

## **WGC(13)11**

### ***Report of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization***

***Westcourt Hotel, Drogheda, Ireland***

***4 - 7 June 2013***

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

- 1.1 In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, Mr Ted Potter (European Union), 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 NGOs (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions is included on page **xx** of this document.

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

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its Agenda, WGC(13)10 (Annex 2), with the addition of a new item 4 on 'Election of Officers' due to the inability of George Lapointe to carry out his term. In addition, the United States noted its intent to raise an item on management objectives under 'Other Business'.

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

- 3.1 Ms Kimberly Blankenbeker (US) was appointed as Rapporteur.

#### **4. Election of Officers**

- 4.1 The Commission elected Mr Ted Potter (European Union) as its Chairman and Mr Carl McLean (Canada) as its Vice-Chairman.

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

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Ian Russell, presented a report on the scientific advice on salmon stocks in the West Greenland Commission area, CNL(13)8. His presentation to the Commission is available as document WGC(13)6. The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) report, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page **xx** of this document.

- 5.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented a report on the 2012 fishery, WGC(13)4 (Annex 3). For the first time under the Commission's Regulatory Measure for an internal use only fishery, Greenland permitted landings at fish factories; a quota of 35t was imposed on these landings. In response to questions from the Parties, the representative explained that, unlike other components of Greenland's fishery where landed salmon is used at home, sold in local open air markets, or provided to hospitals and other institutions in its fresh form, factory landed product is processed, frozen, and sold to supermarkets and grocery stores for year-round sale. Prior to the advent of the factory landings quota, wild Atlantic salmon was available only as fresh product during the three months of the fishing season (August-October). This change in management approach is expected to reduce product waste from spoilage and facilitate competition between domestically produced salmon with imported salmon sold in grocery stores in Greenland. In addition, factory reporting is more accurate than reporting from other components of the fishery and may reduce unreported catches. Total reported landings for the 2012 fishery at West Greenland was 34t. Of this, 19t was harvested for private or subsistence consumption or sale to open air markets, etc. and 15t was harvested against the allocated 35t factory landings quota.
- 5.3 Several Commission members expressed concern about Greenland's decision to establish a 35t factory landings quota, noting that a commercial quota of this type, that included processing and freezing capabilities, facilitated internal market expansion. This, combined with the lack of limitations on the fresh fish component of the fishery, created the potential for substantial increases in capacity, effort and catches. It was also noted by these Parties that it could take some time to see these changes and that increased harvests could impact imperiled salmon stocks. It was suggested that catches could reach upwards of 65t if the entire 35t factory landings quota were taken together with the 10t unreported catch level and the more traditional component of the local use fishery, estimated to be about 20t, but in the past has reached as high as 43t.
- 5.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) disagreed. She indicated that such changes would already have been observed in 2012 if they were going to occur and that the market for salmon in Greenland was self-limiting, given the size of the country's population and the balancing effect of the market for fresh vs frozen salmon. The representative noted that the price of salmon sold to factories was only a third of salmon sold elsewhere in Greenland, such as open air markets, which also had a limiting effect on harvests. She also reported that the number of fishermen reporting landings was about the same from 2011 to 2012 and had been relatively stable over the last 10-year period.
- 5.5 While appreciating this explanation, some Commission members expressed concern about relying on market forces to control the salmon fishery and noted that they were not confident that harvests would not increase. It was noted that the total number of licenses to fish salmon had increased by 20% from 2011 to 2012 and that there were no regulations in Greenland to limit access to, or effort in, the fishery. The Chairman noted that the fish currently being imported from Norway would be of farmed origin and the factory landings would result in some of these being replaced by wild caught salmon. This was an additional concern.

- 5.6 The representative of the United States underscored the precarious state of US wild salmon stocks and noted the critical importance of limiting mortality of US origin salmon to the lowest possible level. He stressed the need for effective monitoring of, and reporting on, the West Greenland fishery, noting the need for additional improvement in that regard, and asked if Greenlandic fishermen were required to file nil reports. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that there was no such requirement in Greenland but that all fishermen are required to report their catches.
- 5.7 The NGO representative reiterated many of the concerns expressed by the Parties, stressed that something needed to be done to address the situation, and urged Commission members to show leadership on this matter. She asked how Greenland ensured that factories did not export salmon. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stressed that there was really no substantive change to their fishery and that they have regulations in place that ban export of wild salmon. She also pointed out that Greenland's action was responsive to the recommendation from the Focus Area Review Group on fisheries management. The Chairman pointed out, however, that the FAR Review Group said that a quota was needed on Greenland's fishery to restrict total catch - not just one component of the fishery.
- 5.8 The Chairman urged Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) to take account of the concerns expressed.

