

NEA(06)8

*Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic
Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
Hotel Riekonlinna, Saariselkä, Finland
5-9 June, 2006*

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission and welcomed delegates to Saariselkä.
- 1.2 An opening statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page 177 of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, NEA(06)7 (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 The Commission appointed Dr Paddy Gargan (European Union) as its Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Election of Officers

- 4.1 The Commission unanimously re-elected Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway) as Chairman. The Commission elected Mr Kaj Mortensen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-Chairman.

5. Review of the 2005 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Timothy Sheehan, presented the scientific advice relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(06)7, prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Twenty-Second Annual Meeting. The ACFM report, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page 137 of this document.
- 5.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the advice from ICES stated that fisheries in the Commission area should only be on river stocks shown to be at full reproductive capacity. He asked the representative of ICES to confirm if there were any fisheries within the Commission area that were exploiting river stocks that were not at full reproductive capacity. The representative of ICES responded that the advice indicates that within the Commission area a high

proportion of the catch of both Northern and Southern European Stocks is taken in coastal fisheries but, without consulting the Parties, he could not provide more detailed information as to the origin of the stocks targeted. The representative of Norway indicated that there may be such fisheries. The Chairman suggested that this information might be presented by the Parties under agenda item 8. The Chairman of the NGOs indicated that the NGOs would be willing to assist the Parties in identifying some of these fisheries.

- 5.3 The representative of Iceland referred to a questionnaire survey of Icelandic fishermen that had been conducted with regard to by-catch of salmon in fisheries for other species. This survey had been reported in the advice from ICES. He asked the representative of ICES if there had been similar surveys in the north-west Atlantic with regard to by-catch of North American salmon stocks. The representative of ICES referred to previous advice from ICES that had indicated that in the north-west Atlantic the potential for by-catch was considered to be low. He referred to extensive observer programmes on US vessels but he indicated that he was not aware of specific questionnaire surveys of fishermen. He indicated that the Study Group on the By-catch of Atlantic Salmon (SGBYSAL) had not met to date during 2006. However, with the additional information provided to ICES by the Parties, ICES reported that the conclusions made in 2005 by the SGBYSAL were still valid.
- 5.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the presentation from ICES had indicated that disaggregated catch data was only available for Germany but indicated that such data had also been provided for the Faroe Islands.
- 5.5 At the second session of the Commission, the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) raised the question again regarding fisheries within the Commission area that were exploiting river stocks that were not at full reproductive capacity.
- 5.6 The representative of the European Union made the following statement:
- “Denmark (in respect of Greenland and Faroe Islands) is correct that fisheries in the European Union do act on some stocks that are below their conservation limits. This is understood to be undesirable, and as you will have seen from the Draft Implementation Plans presented at this meeting, EU Member States are taking many steps to move towards single stock management. For example, many fisheries operating on mixed stocks in coastal waters have been closed or are being phased out. Fisheries operating in rivers are generally regulated by effort controls, which limit the fishing gear, fishing seasons, etc., as well as bag limits and other measures. Controls operate on single stock fisheries and aim to permit recovery to conservation limits while preserving the economic viability of the river management. In addition, Ireland has given a firm commitment to meet scientific advice in 2007 which means that fisheries will only take place in estuaries and rivers on stocks which have been shown to be above their conservation limit.”
- 5.7 The representative of the Russian Federation indicated that he was not aware of any stocks in rivers being exploited where stocks were below conservation limit, but he was aware of the threat coastal fisheries posed and the Russian Federation is in the process of phasing out mixed stock fisheries.

- 5.8 The representative of Iceland commented that he was not aware of any Icelandic salmon stocks below conservation limits being fished in mixed stock fisheries.
- 5.9 The representative of the NGOs thanked the European Union for its statement and commented that the appropriate place for a detailed response would be in the implementation plans of each Member State. He looked forward to seeing what Member States have planned to achieve further reductions in mixed stock fisheries.

