



Agenda item 5.2
For decision

Council

CNL(18)07

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2017

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Note: This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 2017, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

*Report on the Activities of the
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2017*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Government of Sweden, through the European Union, NASCO held its Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting in Varberg, Sweden. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Council was held during 6 - 9 June 2017 under the Presidency of Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway). Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), five Inter-Governmental Organizations, fourteen accredited Non-Governmental Organizations 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 2017 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by a Review Group. This was done 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. The Review Group developed questions in response to any shortcomings and these were sent to the jurisdictions with a request for written responses prior to the Annual Meeting. These responses were compiled and issued to all delegates attending the 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 Council accepted the recommendations of the Review Group for changes to the reporting template. The Council agreed that, rather than developing questions for response by the Parties / jurisdictions, the Review Group should, in future, provide details of its evaluation of progress on each action in a table at the end of its review, highlighting shortcomings. The Parties / jurisdictions would be asked to address these shortcomings in their APRs for the following year.
- 2.5 The Council established a Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of Reports to be chaired by Mr Rory Saunders (USA). The Council agreed that the Working Group should comprise one, but no more than two,

representative(s) from each Party and from NASCO's accredited NGOs and ideally include members of the IP / APR Review Group. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group were:

- (a) review the Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress, CNL(12)44, and advise on any changes required to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle in order to ensure that reports are meaningful and that unnecessary burden is avoided;
- (b) review the templates for preparation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports, CNL(12)42 and CNL(12)43, and advise on any changes to streamline and further improve reporting in the next Implementation Plan cycle, including options for including reporting under the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery;
- (c) propose a schedule for the development and review of Implementation Plans and submission and review of Annual Progress Reports.

(b) Theme-based Special Session: Understanding the Risks and Benefits of Hatchery and Stocking Activities to Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations

2.6 The Council held a half-day Theme-based Special Session entitled '*Understanding the Risks and Benefits of Hatchery and Stocking Activities to Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations*'. The over-arching objective for the session was to facilitate an exchange of information relating to understanding the risks and benefits of hatchery and stocking activities to wild Atlantic salmon populations by:

- reviewing the latest scientific information on the risks (genetic and ecological) and benefits (demographic, reduced extinction risk) to wild Atlantic salmon fitness of hatchery and stocking activities;
- reviewing the approaches used to prevent the loss of Atlantic salmon populations at high risk of extinction (e.g. by live gene banking, smolt-to-adult supplementation);
- reviewing the approaches used to minimise unintended negative consequences to wild Atlantic salmon populations from hatchery and stocking activities;
- sharing information on policy frameworks for assessing the risks and benefits and the decision-making process for stocking proposals; and
- reviewing NASCO's Guidelines for Stocking Atlantic Salmon and considering the need for any revisions to them in the light of new information.

2.7 Following the Meeting, the Steering Committee prepared a report of the Theme-based Special Session.

2.8 The Council decided not to hold a Theme-based Special Session during the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting in 2018, given that there will be negotiations for new regulatory measures at that Meeting.

(c) International Year of the Salmon

- 2.9 The Council held a half-day Special Session on the International Year of the Salmon (IYS). An update on the work of the IYS Committees and planning was presented.
- 2.10 The Council noted that the NASC had identified the following tasks to be undertaken by the Coordinating Committee: development of an IYS logo; development of an IYS website (after considering the pros and cons of having a single shared website or separate websites); development of key messages at a salmosphere level; development of criteria for IYS endorsement / use of the IYS logo; and organizing an international symposium (through the Symposium Steering Committee).
- 2.11 The NASC considered that the primary task relating to research is to identify priorities and support implementation of research at a basin scale and it did not see the role of the Coordinating Committee as being to identify research priorities at a salmosphere scale. It was recognised that there could be benefits from improved exchanges among scientists working in the North Pacific, North Atlantic and Baltic. The benefits and opportunities for research programmes at a larger geographical scale should first be considered by the IASRB's Scientific Advisory Group or at the international symposium.
- 2.12 At the RFMO level, the NASC had recognised that SALSEA - Track was the Board's research priority. The NASC had developed a number of key messages and examples of activities that might be conducted in the North Atlantic as a contribution to the IYS, including production of a 'State of the Salmon' report. It was also recognised that there might be opportunities to raise awareness of the challenges facing salmon at Ministerial and high-level conferences. A one-page briefing note might be prepared. The NASC also recognised that a portal similar to that used for promoting awareness of activities under the World Fish Migration Day might be helpful.
- 2.13 The Council recognised the considerable potential of the IYS and noted that much of the activity in implementing the IYS will be a matter for the Parties and NGOs. There will be a need for enhanced co-ordination, particularly within the North Atlantic area, and the Council agreed on the need to provide for additional resources within the Secretariat to implement the IYS activities identified. In this regard the Council noted that funds were available in the 2018 budget to employ a full-time Assistant Secretary and considered that the duties of this position could include supporting the Secretary on IYS activities.
- 2.14 The Council asked the President to contact the President of NPAFC to discuss the focus of joint activities under the IYS. A meeting to discuss this took place in August 2017.
- 2.15 The Council accepted a proposal from Norway to hold an IYS symposium in conjunction with the 2019 Annual Meeting. The symposium would be entitled 'Managing the Atlantic salmon in a rapidly changing environment - management challenges and possible responses'. The Council agreed that each Party and the NGOs should be asked to nominate one person to serve on the Symposium Steering Committee. The Committee should report back prior to the 2018 Annual Meeting. The Committee should develop the programme and make the arrangements for the symposium. This symposium, at a North Atlantic level, would be in addition to the

