

NEA(13)11

Report of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization

Westcourt Hotel, Drogheda, Ireland

4 - 7 June, 2013

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Raoul Bierach (Norway), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Commission.
- 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, NEA(13)6 (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 Mr Marc Owen (European Union) was appointed as Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Review of the 2012 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 4.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Ian Russell, presented the scientific advice on salmon stocks relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(13)8. His presentation is available as document NEA(13)7. The Advisory Committee (ACOM) report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page **XX** of this document.
- 4.2 The representative of the NGOs commented that the ICES presentation indicated that there had been no signs of improvement in stock status and had emphasised the need for action to restore these stocks. This had been highlighted in the NGOs' Opening Statement.

5. Progress with development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 5.1 At the Commission's Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting in 2009, the Chairman had noted that ICES had been unable to make progress in developing quantitative catch advice. This was because the Commission had not agreed explicit management objectives for provision of catch advice for the Faroese fishery and there is no pre-agreed sharing agreement among NASCO Parties. Since 2010, the Commission has discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese fishery that would be

needed before ICES could provide quantitative catch advice.

- 5.2 In 2012, the Commission had asked that ICES advise on the implications of selecting different numbers of management units. Specifically, ICES was asked to advise on the limitations for defining management units smaller than the current NEAC stock complexes (four), the implications of applying probabilities of achieving conservation limits (CLs) to separate management units versus the use of simultaneous probabilities, and the choice of risk levels for achieving management objectives.
- 5.3 The representative of ICES reported on the progress made with the development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese salmon fishery since last year.
- 5.4 At the 2012 Annual Meeting, the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had advised the Commission that due to a need for internal discussions, including consultations with stakeholders, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was not able to move forward on agreeing a Risk Framework, and agreed to return to the issue at the Thirtieth Annual Meeting. At the 2013 Annual Meeting, the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that his delegation would need more time for domestic consultations before it would be able to further consider a Risk Framework.
- 5.5 The representative of the NGOs asked the representative of ICES how long he thought it would take for a quota to be available, given the need to achieve 95% probability. The representative of ICES responded that he was unable to state definitively how long it would take, but noted that things can change quite quickly, even to the extent of a significant change year-to-year.
- 5.6 The Chairman suggested that the Commission should seek to resolve the issues concerning the Risk Framework as soon as possible so that it can be agreed before there is the potential for a fishery, and encouraged the Parties to consider how progress could be made over the coming year. He expressed a hope that a decision would be reached next year.

6. Regulatory Measures

- 6.1 At the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting a Decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (NEA(12)7) was agreed, together with a Framework of Indicators (FWI). The Commission had agreed that the same procedure as that used in the West Greenland Commission would be used to apply the FWI in the North-East Atlantic Commission.
- 6.2 A report describing the work of the FWI Working Group was tabled (NEA(13)3). There had been a significant change in the indicators for the Southern NEAC MSW stock complex. The FWI indicated that the PFA forecast for this stock complex was an over-estimate. The Group had concluded that a full reassessment of the ICES management advice was required. The Group had also recommended that ICES be asked to review and update the NEAC indicator data sets and FWI worksheet before it is used in association with a future multi-annual regulatory measure for the Faroes salmon fishery. In accordance with this decision, ICES had been requested to provide catch options or alternative management advice for the North-East Atlantic

Commission area for 2013 - 2016 and to update the FWI.

