

WGC(06)3

*Draft Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission
Hotel Riekonlinna, Saariselka, Finland
5-9 June, 2006*

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1 The Secretary, Malcolm Windsor, opened the meeting by noting that neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair were present, so an election would first be necessary. The Commission elected Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada) as Chair, and Mr Alan Gray (European Union) as Vice Chair, both to serve for two years.

1.2 There were no initial statements from the Parties. The NGO Chair, Mr Chris Poupard, designated Ms Sue Scott of the Atlantic Salmon Federation to make an opening statement on behalf of the NGOs. The NGOs urged Parties to continue support and assistance for the conservation agreement negotiated by the North Atlantic Salmon Fund and others in the private sector with the Organization of Fishermen and Hunters in Greenland. The NGOs also urged Parties to develop regulatory measures that adhere to the scientific advice from ICES that no fishery should take place at West Greenland.

1.3 A list of participants at the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page ?? of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, WGC(06)2? (Annex??).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

3.1 The Commission appointed Dr Alexandra Curtis (United States) as its Rapporteur for the meeting.

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

4.1 The ICES representative, Mr Tim Sheehan, presented the scientific advice from ICES relevant to the West Greenland Commission, prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Twenty-Second Annual Meeting. The ACFM report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page ?? of this document. The overhead presentation is included in CNL(06)38.

4.2 The Chair thanked the ICES representative for his presentation.

4.3 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented a paper on the 2005 fishery at West Greenland, WGC(06)4 (Annex ?), with the correction that no sales of fish to shops exist.

4.4 The European Union asked what happens to unallocated licenses, and whether Greenland plans to take measures to deal with unreported catches that ICES estimates at ten metric tons, which drive the total West Greenland take up to 23 metric tons when combined with reported catch. The European Union further asked whether Greenland would try to meet the ICES recommendation to provide information on fishing by all license holders. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that in order to deal with unreported catch, they might withhold licenses in the future from people who did not report their catches. The United States expressed support for taking additional steps to address underreporting and to make the recommended changes to the catch reporting form to include date, location, and number of nets.

5. Regulatory Measures

5.1 The Chair asked for proposals on regulatory measures for the fishing of salmon at West Greenland. The United States recalled the commitment made by the Commission at the previous annual meeting to explore multi-annual regulatory measures, and remarked that the scientific advice from ICES was clear in recommending that only a zero catch level would be safe for the salmon stocks for 2006-8. Canada expressed support for the proposal for multi-annual regulatory advice and for allowing only fishing for internal consumption. The European Union agreed that the scientific advice was solid and that it was clear that there would be no change in the status of the stocks, so the current zero catch advice should remain in place for the next three years. The European Union added that such a measure would be consistent with what is being considered in the Northeast Atlantic Commission, and that stability in the advice through multi-annual measures was desirable in order to give the stocks the best chance of recovery.

5.2 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) welcomed the proposal for a multi-annual regulatory measure, but stated that they would need to see an indicator framework that can be used to identify significant change in stock status before fully committing to multi-annual measures. They added that since the catch advice would not change from year to year, they did not see the rush for making this decision. The United States said that the preliminary work on indicators by the ICES working group is promising and worthy of further development, but that the multi-annual scientific advice provided for this year has very little likelihood of changing. As such, it should be possible to agree multi-annual regulatory measures, allowing the ICES working group to use the time saved to continue to develop indicators in parallel to such an adopted measure. The European Union and Canada agreed that sufficient evidence exists to support a multi-annual measure now. The European Union proposed incorporating a midterm review by ICES in such a measure to evaluate the continued stability of the advice.

5.4 Upon request by the Chair, the ICES representative elaborated on a possible framework for predicting PFA from returns. He also explained that the amount of time required to develop the indicator framework would depend on staffing, noted that the next working group meeting is tentatively scheduled for the first two weeks of April 2007, and expressed concern that the working group might not be able to fully analyze the problem within the short time available to them. The ICES representative also clarified that the working group had concluded that no middle-of-the-road solution was possible in terms of stock assessments and catch advice, because a quick assessment was not informative in capturing the full dynamics of the stocks. Instead, they had begun to develop the indicator framework for triggering a full assessment. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) identified several questions that would need to be answered in the development of an indicator framework, including what constitutes significant change, and when they would need to act on such a change according to the multi-annual agreement. Finally, he noted that under a precautionary approach, a spawner abundance just above the conservation limit would not be sufficient to support opening a fishery, nor would one year of high pre-fishery abundance, and a rule supporting these implications of a precautionary approach should be established before opening a fishery.

5.5 Following negotiations between some of the Parties, the United States introduced a draft regulatory measure for fishing at West Greenland in 2006, with possible application for 2007-8, WGC(06)06 (Annex ??). The measure includes language per the following:

- the Parties agreed a fishery for internal consumption only, with no commercial exports, and
- the measure would apply to 2007-8 if two conditions are met: that the indicator framework is developed by ICES, and that the Commission accepts the framework for use in the interim years to identify any significant change in the previously provided multi-annual advice.

5.6 The Chair thanked the United States for reporting the draft and congratulated the parties on their excellent work towards reaching an agreement. The ICES representative encouraged the SSC to draft their request for scientific advice in a way that the requirements are clear. The Parties adopted the proposal, and the European Union noted that the adoption of a multi-annual measure was historic for NASCO, and although there was still room for improvement, the Commission was headed in the right direction, and they congratulated the parties.

6. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

6.1 The ICES Representative, Mr Tim Sheehan, presented an overview of the results of the sampling programme at West Greenland in 2005, including discussion of oversampling of reported catch and tag recoveries. He gratefully acknowledged those who had assisted with the sampling as well as the cooperating Parties. The European Union asked the ICES representative whether Canada participated in the sampling party in 2005. The ICES representative explained that Canada contributed to the 2005

sampling effort by providing scale analysis and database work. The European Union asked Canada whether they would be able to provide a sampler in 2006, and Canada responded that they would provide two samplers in 2006.

6.2 The United States tabled a paper containing the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2006, WGC(06)05 (Annex ??). The European Union confirmed that the UK, Scotland, England, and Ireland would participate in the sampling program, and asked other parties to confirm their participation. The United States and Canada confirmed their participation as well. The Commission agreed the document.

7. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

7.1 Two eligible tags were returned from Greenland in 2004. The prize winner was Mr Nikatius Kielsen of Qaqortoq, Greenland, who caught the salmon in West Greenland. The salmon was of Canadian origin, originally tagged as a smolt in May 2004 near the mouth of the Dungarvon River, a tributary of the Main Southwest Miramichi River.

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

The Commission agreed to review the request to ICES for scientific advice along with the request of the other Commissions in the meeting of the Council.

9. Other Business

9.1 There was no other business.

10. Date and Place of Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting of the West Greenland Commission will be held during the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Council from ??-?? June 2007.

11. Report of the Meeting

11.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting, WGC(06)??