

NEA(15)11

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

Hotel North 2, Happy Valley – Goose Bay, Canada

2 - 5 June 2015

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Commission. He noted that the Commission had a busy schedule and some important items of business to complete, not least consideration of a new regulatory measure. He referred to the strong commitment to salmon conservation shown by the Faroe Islands in refraining from fishing for salmon for many years in response to the scientific advice, which again confirmed that abundance remains low. However, the North-East Atlantic Commission has shown a great willingness to work cooperatively in agreeing regulatory measures in all but one year since its first meeting in 1984, and he hoped that the same cooperative spirit would enable the Commission to reach a new multi-annual agreement and make progress on the other agenda items.
- 1.2 An Opening Statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Thirty-Second 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, NEA(15)7 (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 Mr Roy Langåker (Norway) was appointed as Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Review of the 2014 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(15)8. The presentation is available as document NEA(15)9. 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 European Union asked for clarification as to whether data obtained from previous research programmes at the Faroe Islands could be useful in the ICES assessments depending on where they were collected. The representative of ICES indicated that all available data should be used. The representative of the NGOs noted the reference in the WGNAS report to an escape of 250,000 farmed salmon in the south of Ireland. It had been suggested that a large number of these fish would have died in the incident. The NGOs asked if an adequate monitoring programme had been in place to detect escapees in rivers. The representative of ICES indicated that this would be a matter for the Irish authorities to comment on.

5. Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.1 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 (MSFs).
- 5.2 The European Union, NEA(15)3 (Annex 3), Norway, NEA(15)4 (revised) (Annex 4) and the Russian Federation, NEA(15)5 (Annex 5) tabled papers providing a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data, any updates to the Implementation Plan (IP) relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the Implementation Plan period (2013 – 2018) to implement NASCO's agreements.

6. Development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 6.1 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese fishery and had sought advice from ICES to inform its discussions. The elements needed for such a risk framework are:
- agreement on appropriate management units (MU);
 - the management objectives for these units;
 - a sharing agreement;
 - the season to which any TAC should apply (January to December or October to May).
- 6.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that she was not in a position to discuss the development of a Risk Framework and that she would prefer to have substantive discussions on this topic at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

7. Regulatory Measures

- 7.1 The multi-annual decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters adopted in 2012 applied to the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. The Commission considered a proposal for a new multi-annual decision for the salmon fishery in Faroese waters, NEA(15)6. This decision was adopted for the seasons 2015/16 – 2017/18, NEA(15)10 (Annex 6).
- 7.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that by once again entering into a multi-annual measure that commits the Faroe Islands

to manage any fishery in accordance with the scientific advice from ICES, the Faroe Islands has demonstrated its commitment to salmon conservation. No licenses for commercial salmon fishing at the Faroe Islands have been issued for many years and this policy will continue. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) encourages other NEAC Parties to exercise similar restraint and commitment consistent with the objectives of the NASCO Convention. She indicated that with a joint effort, we will once again experience our shared vision of an abundance of wild salmon.

