

## **NAC(16)9**

### ***Report of the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the North American Commission***

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

***7 - 10 June 2016***

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

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada), opened the meeting and welcomed delegates to the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the North American Commission.
- 1.2 A written Opening Statement on behalf of the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting was distributed (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Thirty-Third 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(16)6 (Annex 2).

#### **3. Nomination of a Rapporteur**

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

#### **4. Election of Officers**

- 4.1 Mr Tony Blanchard (Canada) was re-elected as Chairman and Mr Patrick Keliher (USA) was re-elected as Vice-Chairman of the North American Commission, the terms to continue for 2 years from the close of the 2016 Annual Meeting.

#### **5. Review of the 2015 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area**

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Dr Jonathan White, presented the report from ICES on the status of salmon stocks in the Commission Area. His presentation is available as document NAC(16)8. The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) report that contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, CNL(16)9, is included on page XX of this document.
- 5.2 The representative of the NGOs asked for, and received, confirmation that the practice of catch and release for salmon in Canada exceeded 60% of the entire recreational fishery in 2015.

- 5.3 The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) thanked ICES for the presentation and provided the correct numbers of both professional (8) and recreational (70) fishermen licensed to fish for salmon in 2015. The ICES representative thanked the representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for the updated data and requested that this information be made available earlier next year so that it can be included in the report; the representative of St Pierre and Miquelon confirmed that this would be possible.

## **6. Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission**

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The representative of 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, detailed in a report tabled last summer, 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 has continued in 2016.
- 6.3 The representative of 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 representative of 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. The representative of Canada noted that she could not speak to specifics yet, but indicated that \$40 million Canadian dollars a 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.
- 6.4 The representative of Canada presented paper NAC(16)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.

## **7. Sampling in the Labrador Fishery**

- 7.1 The Chair noted that information on the sampling programme had been provided in both the ICES report and document NAC(16)3. 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 is always attentive to this issue, given the possibility for interceptions.

## **8. The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

- 8.1 The Chairman referred the Commission to Council document CNL(16)17 (Annex 4) presenting information on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery.
- 8.2 The representative of the United States asked if France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) intends to carry out a fishery in 2016 and, if so, what the management regime will be. The representative of 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 licenses in future. She noted that the total will not exceed 11. In addition, there has been good dialogue with recreational fishermen and the number of recreational licenses in St Pierre and Miquelon can be capped at 70. Discussions are also ongoing about limiting the number of salmon per fisherman and shortening the season to the period from mid-May to mid-July.
- 8.3 The representative of the United States noted that in the West Greenland Commission the Members have evaluated management controls in the West Greenland fishery using the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery, and are exploring their application by other Parties. The representative of the United States described the six tenets as outlined in WGCIS(16)3. The representative of the United States also thanked the representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for sharing new information about limiting the fishery and sample taking, and noted that he looked forward to science-based management of the fishery.
- 8.4 The representative of the United States asked if logbooks are required in the fishery, and if so whether these could provide information on catch per unit effort, and if all participants in the fishery are contacted about sampling. The representative of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) responded that all salmon are recorded, including size and weight, that they could provide information next year on catch per unit effort, and that sampling is done at the point of landing. The representative of the United States noted that the US looks forward to a more detailed analysis next year, and thanked the representative of France in respect of (St Pierre and Miquelon) for this information.
- 8.5 The representative of Canada thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for the report and noted that Canada appreciated the response. The representative of Canada also noted that Canada remains concerned about commercial aspects of the fishery, even though it is small, and encouraged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to reconsider this aspect. The representative of Canada noted support for the suggestions by the representative of the United States to extend the six tenets evaluations to St Pierre and Miquelon and the North American Commission. The representative of Canada urged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join the North American Commission and, while the fishery is small, Canada considers that this would be a desirable change.

## 9. Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The representative of Canada presented Canada's Annual Report, NAC(16)5 (Annex 5). The representative of the United States thanked Canada for the report and noted the collegial relationship between Canada and the US and the information exchange over the course of the last year, noting that the report is a helpful summation of their discussions. The representative of the United States noted that the US looks forward to this continued collaboration and noted that Canada's announcement of additional funding for scientific research will further improve the coordination and cooperation. The representative of the United States also suggested that, in future, the two Annual Reports be exchanged for review so they can be finalised in advance of the meeting. The representative of Canada agreed that having earlier consultation so that the papers can be made public in advance of the Annual Meeting is a good idea.
- 9.3 The representative of the NGOs noted that it would be helpful to have the reports submitted ahead of time. In particular, the NGOs had several questions following last year's discussion to ensure changes had been made, including the incidence of disease and potential transfer referred to, but without having previously seen the report the NGOs cannot fully engage.
- 9.4 The representative of the United States presented its Annual Report, NAC(16)4 (Annex 6) and thanked Canada for responding to the concerns of both the NGOs and the United States by removing web links from their Annual Report.
- 9.5 The representative of the United States also noted that, while not in Canada's Annual Report, Canada has noted 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.*

- 9.6 The representative of the United States thanked Canada for the detailed response. The representative of the NGOs noted that this would be in the area where the wild salmon is threatened and asked if the risk to the wild stocks is being taken into account. The representative of Canada said she cannot speak to the details but will follow up with the Province to see if this will be a part of their assessment.
- 9.7 After having a chance to review the Annual Reports, the representative of the NGOs thanked the Parties for the very good reports and thanked the United States for suggesting earlier submission. The representative of the NGOs asked if the disease reporting could be more detailed than by province, for example, by bay.

## **10. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize**

- 10.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the North American Commission \$1,500 prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Mark Steeves, Moncton, Canada. The winning tag was of Canadian origin. The tag was applied on 24 September 2014 to a small male 1SW salmon at the Southwest Miramichi River 'Millerton' estuary trapnet operated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada as part of the assessment program for Atlantic salmon in the Miramichi River. It was recaptured on October 4 2014, during the fall salmon angling season in the Cains River, a tributary of the Southwest Miramichi River. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

## **11. Recommendations to the Council on the Request to ICES for Scientific Advice**

- 11.1 The Commission agreed that the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee in relation to the North American Commission area should be considered by the Council. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(16)12 (Annex 7).

## **12. Other Business**

- 12.1 There was no other business.

## **13. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

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

## **14. Report of the Meeting**

- 14.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.