

## NEA(07)5

***Draft Report of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic  
Commission  
Harborside Hotel & Marina, Bar Harbor, Maine, USA  
4-8 June, 2007***

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

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Richard Cowan (European Union) opened the meeting and welcomed the delegates to Bar Harbour.
- 1.2 An opening statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).

### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda but decided to consider Item 7, (Regulatory Measures) immediately after Item 4, (Review of the 2006 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES).

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

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

### **4. Review of the 2006 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area**

- 4.1 The representative of Denmark (in respect of Faroes and Greenland) reported that no fishery had taken place in Faroes in 2006.
- 4.2 The representative of ICES, Mr Timothy Sheehan, presented the scientific advice on salmon stocks relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(07)7.
- 4.3 The representative of the European Union asked ICES if there was a possibility of developing a framework of indicators for the North-East Atlantic as was the case for West Greenland. The representative of ICES reported that Southern NEAC salmon stocks have been hovering around the spawner escapement reserve in recent years and consequently there is insufficient data to build a robust model. He said that there are sufficient data in the North American Commission to build a framework of indicators as there is greater contrast in the abundance level in comparison to the conservation limit.
- 4.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked the representative of ICES if there was any fishing taking place on river stocks not meeting conservation limits. The representative of ICES said that data reported to ICES is country

specific and he did not have the information to report if any salmon river stocks below their conservation limits are being exploited.

- 4.5 The representative of Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked the Chairman if Parties could provide information as to whether salmon stocks in rivers below conservation limit are being exploited. The representative of the European Union responded that the type of information required was very detailed and river specific and may not be generally available. He noted that in the implementation plan process, more information will become available in terms of the management of fisheries and this issue could be examined as implementation plans are revised and submitted to NASCO.
- 4.6 The Representative of the NGOs requested the representative of ICES to define what was meant by the term “mixed stock fishery” in the ICES report. The representative of ICES said that NASCO had identified coastal fisheries as representing mixed stock fisheries and ICES was providing advice on that guidance. He said the advice is based on the location in which the fishery takes place. While there is a debate on the definition of a salmon stock, ICES defines stocks as single river stocks and a mixed stock fishery can be described as a fishery made up of multiple stocks. The representative of the NGOs asked how this definition relates to the NASCO Decision Structure. The Secretary noted that with regard to the Decision Structure, mixed stocks fisheries are defined as those exploiting stocks from two or more rivers.
- 4.7 The representative of Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) commented that Parties do not specifically derive conservation limits for each river but CLs are derived for a small number of monitored rivers and transported to all other rivers to provide a conservation limit. The representative of the European Union indicated that conservation limits are ideally developed for specific rivers by conducting long-term monitoring of the river stock. It is not practical to undertake such studies on all rivers and therefore CLs are transferred between rivers. This involves relating the CL in the monitored river to its productive area. CL’s are then set for other rivers by scaling the value for the monitored river according to their productive areas. As a result CLs for all rivers are based on best available scientific information.
- 4.8 The representative of Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) requested clarification from the representative of ICES on a number of issues relating to the framework of indicators; the use of hatchery stocks as well as wild stocks, the number of rivers represented in the West Greenland analysis and if datasets which were excluded from the analysis may bias the results. The representative of ICES responded by saying that hatchery stocks do not perform as well as wild stocks but it is the relative performance over time which is important. If there is a strong relationship in the data this can be used as an indicator of the current status of stocks. With regard to the rivers used in the West Greenland analysis, the representative of ICES said that there was a large geographic sampling of datasets across all contributing stock complexes. He said the indicator datasets are not representative of the absolute number of fish in the ocean but are a relative measure of the stock status as compared to the management objective. For example, a small river contributing a small proportion to a fishery with a strong indicator relationship with regard to stock status would provide equal weight as a large river contributing a large proportion to the fishery. There were a number of reasons why some

datasets were not included in the analysis including not meeting pre-defined criteria. While some datasets could not be used the study group concluded that this was not likely to bias the results.