major event to launch the IYS.

(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

2.16 The Council received an update on progress in implementing the 2013 ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’. The Council welcomed the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations.

(e) Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management

2.17 Five new studies relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon had been reported in 2016 / 17, along with a publication entitled ‘Comparative economic performance and carbon footprint of two farming models for producing Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*): Land-based closed containment system in freshwater and open net pen in seawater’.

(f) Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

2.18 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.

2.19 ISFA presented information on ‘Aquaculture Technological Developments Related to Sealice Management’. The NGOs indicated that there was a need to quash the argument about the level of mortality of wild stocks related to sea lice. If 100 smolts went to sea and 3 returned normally, but only 2 came back due to the additional mortality related to sea lice, that would equate to a 30% loss of returning fish. The NGOs stated that it must be accepted that sea lice have impacts on wild stocks and systems should be introduced that create a barrier between farmed and wild fish. This would eliminate the costs associated with treatment.

2.20 ISFA responded that mortality at sea had increased markedly, yet there was still an impression that sea lice mortality explained the variation in wild salmon survival rather than mortality at sea. ISFA acknowledged the need to control sea lice and stated that while the authorities should set the regulations, they should not define the approaches to comply. ISFA indicated that while there are several projects involving closed containment systems, there are challenges and noted that all farmed production systems have some impacts.

2.21 The European Union noted that the presentation by ISFA had referred to several techniques for sea lice control and asked how widely these are used and what work is on-going with wrasse for biological control. The European Union referred to a large (€8 million) project on fish parasites, including sea lice, that had been funded under the EU Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for research and innovation. The representative of ISFA indicated that he did not know how many sites or companies were using new approaches to sea lice control. However, chemical treatments are not

effective so new techniques are being used, including wrasse which are deployed at most sites.

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

2.22 A report on the management and sampling of the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon was presented. The Council asked the President to write to France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), noting NASCO's concerns (see paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 below) and encouraging France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to become a member of the Organization.

(h) Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

2.23 There were no applications to conduct scientific research fishing in the Convention area during 2016.

(i) Scientific Advice

2.24 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2018.

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

2.25 ICES presented information on: a review of major threats to Atlantic salmon in Norway; gene flow from farmed escapees altering the life history of wild Atlantic salmon; disease reports from Sweden and the Russian Federation; progress with implementing the Quality Norm for Norwegian salmon populations; poor juvenile recruitment in UK (England and Wales) in 2016; progress in stock assessment models; new opportunities for sampling salmon at sea; by-catch of salmon in the Icelandic mackerel fishery; tracking and acoustic tagging studies; and provided updates on Red Vent Syndrome and sea lice investigations in Norway. Relevant information had also been presented in the Summary of Annual Progress Reports.

(k) Election of Officers

2.26 The Council elected Mr Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its President and Ms Sylvie Lapointe (Canada) as its Vice-President to serve for the remainder of their predecessor's terms of office, which end at the close of the 2018 Annual Meeting.

(l) Appointment of a New Secretary

2.27 The Council was advised that Dr Emma Hatfield had been appointed as the Secretary of NASCO with effect from 1 October 2017.

(m) Reports on NASCO's Activities

2.28 The Council adopted a Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2016.

- 2.29 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.30 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below).
- 2.31 The report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board was presented. A presentation was made on a new approach to tracking based on a technique for sub-surface oceanographic monitoring ('ROAM'). The Council recognised it would be important for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to be kept informed of developments. The Council had been asked by the Board if funds (£5,000) could be made available to support a 'likely suspects' model being developed by the Atlantic Salmon Trust. The Council also considered proposals from the Chair of the IASRB for additional funding to support its work. It was noted that after providing initial seed corn funding when the IASRB was established, the intent was that the Board would seek its own financial resources rather than these being provided through the NASCO budget. The Council also felt that additional information would be needed in relation to the proposal to seek advice on fundraising. The Council decided not to make the funds requested available to the Board and that the Board should work within its existing funding. The Secretary was asked to prepare a review of the procedures relating to the work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group.
- 2.32 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 2017 had been received, and there were no arrears. No new information relating to IUU fishing by non-NASCO Parties had been obtained; liaison with NEAFC and NAFO on this matter is on-going.

