing new measures for the Norwegian part of the river to come into effect no later than 2018.

4.9 The Commission was advised that Finland found it unfortunate that a conclusion to the complex negotiations had not been reached. It is a complex issue with many different stakeholders with different fishing rights. The negotiations have been on-going for several years and although time is now limited, Finland hopes to continue the talks and find agreement to take the measures forward. However, if this is not possible, then national measures will be introduced but this is seen as a secondary option.

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

4.10 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese salmon fishery. 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 2017 Annual Meeting.

(d) Regulatory Measures

4.11 In 2015 the Commission adopted a Decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2015/16 - 2017/18. Under this Decision, the Commission decided not to set a quota for the salmon fishery in the Faroese Fisheries Zone for 2015/16, acknowledging that Faroese management decisions will be made with due consideration to the ICES advice concerning the biological situation and the status of the stocks contributing to the fishery. The Decision would also apply in 2016/17 and 2017/18 unless the application of the Framework of Indicators (FWI) showed that a re-assessment was warranted. The Commission had agreed that the procedure for applying the FWI that was used previously should continue under the new Decision.

4.12 The Commission was advised that the FWI Working Group had concluded that the results of the NEAC FWI assessment in 2016 (based on indicator values for 2015) were

consistent with the previous PFA forecast for 2015 for two of the four stock complexes. For one stock complex (Southern NEAC 1SW salmon), the FWI suggested that the forecast of PFA was an over-estimate which does not trigger a re-assessment when the Faroes fishery is closed. However, for Northern NEAC MSW salmon, the FWI suggested that the forecast of PFA for this stock complex was an under-estimate and that a re-assessment was appropriate. Therefore, the FWI Working Group concluded that a re-assessment of the existing management advice for the Faroes fishery was required from ICES in 2016. Accordingly, ICES had been requested to provide catch options or alternative management advice for the 2016/17-2018/19 fishing seasons, with an assessment of risks relative to the objective of exceeding stock conservation limits, or pre-defined NASCO Management Objectives, and advise on the implications of these options for stock rebuilding. ICES had also been requested to update the Framework of Indicators used to identify any significant change in the previously provided multi-annual management advice.

- 4.13 The advice from ICES indicated that in the absence of any fisheries in the fishing seasons 2016/2017 to 2018/2019, there is a less than 95% probability of meeting the spawner escapement reserves for the two age groups (potential 1-sea-winter (1SW) and multi-sea-winter (MSW) spawners) of the Southern NEAC stock complex. Therefore, in the absence of specific management objectives, ICES advises that there are no mixed-stock fisheries options on the NEAC complexes at the Faroes in the fishing seasons 2016/2017 to 2018/2019. The Decision adopted in 2015 will, therefore, continue to apply to the fishery in 2016/17. It will also apply in 2017/18 unless the application of the Framework of Indicators (FWI) shows that a re-assessment is warranted. The Commission agreed that the FWI as updated by ICES, based only on southern NEAC stock complexes, will be applied by a Working Group in January 2017.

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

- 4.14 The Commission was advised that treatment of the parasite in Norway was a success story and that progress made is in accordance with the National Action Plan. Over the previous year there had been significant activity and the parasite has now been eradicated from many important salmon rivers. New methods to eradicate the parasite have been developed and employed successfully and if the progress continues, only 7 out of 49 rivers will remain infected by the end of 2016. An up-date on the situation concerning *G. salaris* in Sweden was provided in its Annual Progress Report.
- 4.15 In 2004, the Commission had agreed a 'Road Map' for taking forward the recommendations relating to the parasite *G. salaris*. In accordance with this 'Road Map', Working Group meetings had been held in 2006 and 2007. There have been no meetings of the Working Group since 2007, but an item has been included on the North-East Atlantic Commission agendas since then to allow for progress reports from the Parties and, in addition, information is sought in the Implementation Plan template on measures taken to prevent the introduction or further spread of the parasite. At the request of the Commission, a background document on the 'Road Map' and reporting arrangements in relation to *G. salaris* was prepared for and considered at the 2016 Annual Meeting. In view of the serious threat posed by the parasite, the Commission agreed to reconvene its Working Group, under the Chairmanship of Mr Stian Johnsen (Norway), to meet for two days prior to the 2017 Annual Meeting. The Commission asked that the Secretary liaise with the Working Group's Chairman on the

arrangements. The Working Group was asked to undertake the following tasks:

- provide a forum for exchange of information among the Parties/jurisdictions on research on, and monitoring and control programmes for, the parasite *G. salaris*;
- review progress in relation to the Commission's 'Road Map' and advise of any changes required;
- develop recommendations for enhanced co-operation on measures to prevent the further spread of the parasite and for its eradication in areas where it has been introduced; and
- develop recommendations for future research.

