

NEA(05)9

***Report of the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of
the North-East Atlantic Commission of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
Palais des Congrès, Vichy, France
6-10 June, 2005***

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission and welcomed delegates to Vichy.
- 1.2 An opening statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).
- 1.3 In response to the opening statement by the NGOs concerning the dissolution of the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission on the 1st of January 2006, the representative of the European Union informed the Commission that there will be a fishery agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union under which a new joint fisheries commission will be established with responsibility for Baltic salmon. Furthermore, following review of the Common Fisheries Policy the Commission will establish seven new Regional Advisory Councils, one of which will cover the Baltic Sea area and this will be fully established by September or October of 2005. He reminded the meeting that NGOs can participate in the Regional Advisory Councils and suggested that interested NGOs might seek a seat on the Baltic Council. A meeting of interested parties in relation to the Regional Advisory Councils will be held in June 2005 in Copenhagen.
- 1.4 A list of participants at the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page 173 of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, NEA(05)8 (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 The Commission appointed Dr Niall Ó Maoiléidigh (European Union) as its Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Review of the 2004 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 4.1 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) reported that there had been no fishery at Faroes in the past four years.

- 4.2 The representative of ICES, Dr Walter Crozier, presented the scientific advice relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(05)8, prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Twenty-First Annual Meeting. The ACFM Report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page 123 of this document. Dr Crozier's presentation is contained in document CNL(05)44.
- 4.3 The representative of Iceland noted that the information on by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries related only to the mackerel fishery. He stated that adult salmon (2kg weight) are known to have been taken in Icelandic herring catches around Svalbard with up to 200 salmon taken in one trawl which indicated that the by-catch from this fishery may be significant. He asked whether there had been discussions in ICES about the placement of observers on-board herring fishing vessels as larger salmon are separated from the smaller herring following capture, facilitating detection. The representative of ICES replied that sufficient data were only available to examine the by-catch in the mackerel fisheries and not the other pelagic fisheries. While it was not possible at this stage to carry out similar analyses for other pelagic fisheries, he drew attention to the ICES Report of the Study Group on By-Catch of Salmon in Pelagic Fisheries which was available on the ICES web-site and which contained information on these fisheries. He indicated that ICES regards placing observers on-board pelagic fishing vessels as the most appropriate method of obtaining information on by-catch.
- 4.4 The representative of Norway asked for confirmation from ICES that the scientific advice was unlikely to change in the next two or three years. The representative of ICES stated that the forecast of pre-fishery abundance for the Southern European stock complex suggested that it would be unlikely that there would be a major change in abundance as the trend is downwards and the values had been similar in recent years. While there was no forecast for the Northern European stock complex, the trend was also downward and values had also been similar in recent years indicating again that there was little probability of a significant change in stock status.
- 4.5 The Chairman noted that this was Dr Crozier's last meeting as the representative of ICES and thanked him for the clarity of his presentation of the advice for the past three years.
- 4.6 The Secretary introduced document NEA(05)3 regarding the correspondence with the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) on potential by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries and asked ICES if this correspondence had been successful in obtaining the desired information on disaggregated catches. The representative of ICES confirmed this, noting that the data identified in the correspondence had been provided as requested. ICES would also appreciate information for earlier years in addition to that provided for the last three years and he understood that the NEAFC parties were working to provide this information and annual updates.

5. Risk of Transmission of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The Chairman referred to the Commission's decision at its last Annual Meeting to establish a Working Group on *G. salaris*. He indicated that Mr. Stian Johnsen of the Norwegian Food Safety Authority had been appointed as Chairman of the Working Group and the intention is that this group will meet before the next Annual Meeting of

the Commission. He asked the Parties to report on any actions taken in relation to the parasite.

- 5.2 The representative of Norway referred to document NEA(05)5 (Annex 3) which contained correspondence between Norway and the European Commission relating to the “Biocides Directive” 98/8/EC. A consequence of this Directive will be a ban on the use of rotenone from 1 September 2006. The Directive applies to all European Economic Area countries including Norway. He pointed out that the use of Rotenone is a key tool for the eradication of *G. salaris* and that the Directive could have serious consequences in Norway. He indicated that the Commission had advised that there are two options which would allow the continuing use of Rotenone and which were being pursued by Norway. These are that a complete dossier for the evaluation and inclusion of Rotenone in the positive list of the Directive could be prepared and submitted by the Norwegian Authorities to a Rapporteur Member State of their choice (preferably before 1st March 2006 so that placing on the market can continue until the evaluation is completed). Alternatively, Norway could apply for a derogation (temporary authorisation or extension of the phase-out period based on essential use of the substance) while actively pursuing the search for alternative means to combat infestations by *G. salaris*. Norway will be sending an application for an extended phase-out to the European Commission and suggested that it would be helpful if the North-East Atlantic Commission could write a supporting letter to the European Commission. In addition, Norway proposes that a full dossier should be prepared and suggested that this could be done through international cooperation arranged by the Working Group on *G. salaris*. In response, the representative of the European Union agreed that while Rotenone was important in eradicating *G. salaris* he did not feel that it would be possible to provide a supporting letter as this was a European Commission Directive. However, he indicated that individual Member States could do so.
- 5.3 The representative of the European Union tabled document NEA(05)6 (Annex 4) which provides information on the status of *G. salaris* in community waters and efforts being made to control transmission of the parasite. He further suggested that information on *G. salaris* could be placed on the NASCO website where it could be accessed readily by all interested Parties.
- 5.4 The representative of the Russian Federation reported that in 2004 a survey had been carried out by the veterinary services in the Murmansk region to identify parasites which posed a threat to salmon populations and to juvenile salmon in particular. The survey concentrated on the Tuloma River, one of the largest rivers in the region and the border river between Russia and Finland. *G. salaris* was not found.
- 5.5 The Chairman thanked the Parties for their presentations and proposed that Norway should advise the Commission Members, through the Secretariat, of the actions it has taken in relation to *G. salaris* and the Biocides Directive so that the other Parties can consider appropriate action.
- 5.6 The Secretary referred to the “road map” for taking forward the recommendations of the Commission’s Working Group on *G. salaris* which could also be given increased prominence by placing it on the website. With regard to first meeting of the Working Group he indicated that this might be in November 2005 or March/April 2006.

