

WGC(06)8

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

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Secretary, Dr 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 (Annex 1). The NGOs urged the 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 the 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 177 of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

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

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 representative of ICES, 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 137 of this document. The overhead presentation is included in CNL(06)38.
- 4.2 The Chair thanked the representative of ICES 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 3), with the correction that no sales of salmon to shops exist.

- 4.4 The representative of the European Union asked what happens to unallocated licences, and whether Greenland plans to take measures to deal with unreported catches that ICES estimates at ten tonnes, and which drive the total West Greenland take up to 23 tonnes when combined with reported catch. The representative of the European Union further asked whether Greenland would try to meet the ICES recommendation to provide information on fishing by all licence-holders. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that in order to deal with unreported catch, they might withhold licences in the future from people who did not report their catches. The representative of the United States expressed support for taking additional steps to address underreporting and for making 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 representative of 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 2006-2008. The representative of Canada expressed support for the proposal for multi-annual regulatory advice and for allowing only fishing for internal consumption. The representative of 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 representative of the European Union added that such a measure would be consistent with what is being considered in the North-East Atlantic Commission, and that stability in the approach through multi-annual measures was desirable in order to give the stocks the best chance of recovery.
- 5.2 The representative of 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 any significant change in stock status before fully committing to multi-annual measures. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) added that since the catch advice would not change from year to year, they did not see the rush for making this decision. The representative of 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 representatives of the European Union and Canada agreed that sufficient evidence exists to support a multi-annual measure now. The representative of the European Union proposed incorporating a mid-term review by ICES in such a measure to evaluate the continued stability of the advice.
- 5.3 Upon request by the Chair, the representative of ICES 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 it. The representative of ICES 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. The representative of 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.

5.4 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 2007/2008. 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 2007-2008 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.

5.5 The Chair thanked the United States for reporting the draft and congratulated the Parties on their excellent work towards reaching an agreement. The representative of ICES encouraged the SSC to draft their request for scientific advice in a way that the requirements are clear. The Parties adopted the proposal, WGC(06)6 (Annex 4), and the representative of 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 heading in the right direction, and he congratulated the Parties.

6. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

6.1 The representative of ICES 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 representative of the European Union asked the representative of ICES whether Canada had participated in the sampling programme in 2005. The representative of ICES 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 representative of the United States tabled a paper containing the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2006, WGC(06)5 (Annex 5). The representative of the European Union confirmed that the UK (Scotland and England) and Ireland would participate in the sampling programme, 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 2005. The prize winner was Mr Nikatius Kielsen of Qaqortoq, Greenland, who caught the salmon at 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

8.1 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. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(06)13 (Annex 6).

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 4-8 June 2007.

11. Report of the Meeting

11.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting, WGC(06)8.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page 121, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of West Greenland Commission papers is included in Annex 7 on page 135 of this document.