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

- 5.1 The Secretary gave a brief history of issues relating to this agenda item. In 2004, the Commission had adopted a road map for minimizing the risks posed by *G. salaris* and the risk of transmission to non- infested countries. The road map included terms of reference for a commission Working Group and this group reported in June 2006. It had not been possible for the group to meet since the last annual meeting. The Secretary asked the Parties if they wished the Working Group to continue to examine the risk of transmission of *G. salaris* and to update the Commission on measures to deal with this parasite.
- 5.2 The representative of the European Union referred to the extensive debate on this issue at the Commissions 2006 annual meeting and emphasized that additional guarantees are in place under the new EU Fish Health Directive. He referred to measures being taken in the European Community to prevent the spread of *G. Salaris*.
- 5.3 The representative of the EU reported that in Ireland, a comprehensive Fish Disease Contingency Plan is in the late stages of drafting and includes *G. salaris*. The following issues are covered in the plan.
- Policy Objective, Legal framework and Administrative Framework.
  - National Crisis Centre
  - Communications
  - Detailed Technical Instructions for implementation of the contingency plan
  - Training Programmes and Laboratory Facilities available for implementation of the contingency plan.
  - Appropriate Action in the event of identifying *G. salaris*
  - Enforcement and related issues
- 5.4 If GS is suspected or found in Ireland the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources will liaise with the appropriate authorities in Northern Ireland (the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) for the purpose of preventing the spread of *G. salaris* throughout the island. In the event of any fish suspected of being infected with the disease Gyrodactylosis a National Crisis Centre (NCC) will be established to co-ordinate all control measures against the disease.
- 5.5 The representative of the EU reported that Scotland had established a Task Force on *G. salaris* and had published a contingency plan in 2006. The plan was launched nationally and regionally and has been trialed in a desk study with participation from England and Wales. Posters and leaflets have been distributed widely advising visiting anglers of the risks of introduction of *G. salaris* to Scotland. An Aquaculture and Fisheries Act was passed in 2007 and Part 2 of this Act has provisions with regard to prevention of the

spread of *G. salaris* within Scotland. These provisions include restrictions on the movement of fish and fish eggs, provision to clear out fish farms, create barriers in rivers, provide compensation, etc. There is great concern regarding the threat of the introduction of *G. salaris* to Scottish rivers and the potential impact on stocks. NASCO is seen as a good vehicle for all members to work together to prevent the spread of the parasite. A similar plan to that being finalized in Ireland is also in the final stages of preparation in England and Wales.

- 5.6 The representative of Norway commented that, besides the introgression of escaped farm salmon, the greatest threat to salmon stocks in Norway is *G. salaris*. To date, the total number of rivers infected with the parasite has fallen from 46 to 21 rivers. Chemical treatment is undertaken in 35 infected rivers and the parasite has been eradicated in 15 rivers. Ten rivers are still being monitored and the parasite has re-infected 10 rivers. Because of the level of re-infection, there is need for a five year monitoring programme after chemical treatment to confirm the absence of the parasite. Salmon stocks are being introduced into three rivers. The budget for the eradication of *G. salaris* has risen from £256,000 per annum over the 1995-1999 period to £4.2 million in 2006. The representative of Norway said that due to the continuing problem with *G. salaris*, the Working Group should continue its work.
- 5.7 The representative of Iceland commented that *G. salaris* was not present in Iceland but the prospects of its introduction were very serious. He supported the continuation of the Working Group and said that the group may not need to meet on an annual basis but rather could meet as required.
- 5.8 The representative of the NGO's supported the continuation of the working Group. He commented that best guarantee to prevent the spread of *G. salaris* was not to allow any transfer of live salmonid material between countries. He suggested that additional resources would be required to eradicate the parasite from Norway as with existing resources the parasite was unlikely to be eradicated before 2024.
- 5.9 The Chairman noted the support for the continuation of the *G. salaris* Working Group and concluded that there was general approval that the Working Group continue to operate. The representative of the European Union expressed support for the continuation of the Working Group but sought more clarity on the role of the Working Group as this was unclear from the interventions made. The Secretary commented that the Working group was a place for cooperation and exchange of information. The role of the group includes;
- Monitoring the spread of the parasite
  - Reviewing methods for identifying *G. salaris*
  - Reviewing treatments methods
  - Identifying control measures
  - Considering appropriate measures to prevent the spread of the parasite

5.10 The Commission agreed that the Working group should meet prior to the next annual meeting of the Commission and that the need for subsequent meetings be reviewed on an annual basis.