(n) Observers

- 2.33 The Council was advised that the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Schools Network (ASCSN) had been granted observer status to NASCO. This brought the total to 38 NASCO accredited NGOs. One existing NGO, the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards, had changed its name to Fisheries Management Scotland.

(o) Other Business

- 2.34 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of £1,500 was Mr Juan Cruz Medina of Bariloche, Argentina.
- 2.35 The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting in the United States of America during 12 - 15 June 2018. The Council accepted an invitation to hold its Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting in Norway during 4 - 7 June 2019.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Varberg, Sweden during 6 - 9 June 2017. In the absence of both the Chair and Vice-

Chair, Mr Stephen Gephard (USA) was appointed as Acting Chair for the duration of the Meeting.

(a) Review of the 2016 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2016 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. In response to a question from the NGOs regarding sampling in the Labrador Subsistence Fishery, ICES noted that sampling representation is an important point to consider. Studies in previous years had indicated that size was not linked to the results of sampling in terms of fish origin. While the current sampling efforts by fisheries officers and fishers was significant, there was always room for improvement. The Commission was advised that there is a clear north / south association with stock status, although this is more likely due to increased mortality at sea of southern stocks than southern fish moving north in search of cooler waters. The sampling results from Labrador indicate that all fish are from Labrador. The NGOs noted that in addition to climate change, human influences were likely to play a role as, for example, hydro-electric dams and aquaculture activities are more prevalent in southern areas.

(b) The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) presented a report on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery. The Commission was advised that, as requested, the report had been provided earlier to ICES to ensure that the data could be included in the ICES report. Although France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had committed to providing catch per unit of effort (CPUE) data in 2017, it had not yet been possible to conduct this analysis. The Commission was advised that there had been reduced catches in the professional fishery and that one professional fisher is due to retire in the next few years. However, due to favourable weather conditions there had been increased catches in the recreational fishery.

3.4 The Commission was advised that as one professional fisher leaves the fishery, their license would not be eliminated. However, it is unlikely that there would be new interest for new professional licenses. The number of recreational licenses issued had increased from 70 in 2016 to 80 in 2017, but has been permanently capped at that level. The 2017 fishing season had been shortened by 10 days in 2017 and would be shortened by two weeks in 2018. The United States expressed concern with the continued mixed-stock fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon and asked whether consideration had been given to establishing regulatory measures to limit catches. The Commission was advised that limiting the number of retained salmon per recreational license was being considered.

3.5 Canada noted its appreciation for the report and continued sampling efforts, and an understanding of the difficult conversations taking place with fishers. However, Canada also expressed concern at the increased catch in 2016, given that those catches were of Canadian origin, many from vulnerable populations. While establishing a limit on the total number of recreational licenses could be positive, Canada was very concerned that fixing this limit at 80 represented an increase from the 2014-16 yearly limit of 70 licences. Canada proposed that a letter from the President of NASCO to France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) could be useful to express NASCO's concerns and encourage France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to become a member of the Organization. The United States supported the proposal of a letter stressing the

importance of improved co-operation with France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) in salmon conservation through effective management. The Commission recommended to the Council that the President of NASCO submit a letter to the French Government in this respect. This letter was sent on 15 September 2017.

(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. In 2016, it had been agreed that these reports would be submitted in advance of the Annual Meeting in future. However, this had not been possible in 2017 due to revisions being made to address comments and / or questions on the draft reports from one Member.

3.7 The NGOs noted that there were no escapes reported in New Brunswick in 2016. However, in Canada's Scotia-Fundy consultation process, it was indicated that an increase in escapes was observed in the Magaguadavic River that year. The origin of these escaped fish was unclear. Canada advised the Commission that in New Brunswick the industry must report and submit a containment plan on breach events greater than 100 fish. These reports are shared with federal agencies. Smaller breach events can occur. In recognition of this, in 2016 an Aquaculture Containment Liaison Committee comprising federal and provincial government, NGOs and the industry was established in New Brunswick. Co-chaired by the Atlantic Salmon Federation and the Atlantic Canada Fish Farmers Association, the Committee provides a forum to communicate and determine collaborative opportunities that are consistent with the objectives of the Containment Management of Marine Salmonid Farms in New Brunswick. This Committee was aware of the farmed salmon found in the Magaguadavic River and the Co-Chairs had discussed the source.

3.8 Canada presented a paper containing an update on AquaBounty's AquAdvantage Salmon (AAS) project. The NGOs advised the Commission that the scientific risk assessment mentioned in the paper was based on a much smaller number of eggs being produced (100,000 vs the 13 million eggs proposed) and all grow-out would occur from eggs exported to the Pacific drainage of Panama. The current AquaBounty proposal includes grow-out of 250 tonnes in PEI and potential sales of eggs for grow-out elsewhere. The risk assessment noted 'changes to the proposed use scenario or to the proposed containment measures may result in the entry or release of AAS into the environment in a quantity, manner or circumstances significantly different to the potential exposure of AAS assessed in the current risk assessment. Given the potential hazard of AAS to the environment and associated uncertainty, including potential invasiveness, any significant new activity may result in an altered exposure and consequently in a different risk assessment conclusion than provided in this report.'