6. Report on a Pilot Study to Improve Understanding of the Migration, Dispersal and Survival of Farmed Salmon

- 6.1 The representative of Norway outlined the proposal for a simulated escape of tagged farmed salmon in the Commission area. He indicated that three years ago NASCO had asked ICES to design a study to better understand the migration, survival and dispersal of escaped farmed salmon. In 2003, ICES described an experimental design and the Commission had decided to undertake a pilot study in April 2004 involving releases of 500 to 1,000 tagged large salmon in a number of countries. He reported that this study had been postponed in 2004 and again in 2005 as several countries experienced difficulties in participating in the project.
- 6.2 The representative of the European Union stated that he regretted the delays with the project but informed the Commission that it was necessary to establish the right conditions for such a study. However, one Member State has indicated that it may be possible to conduct simulations and he would endeavour to provide the Commission with more information as soon as this became available.
- 6.3 The representative of Iceland indicated that, for various reasons, it had not been possible to participate in this study. There was a need to proceed with caution and under the most appropriate conditions.
- 6.4 The representative of Norway stated that the incidence of fish farm escapees was considered a serious problem and there was a lack of information on the dispersal and behaviour of escaped farmed salmon. He expressed his disappointment that the project had been delayed again and asked whether it was likely that the project could be carried out in 2006.
- 6.5 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) also expressed regret that the project had been postponed. He noted that there were also escaped farmed salmon at Faroes, although the numbers appeared to have declined in recent years. He pointed out that lack of funding had caused this delay and indicated that the Faroes would like to be involved in a joint project where funding was made available.
- 6.6 The representative of Canada drew attention to a similar project being undertaken in Canada and which was described in the Research Board's inventory of research, ICR(05)3.
- 6.7 The representative of the Russian Federation also expressed disappointment at the delay in implementing the project. Although Russia does not have a large salmon farming industry, negotiations had taken place with the owner of the only salmon farm in the Murmansk area to allow a trial release. While it was understood that other Parties were experiencing some difficulties, she hoped that the project could be carried out in 2006.
- 6.8 The representative of the European Union indicated that there was a series of issues which had resulted in the delays, including lack of availability of completely disease-free stock. He stated that he would look into this further and expressed the desire to keep the project on the Commission's agenda.

- 6.9 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked for clarification on a letter received from the Institute of Marine Research in Norway regarding a release of farmed salmon along the Norwegian west coast. The representative of Norway stated that he had not seen details of the proposal but was aware of plans to release post-smolts rather than the larger salmon which would be used in the Commission's pilot study. He undertook to send out a reminder about the pilot study and a project outline to the participating Parties in the Autumn.
- 6.10 The Chairman indicated that he found it unacceptable that this agenda item was being repeated without any action being taken. He understood that Parties would seek to have the project carried out as soon as possible.

7. Regulatory Measures

- 7.1 The Chairman asked the Parties to report on their salmon management measures for 2004.
- 7.2 The Representative of Norway stated that although catches had decreased in Norway in 2004 no new regulatory measures had been introduced. Norway operates a five-year regulatory regime for salmon fisheries which had been introduced in 2003. During this period there were no plans to make major changes to regulations unless there was a major change in the status of stocks. However, noting the advice from ICES regarding stock status, Norway would review this position at the end of the year with a view to changing regulations if necessary. He also noted that the river owners around the Trondheim fjord had initiated a bag net buy-out scheme aimed at reducing exploitation in the bag net fishery by 80% on an estimated total catch of 15,000 salmon (50-60t). The effects of this measure on the remaining bag net fisheries, in-river fisheries and spawning stocks will be evaluated.
- 7.3 The representative of the European Union referred to his opening statement regarding the efforts by Member States to reduce mixed-stock fisheries and their continued commitment to further this objective. He referred to a report which has been commissioned by the European Commission to describe the problems posed by mixed-stock fisheries which would assist the Council of Ministers in deciding on appropriate future action.
- 7.4 The representative of Iceland reported that there had been no change in their salmon fishery regulations.
- 7.5 The representative of the Russian Federation reported that the quota for the White Sea coastal mixed-stock fishery was reduced by 20% to ensure more salmon would return to spawn in the southern rivers of the Kola Peninsula. The in-river commercial fisheries of the Kola Peninsula had been closed and the practice of catch and release fishing was increasing.
- 7.6 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that there had been no fishery at Faroes for four years.
- 7.7 The representative of the European Union asked if there had been a research fishery at Faroes in 2004 and, if so, what had been the size of the catch taken. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded

