

NAC(15)10

Report of the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the North American Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization

Hotel North 2, Happy Valley – Goose Bay, Canada

2 - 5 June 2015

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada), opened the meeting and welcomed delegates to the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the North American Commission.
- 1.2 An Opening Statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Thirty-Second Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page XX of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its Agenda, NAC(15)7 (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 Ms Rebecca Dorsey (USA) was appointed as Rapporteur.

4. Review of the 2014 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 4.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Ian Russell, presented the report from ICES on the status of salmon stocks in the Commission Area. His presentation is available as document NAC(15)8. The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) report that contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, CNL(15)8, is included on page XX of this document.
- 4.2 The representative of the United States thanked the representative of ICES and the Chairman of the North American Sub-Group of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon for their work.
- 4.3 The representative of the United States proposed that the numbers of permits issued at St Pierre and Miquelon be corrected, as those in the report were from 2013, not 2014. This was acceptable to the Commission.
- 4.4 The representative of the United States also asked the representative of ICES if he could elaborate on the coastal fishery in Canada, which accounts for only 6 percent of the

total fishery in the Commission area. The ICES representative was not able to do so. The representative of the United States noted that it would be interested to see how any information about the fishery's operation may have impacted the years catch reduction. The representative of Canada noted that catch was reduced in the coastal fishery because while the effort was there, the salmon were not, and many fishermen switched to striped bass.

- 4.5 The representative of the United States asked if the lack of US-origin salmon observed in Labrador and St Pierre and Miquelon was due to the sampling levels or something else. The representative of the United States supported additional sampling in future years. The representative of ICES noted that some incidental catch may be possible, but that the data showed none.
- 4.6 The NGO representative asked the representative of ICES why northern stocks are faring better than southern stocks. The representative of ICES commented that there is no firm answer as to why the relative abundance in the north is better than in the south, but it may be the result of climate change. The NGO representative also asked what percentage of the catch in Labrador is tested for genetic composition. The representative of ICES noted the sample size is relatively small.
- 4.7 The NGO representative also clarified with the representative of Canada that while the percentage of monitored rivers in Labrador that meet the Conservation Limit is high, this is due mostly to the English River, and that the other 3 rivers did not meet their Conservation Limit.

5. Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.1 The Chair recalled that 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.
- 5.2 Canada presented paper NAC(15)3 (Annex 3), 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 program, as well as the origin and composition of the catches. As the paper had already been presented and no Commission Members had any additional questions, it was determined that the agenda item could be closed.

6. Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 6.1 The representative of the United States wished to reiterate that in the analysis of the Labrador fishery in 2014, the sampling showed that no US-origin fish were observed in 2012, 2013 or 2014. However, US-origin fish have been observed in the area before and the fishery occurs in an area where US-origin salmon would be expected to occur. Further, the representative of the US urged Canada to continue to conduct sampling, mindful of resource constraints. The representative of ICES reaffirmed that earlier studies, from 2006 to 2011, showed US-origin salmon in the fishery.

6.2 The representative of Canada noted a recent decision to take at least 50 samples from several communities, which will increase the total number of samples taken. In addition, the representative of Canada noted that an additional 450 samples were taken from Lake Melville.

6.3 The NGO representative thanked Canada for the increase in sampling and noted its importance to understanding the fishery.

7. The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

7.1 The Chairman referred the Commission to Council document CNL(15)16 (Annex 4) presenting information on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery.

7.2 The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had presented the report to the Council, noting that there had been a decline in catches compared to 2013 and an increase in licenses, and that the increase to 12 licenses (in 2014) is seen as the maximum because this is the number of artisanal fishermen in St Pierre and Miquelon. For 2015, the number of professional licenses decreased to 8. The increase in 2014 was due to fishermen who fish other species requesting an additional permit for salmon specific in 2014. In addition, she reported the number of fishermen with recreational licenses was 70 and there had been more inspections in 2014.

7.3 The representative of Canada asked if the increase in licenses, but lower catch, in 2014 was the result of less fishing effort or because there were fewer fish to catch. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) said that a higher number of licenses does not necessarily mean more effort and that France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) would be in a better position next year to provide more information on the use of licenses. She expected that the data would not show much variation in effort and that the amount of the catch is mostly due to variability of salmon abundance.

7.4 The representative of Canada thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for attending the meeting and noted that since St Pierre and Miquelon is near Canada and the United States, collaboration in science and sampling is very important. The representative of Canada explained that the Canadian Government has been encouraging France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO as a Party for many years, including through standing bilateral fisheries consultations, and would continue to do so. The representative of Canada cited the good collaboration in 2014 and expressed appreciation for the sampling and genetic analysis of the fish caught, and reiterated that it is essential that France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) commits to become a full member of NASCO and to end the commercial fishery.

7.5 The representative of the United States echoed Canada's statement and expressed appreciation for the continued participation in NASCO by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) as an observer and its annual reporting. He called on France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to end any commercial component of the fishery and to join NASCO and the North American Commission as full members.