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

3.9 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries.

3.10 Canada presented a paper which provided a description of the Labrador Subsistence Food Fishery, including information on the management, stock status, the most recent catch data and the sampling programme, as well as the origin and composition of the catches. The United States recognised favourable trends in the report, such as a reduction in total harvest, fishing closer to the shore to avoid possible interactions with non-Labrador stock and sampling activities which have recently demonstrated the absence of US-origin fish among the sampled fish and noted that the United States appreciated Canada's efforts in these respects.

(e) Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

3.11 The Commission was advised that information on the sampling programme had been provided in both the ICES report and in the paper on the Labrador Subsistence Food Fishery (see paragraph 3.10 above).

(f) Other Business

3.12 Canada provided information on various domestic issues related to the conservation of Atlantic salmon. The Ministerial Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon (MACAS), formed to investigate the low returns to southern Canadian rivers in 2014, had completed its work. Its final report contained over 60 recommendations ranging from habitat improvements to science and enforcement. The Government of Canada had reviewed the recommendations in detail, and subsequently a Forward Plan for Atlantic Salmon was developed, outlining how the Department would advance the recommendations. The Forward Plan was posted on the internet in July 2016. Updates to the Forward Plan would be made in the coming months to capture the progress made over the past year. The Commission was advised that Canada's Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy was initiated in 2016, and was completed by a working group involving representation from 17 indigenous, watershed and conservation groups. One key highlight of the resulting draft policy was the plan to institute a process of 2-year, regionally based implementation plans for salmon conservation. Ministerial approval of the revised policy would be sought in the next few months. In October 2016, Fisheries and Oceans Canada had launched the Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture, the first ever collaborative research forum for Atlantic salmon. This brings together experts from Canada, the United States, indigenous groups, provincial agencies, NGOs, academic institutions and other stakeholders to prioritise scientific research and data and information-sharing. This significant undertaking was already promising to show noteworthy benefits with respect to targeting research efforts to areas of concern and sharing information regularly so that collective efforts for salmon conservation remain aligned, as understanding of the various science-related issues is increased. The Commission was also advised that the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (SCFO) had issued its 'Report on Wild Atlantic Salmon in Eastern Canada' in January 2017. This further helps place a high profile on Atlantic salmon, not just within Government but also in the public sphere. The report itself contained very pointed and specific recommendations that were being reviewed to assess their feasibility.

3.13 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Maurice LeBlanc, Saint Antoine, Canada.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

4.1 The Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Varberg, Sweden, during 6 - 9 June 2017, chaired by Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union).

(a) Review of the 2016 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

4.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES.

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

4.3 The Commission was advised that a fisheries agreement for the Teno / Tana river had been reached by the Finnish and Norwegian Parliaments and had come into force on 1 May 2017. The Teno / Tana is the border river between Finland and Norway and is one of the largest salmon rivers in the world. It is very important for the indigenous Sami people. The new agreement is flexible, target- and science-based and socio-economic factors have been taken into consideration. This means that the use of traditional gears can continue with reduced effort and the tourist fishery continues with a new licence sales system. Fishing pressure will be reduced substantially, particularly for the weakest stocks. The Commission was advised that under the new agreement there will be close co-operation between the authorities managing the fisheries in Norway and Finland. A joint science group will co-ordinate monitoring and research and local knowledge will also be involved in all aspects of the group's work. The new agreement will be translated into English and distributed to NASCO Parties.

4.4 Norway indicated that a decision had been taken in the 2016 regulations for further restrictions on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs) in Finnmark in the Tanafjord and coastal region, including the Varangerfjord, in order to offer additional protection to Tana River stocks. At that time, it was intended that these additional restrictions would come into force when a new agreement for the Tana River was reached. However, decisions on the new agreement were taken later than anticipated. The status of stocks suggests that these regulations had been beneficial, but given the delay in reaching agreement, the decision was made not to bring the regulations into force in 2017 but to do so in 2018 unless unforeseen circumstances occur or the scientific advice changes.

4.5 In 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been signed by Norway and the Russian Federation on co-operation and management and monitoring of, and research on, wild Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk region (Russian Federation). A joint Working Group had been established under the MoU consisting of managers and scientists from each country, which would meet and report annually to the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fisheries (Russian Federation). The first meeting of that Group had been held in 2016. The report of that meeting was not available at the time of NASCO's 2017 Annual Meeting, but will focus on the mandate of the group, the salmon stocks and the fisheries. The second meeting of the Group was scheduled for the second half of 2017.