4.16 It was noted that previous meetings of the Working Group had included representatives of the Parties, NGOs and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the ICES Working Group on Pathogens and Diseases of Marine Organisms.

(f) Election of Officers

4.17 The Commission re-elected Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union) as its Chairman and elected Mr Victor Rozhnov (Russian Federation) as its Vice-Chairman.

(g) Other Business

4.18 The winner of the Commission's US\$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Andrey Federov of Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation.

5. West Greenland Commission

5.1 The Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany, during 7 - 10 June 2016 under the Chairmanship of Mr Ted Potter (European Union).

(a) Review of ACOM Report from ICES

5.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES. It was noted that a report on the 2015 fishery had been presented at the Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission.

5.3 The United States asked for clarification on how the adjustment to the phone survey results had been conducted. ICES indicated that the adjusted figure had been provided in a working paper from Greenland and had been considered and accepted by the Working Group.

(b) Report of the Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission to review the Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017

5.4 The report of the Inter-sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was presented. A report on the West Greenland Salmon Fishery in 2015 had been presented at the Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission, including an update on changes made

to the reporting and licensing systems in place for the fishery. The Commission had been advised that the 2016 quota for the West Greenland Salmon Fishery had been set at 32 tonnes in response to the 2015 quota being exceeded.

- 5.5 The Commission noted that two questions remained open from the Inter-sessional Meeting. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had been asked whether any further efforts had been made to contact those licensed fishermen who could not be contacted during the telephone survey and whether any further details could be provided about the harvest in the municipality in NAFO Division 1F that resulted in the quota being exceeded due to late reporting. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that at this stage it was not possible to provide additional information on either of these questions, but it would be followed-up on return to Greenland.
- 5.6 The United States commended Greenland on the progress made since last year but remains concerned at the level of harvest at West Greenland, given that the scientific advice from ICES is clear that there are no harvest options that will allow management objectives to be met. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was asked for clarification on how settlements and communities are grouped into municipalities and what information was provided to ICES. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that the incident in NAFO Division 1F occurred in one town in one municipality and was extraordinary. The Commission was advised that this had occurred because although the catch reports had been gathered, they had not been forwarded to the central authority. As a result, the quota was exceeded by 11 tonnes and the catch in NAFO Division 1F was 14 tonnes in total. Measures will be taken to ensure this does not happen again in the future. The Commission noted that there had been widespread recognition of what Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had achieved over the last year.
- 5.7 The United States noted that there had been discussions at the Inter-sessional Meeting on the exceedance of the quota, how the catch at East Greenland is handled and regarding the additional tonnage in the light of the phone survey proration (2.94 tonnes). Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had indicated that the quota for 2016 of 32 tonnes is based on reported catches and does not include the 2.94 tonne proration. The United States noted that it looks forward to working with Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and asked if the Commission could be informed of these prorations before measures are adopted by the Greenland Government for the 2017 fishery and prior to any Inter-sessional Meeting. The Chairman indicated that he understood that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had used the official statistics in the form of reported landings and cannot use estimates in official statistics.
- 5.8 The Commission was advised that given the changes that have been made since last year, and the small size of the administration in Greenland, consideration was being given to simplifying the system for next year in order to have only one total catch figure.
- 5.9 The European Union commended Greenland for the efforts made since last year and the level of transparency in reporting, and asked for clarification on what a simplified system might entail; one figure rather than two figures, or one figure reported to NASCO and another to ICES that includes proration. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe

Islands and Greenland) indicated that there would be a need for discussions with the Control Unit.