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

- 6.1 In the absence of the Chairman of the *Gyrodactylus salaris* Working Group, Mr Stian Johnsen (Norway), the Secretary introduced the report of the Group's meeting, NEA(06)3 (Annex 3). The Working Group had met in Oslo in March 2006 and had provided an excellent forum for cooperation and sharing of information on this very damaging parasite, described as a fisheries manager's nightmare. Information presented to the Working Group indicated that the annual economic losses caused by the parasite in Norway had been estimated at approximately £25 million and the additional annual cost of treating the parasite was estimated to be about £3.7 million. The Working Group had considered information from the European Commission which indicated that the level of Community protection against the importation of *G. salaris* has not been diminished under the new EU Fish Health Directive. The Working Group had concluded that this would only be the case if the existing Additional Guarantees were permanently adopted under the new Directive rather than being subject to review. The Secretary indicated that one of the major outputs of the Working Group meeting was the preparation of guidelines for establishing contingency plans for the treatment, containment and eradication of *G. salaris*. The Secretary also indicated that the Working Group had considered the implications of the Biocides Directive (98/8/EC) for the treatment of *G. salaris*. He concluded that it would be important for the Commission to adopt the Working Group's report.
- 6.2 The Chairman of the NGOs supported the need for clarification on the conflict between fish health and trade issues. The representative of the NGOs from Norway expressed concern about the risk of the spread of *G. salaris* both to new rivers and regions. He stated that experience had indicated that the parasite spreads to a new river every year and to a new region every fifth year. A 10-year Action Plan against the parasite has been agreed in Norway, but the new method of treating *G. salaris*, a combination of rotenone and aluminium sulphate, is expensive, and additional funding is required. At present less than half of the money required to implement the Plan has been made available, and the NGOs requested the Norwegian government to increase this funding to ensure eradication of this dangerous parasite. The NGOs also believe there should be an exemption for rotenone in the EU Biocide Directive as, without the use of this chemical, it is unlikely that *G. salaris* can be eradicated.
- 6.3 The representative of the European Union commented that he is very aware of the risks *G. salaris* poses to salmon stocks in certain EU Member States. He stated that "the Community intends to ensure the future protection of susceptible stocks of Atlantic salmon in fresh water, as laid down in the Habitat Directive 92/42/EEC, against the threat of *Gyrodactylus salaris*. This will be achieved through Article 43 of the proposal for a new aquatic animal health Directive, which creates a legal base to carry over the current protection measures laid down in Commission Decision

2003/453/EC under the new legislative regime". He stressed that this clearly means that the safeguards in place will be maintained.

- 6.4 The Chairman of the NGOs asked the European Union for some clarification as to whether the Habitats Directive could be used to prevent the import of live fish. The representative of the European Union stated that he could not respond in detail, but his previous statement had indicated that the current guarantees will still apply. He noted that a Norwegian company (VESO) had made an application for the continued use of rotenone. It is indicated in the Working Group report that an application for the inclusion of rotenone in the positive list of the Directive would lead to a two-year extension and a positive response to such an application from the European Commission would allow for the continued use of rotenone within the framework of the Biocides Directive throughout the Community.
- 6.5 The representative of the Russian Federation said that he had received a letter from the NASCO Secretary, written on behalf of the Working Group, regarding live imports of rainbow trout from Finland to Karelia in Russia. At the Working Group meeting it had been stated that imports had been made from sources in Finland that had not been confirmed to be free of the parasite. He indicated that he had written to the Karelian authorities requesting them to clarify the conditions applying to imports of live fish from Finland to Karelia. He stated that a response from the Federal Veterinary Authorities had confirmed that while there had been imports of live rainbow trout to Russia from Finland, all imports were under permit and all the regulatory requirements had been met. It had subsequently been decided that the Russian import requirements would be modified to include specific provisions regarding the parasite *G. salaris*.
- 6.6 The representative of Iceland commented that the introduction of *G. salaris* into Iceland would have very serious consequences and he asked the representative of the European Union if the additional guarantees available to UK and Ireland applied in the European Economic Area (EEA). The representative of the European Union confirmed that the draft Directive, once adopted, would be applicable in the EEA.
- 6.7 The Commission discussed whether there was a need to seek further clarification from DG SANCO about the protection available in relation to *G. salaris* under the new Directive. After some debate, the Chairman suggested that the additional guarantees are in place and available to countries in the EEA. Regarding the future use of rotenone throughout the Community, he believed that this matter was now a case for the European Commission.
- 6.8 The Commission adopted the recommendations in the Working Group report.
- 6.9 The Chairman of the NGOs indicated that he believed that trade in wild fish is permitted between zones of the same epidemiological status and the UK has higher status for *G. salaris* than Norway. However, approved zone status can apply within countries so movements can occur between the UK and approved zones in Norway, a country with *G. salaris*. The NGOs are concerned that if approved zone status was granted to an area in Norway, then imports of smolts to the UK could not be prevented, although it was recognized that some trade associations in the UK have voluntary agreements against such imports. He noted that the size and dominance of the fish farming industry in Norway is increasing and there are likely to be increasing pressures for approval to move live fish. It will be important to safeguard wild salmon stocks

against such movements. The representative of the NGOs said that it was his understanding that it may be possible to use the provisions of the Habitats Directive to restrict movements of live fish. He asked that the Parties and the European Union provide an overview of the situation. The representative of the European Union indicated that while he would be willing to consult on the matter, it was expected that a decision would be taken soon with regard to the draft Fish Health Directive, so there may not be time to obtain further clarification.