4.6 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a

focus on MSFs. The European Union, Norway and the Russian Federation tabled papers providing a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.

- 4.7 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the mixed-stock salmon fishery at the Faroe Islands had been closed and indicated that all MSFs should be sustainable and encouraged the European Union to take further action. The NGOs commended Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for their actions in this respect and noted that this had been a difficult political decision for a country that relies heavily on marine resources. The NGOs indicated that there are considerable MSFs in the North-East Atlantic Commission area and urged other Parties to take further action.

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

- 4.8 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese salmon fishery.

- 4.9 The Commission was advised that there had been some further consultations in the Faroe Islands over the past year and that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) intended to prepare a discussion document examining both scientific (e.g. the data to be used and appropriate Management Units) and management (components to be included in the framework) aspects. A Working Group on allocation criteria had been set up by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). This Working Group considered issues including zonal attachment, historical fisheries, biomass conversion and socio-economic factors. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that these might be factors for inclusion in a risk framework for the Faroes salmon fishery and suggested that the discussion document could be considered by correspondence and the Parties could then decide if a meeting was required.

(d) Regulatory Measures

- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 The Commission was advised that the FWI Working Group had concluded that the results of the NEAC FWI assessment in 2017 (based on indicator values for 2016) did not suggest that the PFA forecast for 2016 had been under-estimated. Therefore, the FWI Working Group had concluded that no re-assessment of the existing management advice for the Faroes fishery was required from ICES in 2017. The Decision adopted in 2015 would, therefore, continue to apply to the fishery in 2017 / 18.

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

4.12 In 2004, the Commission had agreed a 'Road Map' for taking forward the recommendations relating to the parasite *G. salaris*. In 2016, in view of the serious threat posed by the parasite, the Commission agreed to reconvene its Working Group, chaired by Mr Stian Johnsen (Norway), to meet for two days prior to the 2017 Annual Meeting. 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.

4.13 The Report of the Meeting of the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the North-East Atlantic Commission Area was presented. The Working Group stressed the importance of ensuring that adequate measures are in place to prevent the introduction of the parasite. It was recommended that publicity material highlighting the risks posed by the parasite be disseminated by the competent authorities and made available on the NASCO website. The Working Group noted that legislation should recognise different strains and their pathogenicity. In the event that *G. salaris* and *G. thymalli* were synonymised, there could be serious consequences for the protection afforded by Additional Guarantees. The Group noted that emerging risk factors for the spread of *G. salaris* include a changing climate, which could result in reduced salinities, and changes in migration patterns with smolts entering the sea but then migrating into other rivers. In this regard, the Working Group had noted with concern the continuing spread of *G. salaris* along the west coast of Sweden and it was suggested that salinity levels in the Skagerrak may not always be at levels that would prevent the further spread of the parasite. The Working Group further recommended that the North-East Atlantic Commission retain an item on its agenda to allow for an exchange of information on *G. salaris*. To facilitate this, there should be a further meeting of the Working Group in 2018 but, thereafter, only every three years. The importance of developing and testing contingency plans was highlighted and it was noted that these are at different stages of development in different countries. The Working Group recommended that the North-East Atlantic Commission request that contingency plans be made available through the Secretariat in advance of the Working Group meeting in 2018 and that those countries without plans be encouraged to develop them as a matter of urgency. The Working Group recommended that, given the potentially devastating impacts of the parasite, the Commission adopt a revised 'Road Map' as contained in Annex 12 of its report. This revised 'Road Map' had been considerably simplified to remove duplication and reflect changes in EC fish health legislation and it had been re-formatted without reference to the original source of the recommendations, responsibilities and timeframe for action which should be clear from the text.

- 4.14 The European Union indicated that while it could support the Working Group continuing its work, it would not be able to adopt the recommendations in Annex 12 (the revised 'Road Map') at that time because there had been inadequate time to consult and it was not clear if some recommendations were consistent with EU Animal Health regulations. The European Union also indicated that the recommendations concerning research should have been reviewed by the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board's Scientific Advisory Group (SAG).
- 4.15 The Commission agreed that it would retain this item on the agenda for its Annual Meetings, and the Working Group should meet every three years starting in 2018 with the following Terms of Reference:
- provide a forum for exchange of information among the Parties / jurisdictions on research on, and monitoring, control and eradication programmes for, the parasite *G. salaris*;
 - consider the need for revisions to the recommendations in Annex 12 of NEA(17)4 to ensure consistency with NASCO Parties' Animal Health Legislation;
 - 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.
- 4.16 The European Union indicated that it would provide comments to the Working Group in relation to Annex 12 of NEA(17)4 ahead of the next meeting of the Working Group.