- 7.3 The Commission agreed that the same procedure for applying the Framework of Indicators (FWI) as used during the previous multi-annual decision would apply during the new measure. Under this arrangement, a small group comprising one representative from each member of the Commission would work by correspondence to coordinate the data collection and application of the FWI. The Secretary will contact the Parties to seek their nominations for the Group and liaise with the Chairman and report the findings to the Parties and to ICES in January in each year when the FWI is applied.
- 7.4 The representative of Norway indicated that the present bilateral agreement with Finland for the Tana/Teno River (which entered into force in 1990) has led to a management regime that is clearly inconsistent with the requirements for sustainable salmon fisheries. He noted, furthermore, that the interests and fishing rights of the local population are an important issue for Norway. The negotiations have been on-going since 2012 and the original intention was that there would be a new agreement in place by 2015. In the light of this, the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment has indicated that Norway cannot accept the present management regime much longer and is now investigating whether or not the present bilateral agreement should be replaced with a national management regime for the Norwegian part of the river to apply from 2017. However, much has been achieved in the negotiations so far and Norway's primary goal remains to have a new bilateral agreement in place in 2017.
- 7.5 The representative of the European Union indicated that she was speaking on behalf of Finland as the European Commission is not involved in the negotiations. She advised the Commission that Finland has the same concerns as Norway and that there is a strong commitment to reach agreement for modern management measures consistent with NASCO Guidelines and that national measures, in line with NASCO Guidelines, would be less desirable than a new bilateral agreement.
- 7.6 Norway and the Russian Federation provided an update concerning their cooperation on salmon issues of mutual interest in Finnmark County and the Murmansk region. In a meeting in April 2015, representatives from Norway and the Russian Federation agreed to recommend a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning cooperation on management and monitoring of, and research on, wild salmon stocks in Finnmark County and the Murmansk region. This MoU establishes a joint Working Group consisting of two managers and two scientists from each country. The Working Group will consider all relevant issues, including evaluation of management in the light of NASCO's Guidelines. The MoU is expected to be signed before Autumn 2015. Norway has assessed regulatory measures that could reduce catches in the sea fishery for salmon in eastern Finnmark County (Varanger Fjord area) of salmon originating in Russian rivers. The assessment has been considered by the Russian Federation and considered to be comprehensive. Possible new measures aimed at reducing catches of salmon originating in Russian rivers will be considered as part of an ongoing process

for new regulatory measures in all Norwegian salmon fisheries from 2016. The Russian Federation will be involved in the process. Both Norway and the Russian Federation appreciate the dialog that has taken place since last year's meeting in NASCO and are looking forward to even closer cooperation in the years to come.

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

- 8.1 While the Working Group on *G. salaris* in the North-East Atlantic Commission area has 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 advised the Commission that efforts to eradicate *G. salaris* will be continued as planned. The infected rivers in the Skibotn region in the county of Troms will be treated for the first time during 2015. He indicated that the unfortunate reappearance of the parasite in the Rana River last year, ten years after it was treated and five years after it was declared free of the parasite, necessitated an *ad hoc* treatment in 2014 in accordance with a contingency plan. This treatment will be repeated this year. He indicated that there is still no confirmed source or explanation for the reappearance of the parasite in the river. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority has initiated a formal investigation on the matter. The planning of the fish barriers in the Driva region are in their final stages, and construction will commence in the winter of 2015 - 2016. He advised that the barriers are planned to be in effect from the 2017 season. The Drammen region is the only region where a plan to combat the parasite is not yet in place due to the size of the river and brackish water in the fjord which might allow the parasite to survive for a considerable amount of time. To investigate possible strategies to deal with those problems and ways to eradicate the parasite, a Working Group has been established to report on its findings in 2017.
- 8.3 In view of the serious risks posed by the parasite, the Commission agreed to retain an agenda item to allow for an exchange of information among the Parties. The Commission asked that the Secretary prepare a background document on the 'road map' and reporting arrangements in relation to *G. salaris* for consideration at the next Annual Meeting.

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 9.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the North-East Atlantic Commission \$1,500 prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Hennin Normark of Fyn, Denmark. The winning tag had been applied to an adult salmon in a bag-net at the inlet of the Trondheimsfjord and was recaptured in the river Gaula. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

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

- 10.1 The Chairman noted that the Commission needed to appoint a representative to the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC); a manager and a scientist from each Commission are SSC members, and a manager from the Commission needed to be appointed. The Commission appointed Mr Konstantin Drevetnyak (Russian Federation). The

Commission's representatives on the Standing Scientific Committee are Dr Peder Fiske (Norway) and Mr Konstantin Drevetnyak (Russian Federation).

- 10.2 The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(15)11 (Annex 7).

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 meeting during the Thirty-Third 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 8.