- 6.3 The representative of ICES indicated that there were no mixed-stock fishery catch options on the North-East Atlantic Commission stock complexes for the years 2013/14 – 2015/16.
- 6.4 This was the first time a FWI had been used by the North-East Atlantic Commission in association with a multi-annual decision and the arrangement appeared to work well and within the timescale proposed by the Commission. However, ICES has recommended that in future, when the fishery is closed, the FWI should only be used to signal an under-estimate of forecast abundance. Had this approach been used in 2013, the reassessment of the management advice would not have been required. The Commission agreed to this recommendation and decided that this approach to running the FWI should be applied in 2014.
- 6.5 The representative of the NGOs asked whether there should be further research on by-catch, particularly of post-smolts, on their outward migration in areas other than Iceland and Faroes. The representative of ICES noted that there was an initiative in relation to by-catch in the report of the inter-sessional meeting of the Parties (see CNL(13)11).
- 6.6 The Chairman asked if the Commission wished to continue with the decision agreed in 2012 for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 or whether it wished to negotiate a new measure in the light of the new advice from ICES. He indicated that there would be merit in continuing with the measure agreed in 2012 as that would mean that both the West Greenland and North-East Atlantic Commissions would have negotiations for new measures in 2015. The Commission decided to continue with the decision agreed in 2012.
- 6.7 The Commission agreed that a Working Group would again be established to run the FWI in January 2014.

7. Management of Mixed-Stock Fisheries

- 7.1 At the request of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), this item had been included on the 2013 Agenda. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that his delegation wished to focus on this topic because of the mismatch between hard and soft law measures and how they were applied to managing mixed-stock fisheries and by-catch.
- 7.2 The representative of the European Union made a presentation on mixed-stock fisheries in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, UK (England and Wales), UK (Northern Ireland) and UK (Scotland).
- 7.3 The representative of the NGOs asked why the Solway Firth fishery was not classed as a mixed-stock fishery. A representative of the European Union responded that where rivers discharge into one estuary they are classed as a single management unit (river stock), and that exploitation of all river stocks, whether classed as a mixed-stock fishery or not, were managed in the same way, i.e. by aiming to meet their conservation limit.

- 7.4 The representative of the NGOs stated that the EU presentation demonstrated that there are significant mixed-stock fisheries across the EU and asked the representative of the European Union what steps are being taken to reduce their impacts and to ensure areas classified as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive are being managed properly. The representative of the European Union stated that the Habitats Directive has to be transposed into national legislation by EU Member States and that implementation is then monitored. Indications of failure to implement the Directive lead to discussions and potentially to infraction proceedings and fines. He indicated that the threat of fines is often enough to lead to action.
- 7.5 The representative of the NGOs stated that there is also a moral obligation in respect of management, as Greenland and the Faroe Islands are asked not to fish while the EU continues to operate mixed-stock fisheries. The representative of the European Union stated that it is not a matter of morals but a matter of law.
- 7.6 The representative of Norway made a presentation on mixed-stock fisheries in Norway.
- 7.7 The representative of the NGOs noted that around 60,000 fish are taken annually in mixed-stock fisheries in Norway, and asked if the representative of Norway believed that appropriate action is being taken in order to meet NASCO commitments, particularly given the actions taken in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The representative of Norway responded that the number of fish has been decreasing substantially. He also indicated that not all stocks exploited are below their conservation limits. In response to a question from the representative of the NGOs, the representative of Norway stated that it was not the intention to close all mixed-stock fisheries in Norway.
- 7.8 The representative of the Russian Federation advised the Commission that, as in previous years, Russia and Norway held bilateral consultations at the 2013 Annual Meeting on the mixed-stock fishery in coastal waters of Northern Norway. Salmon of Russian origin are intercepted in this fishery. Some elements of the fishery were discussed, among them the type of gear used for salmon fishing in the Norwegian county of Finnmark. The Parties exchanged views on the process to further the negotiations regarding this fishery and its impact on Russian salmon. This process was agreed. The Parties will have a report from the international Kolarctic salmon project, in which Russia, Norway and Finland are participating, in early 2014. Russia and Norway will then have a bilateral meeting in April 2014 after the publication of the report to discuss further the issue of the interceptory sea fishery based on the project findings. Further actions by the Parties will be decided according to the outcome of the bilateral meeting.
- 7.9 The representative of the Russian Federation made a presentation on mixed-stock fisheries in the Russian Federation. In response to a question from the representative of the NGOs, the representative of the Russian Federation confirmed that the actions described in the presentation would be taken and were part of the action plan outlined in their Implementation Plan.
- 7.10 The Chairman widened the discussion to mixed-stock fisheries in general following these presentations. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) thanked

the Parties for their presentations and noted that they highlight the imbalance between NASCO's Convention-based and other measures; the issue of mixed-stock fisheries needs to remain high on the agenda; and that Parties should bear their own mixed-stock fisheries in mind when considering the management of the Faroe Islands and West Greenland fisheries.