(f) Update on the Work to Eradicate *Gyrodactylus salaris* in Norway

- 4.17 The Commission was advised that efforts to eradicate *G. salaris* in Norway have given good results in recent years. By 1 January 2017, *G. salaris* had been successfully eradicated from 22 rivers and a further 21 rivers had been treated and are being monitored. After eradicating the parasite, the local salmon stocks are re-built from the gene bank. Work would continue in 2017 in accordance with the National Action Plan and it was expected that two new regions would be declared free of the parasite later in the year. The treatment in the Skibotn region seemed to have been successful and efforts to re-build the stocks would commence in 2017. It would be a further five years before the result of the chemical treatment could be confirmed. There would then be two regions infected with the parasite. In the Driva region, a fish barrier is now operative and prevents salmon from migrating upstream, thereby reducing the infected area in preparation for chemical treatment. The expert group assessing options for treating the Drammen River will deliver its final report in 2018.

(g) Other Business

- 4.18 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Eugeny Danilov of Murmansk, Russian Federation.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Varberg, Sweden, during 6 - 9 June 2017, chaired by Mr Carl McLean (Canada).

(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 2016 fishery had been presented at the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Commission.
- 5.3 The United States asked if there are methods, in addition to or instead of the phone surveys, that might produce more reliably robust catch information. ICES indicated that no such formal discussions have taken place. Phone surveys are more widely used in fisheries where there is information on the pool of participants. In the absence of a known pool of participants, it is a difficult and challenging issue to resolve adequately. Alternative approaches have been discussed previously, for example, the use of internet-based applications to gather catch data. Direct engagement with communities may also be useful given that locals may know who goes fishing and how much they catch in the absence of other reporting mechanisms.
- 5.4 The NGOs noted that the unknown level of unreported catches in the Greenland salmon fishery is concerning as a significant proportion of the population in Greenland may be involved in salmon fishing. For example, if 1% of the population caught an average of 50 kg of salmon, such landings could comprise *c.* 25 tonnes per year. While recognising the difficulty in accurately establishing such catches with the disparate character of communities in Greenland, the NGOs asked if ICES considered the accounted unreported catch estimates as accurate. ICES suggested that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) may be best placed to answer that question. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) acknowledged the uncertainties that exist as the pool of participants is unknown and suggested that unreported catches may be low as salmon is perceived to be a delicacy. To some extent, it may be a relatively small fishery in comparison to inshore fisheries for Greenland halibut, cod and red fish. The possibility of considering other forms of reporting to improve compliance and data, such as reporting by community, and the possible pros and cons of such an approach, was discussed.
- 5.5 The NGOs highlighted the issue, previously raised at the Inter-Sessional Meeting, that there is a paucity of catch information available from non-licensed private fishermen in order to quantify their contribution to the catch figures. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was asked whether a statistically-informed random sampling approach of the Greenlandic population could be considered to better address this knowledge deficit. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) thanked the representative of the NGOs for this worthwhile suggestion but indicated that direct engagement with communities, as alluded to by ICES, may provide the most reliable source to quantify unreported catch by private fishermen.

(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

- 5.6 The report of the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was presented. A report on the West Greenland Salmon Fishery in 2016 had been presented at the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Commission. The Commission had discussed this report in depth at that meeting.

5.7 The Commission had also reviewed the self-assessments conducted under the revised matrix for the application of the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery at the Inter-Sessional Meeting.

(c) Regulatory Measures

5.8 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 2017 concluded that ‘the FWI does not show that there has been a significant change in the indicators used, and therefore a re-assessment of the ICES management advice for the 2017 fishery is not required’. The 2015 regulatory measure would, therefore, continue to apply to the 2017 fishery.

5.9 In response to a question from the NGOs on how Greenland planned to manage its salmon fishery in 2017, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that they would implement the measure WGC(15)21 in 2017 and committed that the following would also apply: the quota for the 2017 fishery will be set at 45 tonnes; there will be no factory landings; the season will remain the same as in 2016; the awareness campaign on reporting catches will continue; and validation of catches through phone surveys will continue.

(d) Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

5.10 The United States sought clarification from Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) that external staff inputs are available from the Government of Greenland, in co-operation with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, to undertake the sampling of fish in Nuuk as stated in the Draft West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2017. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that they were aware of issues in this regard and committed to follow-up on them. The United States noted that it had been suggested that the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources would undertake fish sampling during the season in Nuuk. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that it would require time to further clarify this matter with the Greenlandic authorities.

5.11 The NGOs indicated that whole season sampling could be very valuable and would not incur significant time resources, and that this could be explored further with the Sampling Co-ordinator. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that further consultation with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources would be necessary and that international samplers may be better placed to do this work.