- 5.10 Canada also acknowledged the significant effort made and the transparency of reporting and indicated that it did not underestimate the significance of the challenges faced by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) in setting a reduced quota. However, Canada remained concerned at the level of the harvest and, although it did not wish to re-open the measure, Canada felt that the Commission should consider what may be contained in the next measure given the advice from ICES. Canada noted that it would be an extremely important step forward if Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) decided not to authorise factory landings and operate only as a subsistence fishery.
- 5.11 At the Inter-sessional Meeting, the Commission agreed a revised matrix for the application of the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery. It was agreed that self-assessments should be conducted by each Party/jurisdiction of the West Greenland Commission (excluding Finland and Sweden) and submitted to the Secretariat no later than 31 December 2016. The self-assessments would be issued to Members of the Commission and NGOs. The Secretariat would request that any questions on the self-assessments be provided no later than 1 March 2017 and Parties/jurisdictions would be asked to provide written responses to these questions by 1 May 2017. The Commission noted that application of the six tenets is part of the Regulatory Measure and that it would be appropriate to review the self-assessments as part of that process during an Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission to be held immediately prior to the 2017 Annual Meeting.

(c) Regulatory Measures

- 5.12 A Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland was adopted at the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Commission for the fishery in 2015, 2016 and 2017. This measure had applied to the 2015 fishery, and, subject to the result of running the Framework of Indicators (FWI), would also apply to the 2016 and 2017 fisheries at West Greenland. The Commission had agreed that the procedure for applying the FWI that was used previously should continue under the new Regulatory Measure. The Commission was advised that application of the FWI in 2016 concluded that a re-assessment of the ICES management advice for the 2016 fishery was not necessary. The 2015 Regulatory Measure would, therefore, continue to apply to the 2016 fishery.
- 5.13 The United States indicated that there was a harvest of 60 tonnes over a period of 9 weeks of the fishery in 2015. For 2016, the quota would be 32 tonnes and the representative of the United States asked if Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) intended to shorten the season or adjust the start date to manage the smaller quota. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that the start of the fishery in 2015 had been postponed by 2 weeks to 15 August. When the fishery started, there were no landings to factories and the development of the fishery was slow. For 2016, it was expected that the fishery would again open on 15 August with no factory landings, but the development of the fishery would be monitored.

(d) Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

5.14 The Commission adopted a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2016. This internationally co-ordinated sampling programme provides valuable biological data to the ICES stock assessments that inform science-based management decisions for the West Greenland fishery.

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

5.15 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 NGOs noted that the Labrador salmon fishery is an MSF and the advice from ICES is that fishing should only take place on salmon from rivers where stocks have been shown to be at full reproductive capacity. The NGOs encouraged Canada to increase monitoring in Labrador and commended Scotland for the measures introduced to its fishery in 2016, noting that this increased focus on the coastal fishery in England.

(f) Election of Officers

5.16 The Commission elected Mr Carl McLean (Canada) as its Chair and Ms Kim Damon-Randall (USA) as its Vice-Chair.

(g) Other Business

5.17 The Commission agreed to hold an Inter-sessional Meeting prior to the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Commission, in order to undertake a review of the Regulatory Measure pursuant to paragraph 9 of WGC(15)21, including implementation of the Updated Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the Salmon Fishery at West Greenland and the review of the self-assessments made by Parties/jurisdictions against the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery. The United States asked for consultation on the fishery prior to setting the measures for 2017.

5.18 The winner of the Commission's US\$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Kristian Isbosethsen, Qaqortoq, Greenland.

5.19 The Commission appointed Dr Niall Ó Maoileidigh (European Union) to serve on the Standing Scientific Committee to replace Mr Ted Potter.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