that there had been no research fishery at Faroes in 2004. During a tagging study carried out in Faroes 127 salmon were caught and released.

- 7.8 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) drew attention to his opening statement to the Council in which he had noted NASCO's responsibility with regard to mixed stock fisheries and the need for fairness and balance in their management. He noted the poor condition of stocks with all stock complexes below their conservation limits and the ICES advice recommending the management of fisheries in a precautionary manner. He urged the other Parties to follow this advice. He indicated that the Faroe Islands had managed the salmon fishery with a view to sustainability and there had been no fishery in 2004. He noted that the Commission had not set a regulatory measure since 2001. He indicated that the Faroe Islands' intention is to continue to manage the fishery in a precautionary manner and with due regard to the advice from ICES. With this in mind he proposed continuing with the same arrangement agreed for 2005 in 2006.
- 7.9 The representative of the European Union referred to his statement made at the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission, which is still the European Union's position. This statement is as follows: "The representative of the European Union stated that the purpose of NASCO is to regulate the distant-water fisheries in the West Greenland and North-East Atlantic Commission areas. He noted that it had been some time since a regulatory measure had been agreed in the North-East Atlantic Commission and this is a deep concern for the European Union delegation. He asked how the Parties could meet their obligations under various international agreements, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks Agreement (the Fish Stocks Agreement), if regulatory measures were not established. He referred to the Decision adopted by the Commission at its last Annual Meeting. The European Union delegation felt that this Decision did not fulfil the Commission's obligations. It is the function of NASCO to put order into fishing for salmon in areas where it has authority. He indicated that the Fish Stocks Agreement refers to the need to strengthen the role of fishery Commissions and he asked how that could be achieved if regulatory measures are not established." He indicated that while there had been decisions agreed by the Commission in the past, these were not binding but merely state the good intentions of the Faroes with regard to management of the fishery. However, it is clear that NASCO's role is to establish regulatory measures and he proposed this approach.
- 7.10 The representative of Norway expressed his appreciation that Denmark (in respect of Faroes and Greenland) had acted in a precautionary manner consistent with ICES advice. He indicated that Norway would prefer to see a research fishery with a small quota but could accept the same arrangement as last year as he was confident that the Faroes would continue to act in a responsible way. With regard to multi-annual arrangements which had been identified within the "Next Steps" process he felt that there was no need for a new agreement each year but rather every three or four years.
- 7.11 Provided the Precautionary Approach was maintained by the Faroes and that there was no fishery the representative of Iceland stated that he could also accept a similar agreement to last year.

- 7.12 The Commission considered a proposal from the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for a Decision regarding the salmon fishery at Faroes in 2006, NEA(05)7. The representative of the European Union indicated that his Member States very much regretted that no regulation had been agreed, as this was the *raison d'être* of NASCO. He considered such an agreement to be a very final solution and he could only accept it on that basis. He referred to the European Union's position on this matter at last year's Annual Meeting which remained unchanged.
- 7.13 The representative of Norway accepted the proposal as tabled. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that as there had been no commercial fishery at Faroes for several years, and provided the Precautionary Approach continues to be applied by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), she could accept the proposal. The representative of Iceland stated that although he would have preferred a regulatory measure he recognized the restraint shown by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) with regard to the fishery at Faroes and he could therefore also accept the decision.
- 7.14 The Commission adopted the Decision, NEA(05)10 (Annex 5).

8. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 8.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize was Mr. Dmitriy Kuzmin from Murmansk, Russia. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

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

- 9.1 The Commission members reviewed the relevant section of document SSC(05)2. The main change from the advice request of previous years was the move to seek multi-annual catch advice (2006-2008). This change was initiated in response to the recommendation from the Next Steps for NASCO Working Group to consider the feasibility of adopting multi-annual regulatory measures.
- 9.2 The Commission agreed to recommend the relevant section of document SSC(05)2 to the Council as part of the annual request to ICES for scientific advice. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, CNL(05)12, is contained in Annex 6.

10. Other Business

- 10.1 There was no other business.

11. Date and Place of Next Meeting

- 11.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next Annual Meeting in conjunction with the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council during 5-9 June 2006.

12. Report of the Meeting

12.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting, NEA(05)9.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page 73, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of North-East Atlantic Commission papers is included in Annex 7 on page 91 of this document.