- 6.10 The representative of the European Union later indicated that a draft Fish Health Directive is currently under review and can be accessed on the European Union website. The draft Directive is in the public domain and would be provided to the Secretariat for information purposes.

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

- 7.1 The Chairman requested that Dr Lars Petter Hansen (Norway), the coordinator of the project, update the Commission on the project's progress. Dr Hansen reported that at its meeting in 2003, the Commission had agreed to a proposal for a pilot project involving simulated escapes of tagged farmed salmon in countries with salmon farming. He indicated that while the project had been delayed for 2 years, in April this year, 680 large tagged farm salmon were released on the west coast of Scotland. Furthermore, in mid-May 600 large tagged farmed salmon were released from a site in Norway. These fish, which averaged 5kg in weight, are expected to mature in autumn 2006. To date, two tags from the Norwegian experiment have been recovered in the area of release and further recoveries are expected during the summer and autumn in the salmon fisheries. He indicated that he would be in a position to present more detailed results from the project at the Commission's Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting.
- 7.2 The Chairman suggested that a decision with regard to continuing or expanding the project could be considered at the next Annual Meeting in the light of the results obtained. Dr Hansen indicated that ICES had designed the experiment with two phases, an initial pilot project and a more extensive project involving the release of larger numbers of farmed salmon. It was noted that large releases may create greater difficulties for participation in the project for some countries.
- 7.3 The Chairman asked for clarification as to why the 2006 releases had only taken place in Scotland and Norway. The representative of Iceland noted that farmed salmon in Iceland are of Norwegian origin and there were concerns about the deliberate release of such fish in Icelandic waters. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that while there was interest in participating in the project, it had not been possible to fund the releases to date. While the Faroese salmon farming industry also uses imported strains of salmon, the release of such fish should not be a problem in the Faroes. He indicated that he hoped it would be possible to conduct releases in 2007. The representative of the European Union indicated that Ireland had not been able to participate in the project in 2006 and a decision with regard to participation in the project had been deferred until 2007.

7.4 The Chairman asked Dr Hansen to communicate with scientists in each country. He indicated that the agenda item would be retained for the Commission's next meeting so as to allow for a more detailed report on progress.

8. Regulatory Measures

8.1 The Chairman asked the Parties if they wished to make reports on their salmon management measures for 2006.

8.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that no licences for salmon fishing had been issued during 2005 or to date in 2006.

8.3 The representative of Norway reported that no significant new regulatory measures had been introduced in 2005. The total salmon catch in 2005 had increased by 15% compared to 2004. He referred to a voluntary buy-out of salmon netmen in the Trondheimfjord region funded by landowners and owners of fishing rights. An evaluation of the effect of the buy-out had been carried out and had indicated that salmon catches in the remaining bag nets had increased, more salmon had entered the rivers in the region and more were caught in the rod fishery. Furthermore, there had been a 25% increase in egg deposition in rivers draining into the fjord compared to a situation where all the previous bagnet fisheries would have been in operation. He stated that work had commenced to develop a new five-year regulatory measure to come into effect in 2008. The main focus will be:

- monitoring observed and estimated spawning stocks against spawning targets, which are currently under development;
- reducing exploitation in mixed stock fisheries;
- detected levels of escaped farmed salmon will be integrated in a more active way in fisheries regulations, and might necessitate significant additional restrictions in fisheries;
- giving special focus to the Tana River.

8.4 The representative of Iceland indicated that while no new regulatory measures had been introduced during 2005, five new acts will take effect on 1 July 2006 in replacement of the existing Fisheries Act. The acts cover:

- salmonid fisheries;
- enhancement;
- salmonid aquaculture;
- prevention of fish diseases;
- Institute of Freshwater Fisheries.

8.5 The representative of the European Union referred to the revised version of Table 3.10.1 from the ACFM report which provides information on the fisheries management measures undertaken by EU Member States.

8.6 The representative of Russia indicated that under the Federal Law on "Fisheries and conservation of aquatic biological resources" of December 2004 a new management approach was introduced in 2005 for all types of salmon fishing. All types of fishing are now regulated by quotas.