- 7.11 The representative of the NGOs expressed concern at the EU responses to earlier questions, noting that if there is an agreement at NASCO there must be sufficient means of influence within the Parties to take that agreement forward. The representative of the EU responded that there is 'shared competence' within the EU and the EU cannot go beyond the limit of their competence.
- 7.12 The representative of the NGOs stated that there was a need to discuss mixed-stock fisheries more deeply, that there are some complex mixed-stock fisheries in Norway and expressed uncertainty that there can ever be assurance that they are not impacting on weak stocks, and that these should be areas of discussion in the Special Session on mixed-stock fisheries planned for next year.
- 7.13 The Chairman closed the agenda item by noting that this is a complicated area and regulatory decisions on mixed-stock fisheries are very difficult. The Chairman noted there may be uncertainty with regard to interpretation of NASCO's guidelines concerning mixed-stock fisheries and how to incorporate socio-economic issues in any management decisions taken.
- 7.14 The presentations by the European Union (NEA(13)8), Norway (NEA(13)9) and the Russian Federation (NEA(13)4) are included in Annexes 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

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

- 8.1 The Chairman indicated that, at its 2008 Annual Meeting, the Commission had considered a report from its Working Group on *G. salaris* in the North-East Atlantic Commission area, NEA(08)3. While the Working Group had not met since 2008, the Commission had agreed to retain an agenda item on this issue so as to monitor developments in relation to the parasite.
- 8.2 The representative of Norway reported that over the last four years several treatments had been undertaken in order to eradicate the parasite. The results indicate that of the 48 infected rivers, 20 are now free after successful treatments and 14 rivers have been treated and are being monitored to confirm that they are free of the parasite. In 2013, a new action plan will be developed for 2013 – 2016. The new plan includes rotenone treatment of five infected rivers in the Rauma region in 2013 and 2014; rotenone treatment in two rivers in the Skibotn region in 2015 and 2016; and construction of a barrier in the river Driva in central Norway to facilitate treatment in this large river. This barrier will be built 27km up-stream in the river in 2014 or 2015, depending on the necessary approvals and funding being obtained, in order to reduce the area to be treated.
- 8.3 The representative of the NGOs indicated that the NGOs are concerned about the further spread of *G. salaris* and in order to minimise the risk of its introduction, all Parties and jurisdictions should have contingency plans in place.

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 9.1 The Chairman announced that the draw for the North-East Atlantic Commission prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was made by the Auditor on 9 May. The winning tag was of Norwegian origin and had been applied to a 1 year old hatchery smolt in Imsa, Rogaland, Norway. The winner of the Commission's prize was The River Owners' Association on the River Figgjo, Kleppe, Norway. 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 agreed the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee in relation to the North-East Atlantic Commission area. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(13)10 (Annex 6).

11. Other Business

- 11.1 The representative of the NGOs noted that there was no agenda item on aquaculture in the North-East Atlantic Commission area, a topic that is of concern to the NGOs. He stressed that Parties should be confident that proposed aquaculture facilities will not impact on wild fish. The representative of the NGOs stated that a detailed discussion on this topic is needed, and that the Annual Progress Reports under the Parties' Implementation Plans need to be comprehensive and clear, in order to allow full consideration of this issue.

12. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 12.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting during the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Council, and in line with any changes to the structure of the Annual Meeting as discussed in the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Council.

13. Report of the Meeting

- 13.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting.

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