- 7.6 The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) renewed a commitment to report on the fishery and to work in cooperation with Canada. She noted that while France's position is unchanged, there is awareness of the status of the stock and the effect of the fishery, as well as the socio-economic importance of the fishery to many fishermen. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted that there is an openness in Paris to join the Convention in the future, but that it would be contingent on guarantees that the fishery could continue.
- 7.7 The representative of Canada thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for their comment and expressed pleasure and thanks in regard to the statement that there is interest in Paris to join NASCO. However, he expressed understanding for their position but concern over the request to provide guarantees on the fishery. The representative of Canada expressed that France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) could benefit from the broader conservation of salmon and that if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) was a member of NASCO, the North American Commission would work with France (in respect in St Pierre and Miquelon) cooperatively in managing its salmon fishery. The representative of Canada expressed difficulty with accepting a commercial fishery, as even a few tons sold at market are salmon that will not return to the rivers. In addition, he stated that a firm commitment in terms of total catch allows Canada to know that salmon will be able to reach the rivers and to set the basis to be able to evaluate the success of its conservation efforts.
- 7.8 The United States echoed Canada's sentiments and expressed further concerns about the commercial aspect of the fishery, noting the United States' socio-economic interests in salmon, including the sacrifices of the Penobscot Indian Nation for the preservation of salmon and the United States' efforts to conserve salmon. The representative of the United States noted that if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) were to join NASCO, it would not necessitate the closure of the fishery, but rather a full consideration to the needs of the people balanced against the terms of the Convention and principles of NASCO.
- 7.9 The representative of Canada asked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) what the best way would be to engage with Paris to encourage France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted that Paris will need to consult the territory before acceding to the Convention. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted that the Préfet would need to be consulted and he would consult the fishermen. She expressed the opinion that more time is necessary to educate and prepare the fishermen concerning the need to conserve Atlantic salmon. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) also noted that the amount of the catch that is sold is minimal, as most of the catch in St Pierre and Miquelon is for private consumption. The representative of Canada thanked the representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) and noted that Canada would like to engage in a discussion on further conservation measures in St Pierre and Miquelon with respect to what is being attempted through the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the coast of the United States.

8. Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 8.1 In 2010, the Commission had adopted recommendations arising from a Review of the NAC Database on Introductions and Transfers and the Scientific Working Group, NAC(10)6. The Parties agreed (1) that a detailed international database was no longer necessary; (2) that the Parties should provide focused annual reports to the Commission on issues of mutual concern including salmonid disease incidences, breaches of containment, introductions from outside the Commission area and transgenics; (3) that experts should be appointed who could work to identify priority mechanisms and requirements for information exchange on fish health issues; (4) and that minor revisions to the NAC Protocols on Introductions and Transfers of Salmonids should be made to reflect the new information exchange mechanism.
- 8.2 The United States presented document NAC(15)4 (Annex 5). The representative of the United States reported that there were no reportable instances in 2014. He updated the Commission on the incidence of Bacterial Kidney Disease instance reported in 2013, and noted that this was resolved in 2014. In addition, there were no breaches of containment in aquaculture in the United States. The representative of the United States noted that the US had one import to report of 37,000 eggs of *Salmo trutta* (brown trout) to promote a sea run fishery in the Connecticut tributaries at the extreme southern range of the historic range of the Atlantic salmon.
- 8.3 The representative of Canada asked the United States to explain the process by which brown trout, a non-indigenous species, are introduced into waters that could be frequented by salmon. The representative of the United States noted that the protocols established by NASCO through the Williamsburg Resolution do not preclude the stocking of non-native salmonids in southern portions of the Commission area where such species already occur naturally. He reported that the importation was done in full consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, following its full legal authority and process that brown trout occur in the wild in the targeted streams and a rigorous fish health screening was conducted to certify that the fish had been disease free for generations. Finally, he noted that the streams to be stocked do not flow into the Connecticut River, and have never had salmon and do not have suitable salmon habitat.
- 8.4 Canada presented document NAC(15)5. Canada reported one breach of containment involving small rainbow trout in Nova Scotia with no recapture efforts. In addition, Canada had two salmon imports. First, 60,000 Icelandic eggs were brought into Nova Scotia, which will be confined in a land-based facility and cannot be moved alive from the site without authorization of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Second, 50,000 Icelandic eggs were imported for research purposes and will be destroyed after the conclusion of the experiment. Canada reported 10 aquatic animal fin-fish disease instances in 2014 and responded to comment from last year concerning the reporting of instances of disease in the report, and noted that they would make the information more accessible in the future. A revised report was presented, NAC(15)9 (Annex 6).
- 8.5 The representative of the United States expressed appreciation for the coordination on NAC reports this year in advance of the Annual Meeting and noted that this process is improving the final reports. The representative of the United States also clarified that the eggs imported to the land-based facility are held in closed-looped systems.

- 8.6 The NGO representative thanked Canada for indicating that they will improve disease reporting and noted that the website currently contains more recent data from 2015. It was decided that future reports would include the statistics.
- 8.7 The NGO representative also inquired about the observation of salmon escapees at a monitoring site in New Brunswick, but no escape events have been reported. She noted that while only escapes of 100 fish or more are legally required to be reported, they had agreed last year to report all escapes. The representative of Canada noted that while the provinces are responsible for reporting that data, they would verify with the provinces that information is reported appropriately.

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 9.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the North American Commission \$1,500 prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Norris D. Wolff of New York, USA. The winning tag was of Canadian origin and had been applied to large male salmon at the Southwest Miramichi Enclosure estuary trapnet and was recaptured in the Southwest Miramichi. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

10. Recommendations to the Council on the Request to ICES for Scientific Advice

- 10.1 The Commission noted the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee in relation to the North American Commission area would be considered by the Council. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(15)11 (Annex 7).

11. Other Business

- 11.1 The representative of the United States thanked the hosts for their hospitality in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, for the wonderful facilities and for the events and receptions. He emphasized that the presence of community, their leaders, the video and folk music all have provided an appreciation for the connection between the people and the salmon in Labrador and have set a great tone for the negotiations and are a great expression of the importance of NASCO's work. In addition, the representative of the United States noted that this is the last occasion he will sit across from the Head of the Canadian delegation and expressed his thanks and gratitude to his friend and colleague.

12. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 12.1 The Commission agreed to hold its Thirty-Third Annual Meeting at the same time and place as the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of NASCO.

13. Report of the Meeting

- 13.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page **XX**, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of North American Commission papers is included in Annex 8.