- 8.7 The Chairman indicated that there was a need to establish a measure to apply to the Faroese fishery in 2007 and possibly subsequent years.
- 8.8 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) proposed that there should be a roll-over of the measure adopted in 2005 for salmon fishing at Faroes in 2006.
- 8.9 The representative of the European Union thanked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for this proposal but stated that the scientific advice from ICES provided a basis for establishing multi-annual measures. In the light of the advice, and given the statement that there is unlikely to be a change in this advice, the European Union favours adoption of a multi-annual approach. He acknowledged the measures taken by the Faroe Islands in recent years and indicated that if a new measure was for a period of three years, it would free up time for ICES to carry out work on specific areas of interest to NASCO such as indicators of stock abundance. He indicated that the EU would wish to see parallel multi-annual measures in both the West Greenland and North-East Atlantic Commissions.
- 8.10 The representative of Norway also expressed appreciation to Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for acting in a precautionary manner and in accordance with the ICES advice. However, Norway believes that there should be no fishing at Faroes for three years.
- 8.11 The representative of Iceland also thanked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) for their adherence to the scientific advice and indicated that Iceland would be able to support a multi-annual measure.
- 8.12 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that his delegation had concerns about a multi-annual measure because ICES has not yet had an opportunity to develop a framework of indicators that would signal a change in the previous advice.
- 8.13 The representative of the European Union indicated that his delegation would like to see a more firm commitment not to fish over a number of years, with a mid-term review of the continuing validity of the advice.
- 8.14 The representative of Russia agreed with the European Union, Norway and Iceland, and wished to see a multi-annual measure adopted.
- 8.15 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that he had considered further the option of adopting a multi-annual measure and could now consider such a proposal for a three-year period *inter alia* recognising the right of the Faroe Islands to fish for salmon in their area of fisheries jurisdiction.
- 8.16 The representative of the European Union thanked the Faroese delegation for this approach and acknowledged that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had adhered to the ICES advice and did not permit a fishery in 2005. However, the representative of the European Union wished to see appropriate text in the proposal to reflect why the Commission is moving to a multi-annual measure following the advice it had received from ICES. He also wished to see clarification of

the text to indicate that there was agreement that no fishery was to be undertaken rather than the text in last year's agreement which stated that the Commission decided not to set a quota.

- 8.17 At the Commission's second session, the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that he had some concerns about moving to multi-annual measures. In particular, the lack of a framework of indicators from ICES is a concern and his delegation would, therefore, prefer to consider a one-year measure.
- 8.18 The representative of the European Union indicated that the scientific advice from ICES was strong enough to support establishing multi-annual measures and if the measure was to be a single-year measure, there would need to be a clear commitment to moving to multi-annual measures next year.
- 8.19 The Chairman suggested that if ICES did not have to provide catch advice for next year, they would have more time to concentrate on providing a framework of indicators of stock abundance.
- 8.20 The representative of the European Union said that he wished to clarify the difference between the catch advice and the framework of indicators. Regulatory measures are based on catch advice from ICES. A framework of indicators is required to determine whether the advice on which multi-annual regulatory measures were adopted is still valid. He said he could see benefit in freeing up time to have these indicators drawn up. He believed that the Commission should not delay the application of multi-annual measures on the basis of the absence of a framework of indicators and he suggested that if a multi-annual measure could be adopted this year, the Commission could also agree to request one further year of catch advice until a framework of indicators is developed.
- 8.21 After some discussion on the issue of moving to a multi-annual measure in the absence of a framework of indicators of stock abundance, the representatives of Iceland, Norway and Russia also expressed their wish to move to a multi-annual measure at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.22 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) informed the Commission that, after discussion with the other Parties, his delegation was able to propose a Decision regarding the salmon fishery for Faroes in 2007 with possible application in 2008 and 2009, NEA(06)5.
- 8.23 The representative of the European Union said that, while he had some reservations, he was prepared to accept the measure. He referred to the statement by the European Union in last year's report (section 7.9 of the North-East Atlantic Commission report) and said that this statement reflected his concerns. He felt that some justification for moving to a multi-annual measure was required in the preamble text to NEA(06)5 and suggested the use of wording as set out in the West Greenland regulatory measure.
- 8.24 The Chairman opened the draft Decision for discussion and proposed that the measure be adopted. After some minor modifications, the draft Decision was adopted, NEA(06)6 (Annex 4).

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

9.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Gjermund Frisvoll, Eresfjord, Norway.

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

10.1 The Commission reviewed the relevant section of document SSC(06)2, and agreed to recommend its adoption by the Council. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(06)13 (Annex 5).

11. Other Business

11.1 There was no other business.

12. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

12.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next Annual Meeting in conjunction with the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Council during 4-8 June 2007.

13. Report of the Meeting

13.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page 51, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of North-East Atlantic Commission papers is included in Annex 6 on page 105 of this document.