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

6.1 It was agreed at the 2003 annual meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission that a pilot programme should be undertaken to determine the fate of salmon released from farms to study the implications for wild salmon fisheries. Dr Lars Petter Hanson (Norway) presented the results of a study of two releases of farmed salmon in Scotland and Norway in 2006. In April 2006, 678 farmed salmon were released from a farm in the north-west of Scotland and in May 594 salmon were released from a farm in mid-western Norway. The Norwegian fish were released in areas of high salmon fishing activity. Recapture rates were very low with a recapture rate of 0.6% and 7.0% respectively for Scottish and Norwegian fish. Norwegian fish were recorded both north and south of the release location but the majority of fish were recaptured in the release area. The study suggests that farmed salmon which escape from Scottish farms in spring are not as abundant as was previously suggested along the Norwegian coast. However, a large escape of farmed fish in Scottish may result in more significant numbers of farm fish appearing along the Norwegian coast. Recapture data suggest that the released farm salmon were following the predominant current. Dr Hanson concluded that while it was somewhat controversial to release farmed salmon, there is need to continue these studies and release salmon at different life stages in order to understand more about the movement and migration of escaped farmed salmon. The Chairman thanked Dr Hanson for his contribution and noted that the issue of salmon farm escapes was a matter of great concern to NASCO.

## **7. Regulatory Measures**

7.1 The Chairman commented that there had not been a regulatory measure in the North-East Commission for a number of years although decisions regarding the Faroes fishery has been agreed annually. He noted that the text of the Convention required a regulatory measure. He requested if Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) would be prepared to consider a regulatory measure for 2007. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded by asking if Parties could set out how they regulate homewater fisheries, if there were fisheries in rivers not meeting conservation limits and if Parties have conservation limits set for each specific river. The representative of the Russian Federation responded by saying that there are no fisheries in Russia on salmon stocks not meeting conservation limits. The representative of Iceland commented that there were no mixed stock fisheries in rivers in Iceland.

7.2 The representative of the European Union noted that the scientific advice was clear that there was no catch option for a fishery at Faroes that would meet the precautionary management objectives and there was no basis for a fishery for 2008, 2009 or 2010. His preference would be to have a measure in place similar to 2006 and multi-annual in nature. If agreement could not be reached on a multi-annual measure, an annual measure

would be the alternative but he indicated that this was the less desirable option as the scientific advice from ICES was unlikely to change over the next three years.

- 7.3 The representative of Norway also agreed that there should be no fishery at Faroes for the next number of years. He reported that the total salmon catch in Norway in 2006 was similar to the 2005 catch and a new five year fishery regulation will come into effect in 2008. This regulation will be aims at reducing mixed stock fishing, introducing regulations aimed at achieving spawning targets and reducing the relative number of escaped salmon in rivers and spawning stocks. Norway is working on developing spawning targets for all rivers and these will be available for most rivers where there is a fishery by 2008.
- 7.4 The representative of the Russian Federation supported the view expressed by the EU that there should be no fishery at Faroes as such a fishery exploiting mixed stocks would be contrary to the ICES advice. The representative of Iceland also agreed with the ICES advice on mixed stock fisheries.
- 7.5 The Chairman asked the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) if a multi-annual measure could be considered in light of the view that the scientific advice from ICES was unlikely to change for a number of years. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) commented that it was difficult to argue that there should not be a fishery at Faroes when fisheries were operating in homewaters on the same stock. With regard to a regulatory measure for 2008, he indicated that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was prepared not to have a quota set for 2008.
- 7.6 The Chairman said that while not setting a quota for 2008 was the less favorable option, he could recommend this option to the parties in the interests of achieving agreement. He suggested that the Commission accept the willingness of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) to accept a measure with no quota at Faroes in 2008. The representative of the European Union said that while an annual measure was the least preferable option, he could accept this option. The representative of Norway also agreed to accept no quota at Faroes in 2008 provided the guarantees given by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) were in place again for 2008. The representatives of Iceland and the representative of the Russian Federation both concurred with the view expressed by Norway. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that the measures adopted last year would apply to 2008. The Chairman circulated a Draft Decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2008 (NEA (07)3). The Commission adopted this decision, NEA (07)4, Annex xx.

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

- 8.1 The draw for the North-East Atlantic Commission prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was made by the Auditor on 9<sup>th</sup> May. The winning tag was of Russian origin. The tag was applied to an over-wintered 1 sea-winter salmon on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2006 on

the Ponoï River and the tagged fish was recaptured during catch and release fishing on the Ponoï on August 10<sup>th</sup> 2006 by Mr Daniel Schelokov, Murmansk, Russia.

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

**10. Other Business**

**10.1** [There was no other business]

**11. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

**11.1** The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting at the Twenty-fifth meeting of the Council.

**12. Report of the Meeting**

**12.1** [The Council agreed the report of the meeting.]