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

(a) Audited Accounts

- 6.2 The Audited Accounts for 2015 were presented. In 2015, the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Council the appointment of Chiene + Tait for the 2015, 2016 and 2017 audits, or such other company as may be agreed by the Secretary in consultation with the President and Chairman of Committee. The Secretary had requested three quotes for the audit work for the three-year period and, following consultations with the President and Chairman of the FAC, Saffery Champness (Edinburgh) had been appointed to undertake the 2015, 2016 and 2017 audits. The 2015 audit had been conducted effectively and within the time specified in the Financial Rules.
- 6.3 In 2014, the Committee had recognised that the Organisation's financial position was much more favourable than it had been at the start of 2013 and this improvement had continued in 2015. The Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000 and the Contractual Obligation Fund was continuing to be re-built and was close to its ceiling of £250,000 which should be reached in 2017.
- 6.4 The Committee was advised that the Recruitment Fund also continues to be built and the Audited Accounts indicate that it had reached £30,000 by the end of 2015 with an additional £15,000 included in the 2016 Budget. The Committee agreed to retain the sum of £15,000 in the 2017 Draft Budget which would build the fund to £60,000. The Committee considered that this was an appropriate level for the Fund, but, in a case of special need, the Working Capital Fund might also be utilised. The Committee agreed to review this decision at its next Annual Meeting.
- 6.5 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2015 Audited Accounts.

(b) Relationship with ICES

- 6.6 The MoU with ICES had been renewed for a further period of three years from 2016 on the understanding that, during this period, there would be no increase in costs above the rate of inflation in Denmark.
- 6.7 In 2015, ICES had asked NASCO for feedback on the format of the advice. No substantive changes were proposed but the Council had requested that, in future ACOM reports, the responses to questions from NASCO be presented in the same format as that in which the request is made, 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. The Council had also asked that some of the more general information which does not form part of the request for advice, but which applies to all three Commission areas (Management Plans, Biology, Environmental Influences on Stocks, Effects of Fisheries on the Ecosystem and Quality Considerations) be included in a single annex to the ACOM report. Some additional minor comments on the format had also been made by the Council. The Committee noted that while most of these changes had been made in the 2016 ACOM Report, the general information had been removed from the main report but had not been annexed. The Committee asked that NASCO's appreciation be conveyed to ICES for the changes made and that the Secretary liaise with ICES on the remaining issues relating to the format of the ACOM report. ICES would also be asked if the recommendations in the

report of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon could be included in the ACOM report in future.

(c) MoU with the OSPAR Commission

6.8 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 co-ordination 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.

6.9 There had been improved exchange of information under the MoU. However, in 2015, a Draft Recommendation relating to salmon had been developed by the OSPAR Commission's Biodiversity Committee which failed to recognise the measures, agreements and practices developed and implemented by NASCO. The Council had, therefore, requested that the Acting President write to the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission indicating that NASCO, as the RFMO charged with conserving, managing and restoring salmon in the North Atlantic, would welcome support for its work but would appreciate an opportunity for proper consultation and comment before the Draft Recommendation is adopted. This letter had also highlighted the scope for considerable duplication of effort.

6.10 A summary of the consultations that had taken place with the OSPAR Commission's Secretariat since NASCO's 2015 Annual Meeting was presented. The document also included the latest revision of the Draft Recommendation. The OSPAR Commission Secretariat had indicated that it would welcome further comments on the Draft Recommendation before its Annual Meeting to be held during 20 - 24 June 2016. While not endorsing the Draft Recommendation, or taking any policy position on it, the Committee recommended to the Council that the President of NASCO be requested to write to the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission to: (1) express appreciation for the opportunity to comment further on the Draft Recommendation; (2) note the primary interest of the Council is that the Draft Recommendation clearly articulate the demarcation between the roles of NASCO and the OSPAR Commission and factually reflect relevant information about NASCO and its work; and (3) propose limited additional changes to the Draft Recommendation text to reflect these interests.

(d) International Year of the Salmon

6.11 The Committee was advised that inter-sessional consultations indicated that NASCO Parties favour a clearly defined one-year initiative to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing salmon and in support of fund-raising for new research. The proposed 2017 Draft Budget included a sum of £60,000 for the IYS in accordance with the Outline Proposal, but the Committee recognised that appropriate budgetary provision would need to be resolved by the Council once it had agreed on the nature and scope of its involvement and the timing.

(e) Consideration of the 2017 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan

6.12 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2017 Draft Budget and 2018 Forecast Budget and noted a Five-year Budgeting Plan (2017 - 2021) which had been provided for information.

(f) Election of Officers

6.13 The Committee elected Ms Kimberly Blankenkemper (USA) as its Chair and re-elected Mr Cal Wenghofer (Canada) as its Vice-Chair.

Secretary
Edinburgh
7 April 2017