5.12 The Commission adopted a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2017. 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

- 5.13 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries. Canada and the European Union tabled papers providing a description of the MSFs still operating in their jurisdiction, the most recent catch data, any updates to the Implementation Plan relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the IP period to implement NASCO's agreements. The NGOs noted that there should be fairness in the focus and pressure placed on all MSFs, not just the fishery at West Greenland, particularly given that MSFs still operate in other jurisdictions. In particular, they urged the European Union to influence constituent countries with MSFs to close them. The European Union noted that tremendous efforts have been made over many years by EU Member States to address a wide range of ecological and environmental issues in view of ensuring very high environmental standards across the EU. This notably includes the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive, where the achievements and progress made to date are significant and have direct and indirect positive effects on Atlantic salmon conservation. Although many challenges remain, the outlook is positive with a commitment to continual improvement.

(f) Other Business

- 5.14 The Commission agreed to hold an Inter-Sessional Meeting in advance of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Commission, in order to facilitate the consideration of a possible new regulatory measure to be adopted in 2018.
- 5.15 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Per Nukaaraq Hansen, Greenland.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

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

(a) Audited Accounts

- 6.2 The Audited Accounts for 2016 were presented.
- 6.3 The Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000 and, following an unbudgeted payment of £40,000, the Contractual Obligation Fund had reached its ceiling of £250,000. A further unbudgeted payment of £21,000 had been made to the Fund established in 2016 to support activities under the IYS.
- 6.4 The Committee was advised that the Recruitment Fund also continued to be built and the Audited Accounts indicated that it had reached £45,000 by the end of 2016. An additional £15,000 had been included in the 2017 Budget which would allow it to reach the agreed level of £60,000 prior to the appointment of a new Secretary during 2017.

6.5 The Committee was advised that a quote had been received from Saffery Champness to conduct the audit work in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Committee recommended to the Council that Saffery Champness be appointed to conduct the audits for that three-year period.

6.6 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2016 Audited Accounts.

(b) Relationship with ICES

6.7 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.

6.8 In 2015, ICES had asked NASCO for feedback on the format of the advice. No substantive changes were proposed. However, 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. The intention was that 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 Influence on the Stock, Effects of the 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. In 2016 ICES had addressed most of these changes although, while the more general information had been removed from the advice sections of the report, it had not been included in an annex. The annex had been included in the 2017 ACOM Report after the advice for each of the Commissions. ICES had also been asked to ensure that all the recommendations from the report of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon were incorporated in the ACOM Report and this had been done in the advice for 2017. Additionally, each section of the 2017 ACOM report was numbered according to the numbering in the request from NASCO, although individual subparagraphs were still not numbered. The Committee welcomed these changes and asked that the Secretary continue to liaise with ICES on any issues that arise relating to the provision of advice under the MoU and to continue to request that the advice be made available as early as possible.

(c) MoU with the OSPAR Commission

6.9 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.

The MoU is now working well.

- 6.10 In 2015, a Draft Recommendation relating to salmon had been developed by the OSPAR Commission's Biodiversity Committee. Following comments from NASCO on earlier versions of the Draft Recommendation, in 2016 the OSPAR Commission had indicated that it would welcome further feedback on the latest version. This would then be considered for adoption at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the OSPAR Commission. At its 2016 Annual Meeting, NASCO's Finance and Administration 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.
- 6.11 These comments had been sent to the OSPAR Commission by the President of NASCO. In a response dated 30 June 2016, the Chairman of the OSPAR Commission had indicated that the Recommendation had been adopted by the OSPAR Commission and was effective from 24 June. He further indicated that the changes proposed by NASCO had been 'examined carefully to best integrate them (or their intentions) into the finalised text'. Under the Recommendation, the OSPAR Commission's Contracting Parties should report on the implementation of the Recommendation by 31 December 2019 and then every six years.
- 6.12 It was noted that, in accordance with the MoU, the Committee anticipated that updates on developments with the implementation of the Recommendation should be provided to NASCO.

(d) Use of the Contractual Obligation Fund

- 6.13 The Finance and Administration Committee had been asked by Heads of Delegations to advise on a number of issues related to lump sum payments to retiring Secretariat Members. These were as follows:
- confirm and document that the suggested lump sum payments are consistent with the Staff Rules (CNL(14)63) and Staff Fund Rules (CNL(14)62);
 - confirm and document the balance of the Contractual Obligation Fund and identify all contractual obligations that would be covered by this fund;
 - identify any potential short-term risks to the Organization in the event that the Contractual Obligation Fund is fully utilised for lump sum payments; and
 - advise on what financial resources exist to minimise any identified risks.
- 6.14 The Committee noted that Staff Rule 8.2 (b) and Staff Fund Rule 3.2 state that '*Prior to a Secretariat Member retiring from full-time employment with NASCO, a lump sum payment will be made into that Secretariat member's Staff Fund of not less than one-twelfth after tax of the final year's gross salary and allowances for each year of service with the Organization, fractions of a year to count pro-rata*'. The Committee acknowledged that these rules provide flexibility (discretion) in the lump sum paid,

subject to the minimum payment of one twelfth, and thus a proposal to increase the lump sum payment above one twelfth is consistent with the Organization's rules. The Committee acknowledged that the lump sum payments are very important to retiring NASCO staff for whom NASCO has no responsibility after retirement.

- 6.15 The Committee noted that the description of the Contractual Obligation Fund in the audited accounts, reads as follows: '*a reserve with the aim of enabling the Organization to meet such obligations without major fluctuations in budgeted expenditure*'. The Committee noted that the Contractual Obligation Fund had been built up in recent years, in particular to ensure reserves exist to cover the possibility that lump sum payments in excess of one twelfth are agreed. It is also intended to cover other contractual obligations that may arise but the timing and full cost may be unknown. This policy was adopted to avoid the difficulties encountered upon the retirement of the previous Secretary in 2012. The Committee considered that lump sum payments to retiring Secretariat members are a contractual obligation, and that payment of the lump sums from the Contractual Obligation Fund is, therefore, appropriate. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the current balance of the fund, after making the minimum payments of one twelfth, is approximately £258,000 and if the proposed discretionary lump sum payments were made to retiring staff, a balance of about £3,000 would remain in that Fund. However, it was noted by the Committee that the 2018 Draft Budget includes provision of £35,000 to the Contractual Obligation Fund, which would bring the total in that Fund to approximately £38,000 in January 2018. This did not include any 2017 year-end surplus that would be credited to the Fund. The Committee noted that the other potential obligations that would be expected to be met from the Contractual Obligation Fund would be the mortality allowance payable in accordance with Staff Rule 8.3 (a) and the compensation payable in the event of termination of service of an employee (other than in the case of gross dereliction of duties) in accordance with Staff Rule 10.4.
- 6.16 The Committee noted that no other lump sum payments to Secretariat members are expected in the short-term but that prudent financial planning would ensure that the Contractual Obligation Fund is re-built in a timely fashion to a level that allows the Organization to meet obligations as they arise. The Committee noted that the mortality allowance is only payable in the event of death of a Secretariat member following illness or surgery not resulting from an accident covered by the appropriate insurance, and only if the deceased leaves dependents. The amount payable varies with the number of years of service ranging from 3 - 6 months gross remuneration. The mortality allowance payable in June 2017 could have ranged from around £6,000 - £30,000, depending on the staff member concerned. For long-serving staff (more than 10 years), the lump-sum payment and not the mortality allowance would be payable. However, that did not apply to any staff members at the time of the 2017 Annual Meeting. There is also an obligation to pay compensation in the event of termination of service at a rate of one month's salary for each year of service, unless the cause of termination is gross dereliction of duties. The Committee noted that the NASCO Secretariat runs very efficiently and effectively with three full-time and one part-time staff members. This is considered the minimum staff level needed given the workload involved. NASCO's workload is not expected to decrease. In light of the foregoing, the risk of potential financial expenditures associated with the mortality allowance or termination pay is minimal.

- 6.17 The Committee noted that, in addition to the expected balances in the Contractual Obligation Fund for the remainder of 2017 and in 2018, the balance of the Organization's other main reserve, the Working Capital Fund, is at its ceiling of £200,000. The audited accounts describe the Working Capital Fund as a reserve for the purpose of meeting unexpected non-budgeted or urgent costs. For example, these might include unexpected building maintenance costs. The Committee noted that in 2012 the Working Capital Fund was utilised to make a lump sum payment to the previous Secretary on his retirement. Thus, in the event of any unexpected further draw on the Contractual Obligation Fund, substantial additional reserves would be available. Furthermore, Financial Rule 4.4 specifies that the Secretary may make transfers of up to 20% of appropriations between sections, and the President may authorise the Secretary to make transfers of more than 20% between sections. These provisions provide additional flexibility to meet unexpected draws on the Contractual Obligation Fund.
- 6.18 The Committee concluded that it did not see a substantial financial risk to NASCO should the proposed lump sum payments be made to its retiring Secretariat members. However, should something unexpected occur that exceeded the resources available through the Contractual Obligation Fund, the option to access the Working Capital Fund and / or to transfer appropriations between budget sections provides sufficient safeguards.
- 6.19 Following these discussions, it was suggested that at its next Annual Meeting, the Committee might consider the need for any clarification or amendment to NASCO's rules relating to financial and administrative matters.
- (e) Consideration of the 2017 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan**
- 6.20 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2018 Draft Budget and 2019 Forecast Budget and noted a Five-year Budgeting Plan (2018 - 2022) which had been provided for information.
- 6.21 The Secretary was asked to provide the Committee with detailed breakdowns of the staff related costs per staff category, in an appropriate manner, in future. It was also suggested that the Secretary consider filling the Assistant Secretary's position and that additional information be made available in future budget commentaries for the various budget items to facilitate the work of the Committee and further improve transparency. In particular, it was requested that the amount of the fixed (30%) component of the contribution, which is shared equally among all Parties, be documented.

Secretary
Edinburgh
11 April 2018