## **6. Regulatory Measures**

- 6.1 A multi-annual measure for the West Greenland fishery was adopted at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Commission, WGC(12)12, to apply to the fishery in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Under the measure, the catch at West Greenland would be restricted to the amount used for internal consumption in Greenland, which in the past has been estimated to be 20t annually. The Commission also agreed in 2012 that the same procedure used during the previous Regulatory Measure for applying the Framework of Indicators (FWI) would apply during the period of the new Regulatory Measure. The Report on the Use of the Framework of Indicators in 2013 (WGC(13)3) was presented by Mr Gérald Chaput (Canada), Coordinator of the FWI Working Group. He reported that application of the FWI indicated that there had been no significant change and, therefore, that a reassessment of the ICES management advice for the 2013 fishery at West Greenland was not required. In this case, the 2012 Regulatory Measure continued to apply in 2013.
- 6.2 In light of the discussion of the change to the management structure of Greenland's fishery, the representative of the United States expressed concern that Greenland's fishery as proposed for 2013 and 2014 was not in line with the basic assumptions behind WGC(12)12 and would, therefore, be inconsistent with that Regulatory Measure. In an effort to ensure as much consistency as possible between the fishery and Regulatory Measure, the United States proposed a supplementary action (WGC(13)7) calling on Greenland not to authorise factory landings in 2013 and 2014 or, at least, to lower the factory landings quota to 15t. It also proposed that an intersessional meeting of the Commission be convened to begin work on the development of a new Regulatory Measure and that reporting and monitoring of

Greenland's fishery be improved. The proposal (WGC(13)7) is attached as Annex 4. The United States also tabled an explanatory note on its proposal, WGC(13)8, which is attached as Annex 5.

- 6.3 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that she did not understand why such a measure was needed given her extensive explanations of the fishery. Moreover, she noted that there is a significant imbalance with regard to the management of Greenland's fishery and the homewater fisheries of some other Commission members. She noted that one Party had been harvesting six times more salmon than Greenland for the last 10 years and that Greenland's catch amounted to only 1.5% of total catches in the North Atlantic. She stressed that the US proposal was unacceptable, that the Regulatory Measure agreed in 2012 should continue, and that Greenland was acting in a manner consistent with that agreement. She also asserted that it was inappropriate for the Commission to set a quota for Greenland's internal use fishery as this was solely a Greenlandic decision.
- 6.4 The representative of the United States responded that the explanations offered by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) were sufficiently clear. This did not mean, however, that there were not still concerns, and he reiterated some of those previously discussed. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) again stated that there is only one fishery in Greenland and its two components 'regulate' one another.
- 6.5 The representative of the European Union indicated that they shared the US concerns and expressed support in principle for the US proposal, noting that the situation in Greenland had the potential to become a problem.
- 6.6 The representative of Canada noted concern about the change to Greenland's fisheries management and indicated that Canada needed time to consider the best approach to address the issue. The representative of Canada also noted concern about data collection and reporting on Greenland's fishery and stressed that improvements were needed to be able to accurately assess it.
- 6.7 The NGO representative reiterated strong concerns about the factory landings quota and its potential implications. She noted that if each Greenlander consumed only 1 salmon a year, the harvest would amount to 180t. She also noted that Parties should not depend on the 2012 fishery to be a predictor of the future. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that the figures offered by the NGO representative were not realistic and reiterated that there is a trade off between catches for factories and catches made to supply open air markets.
- 6.8 In light of the differing views expressed by the Parties, the Chairman noted that agreement on all aspects of the US proposal could not be reached and opened the floor for views on a way forward. The representative of Canada asked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) if they could commit to improving monitoring of the fishery as a whole and also noted openness to convening the Commission intersessionally to consider the management of the Greenland fishery further.
- 6.9 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

reiterated that catch data would improve as a result of the ability of fishermen to land at factories. The Chairman reminded the Parties that Greenland had previously committed to taking steps to improve monitoring and reporting in its fishery. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that actions in this regard had already been taken in accordance with the new Executive Order, including airing TV spots and deploying wildlife officers to communities in Greenland to remind fishermen to report their salmon catches.

- 6.10 The Chairman also asked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) how Greenland would respond if a substantial increase in the fishery is seen. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that Greenland's government would be aware of any increases in licenses although it was not possible to limit access to licenses at this time. She stressed that, given limited opportunities and resources, Greenland has a great interest in the conservation of wild salmon as Greenlandic people would perhaps be most significantly impacted if the resource were no longer available to them. She noted, however, that Greenland is not in a position at this time to curtail the internal use fishery.
- 6.11 With regard to the question of holding an intersessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission, the Parties supported tentatively scheduling this and noted if such a meeting were needed, it should occur after the data became available for Greenland's 2013 fishery. In that regard, the target timeframe for a meeting was mid-March. The members also noted that it might be possible to hold the meeting through virtual means.
- 6.12 The representative of the European Union stated that the discussions of the management of Greenland's fishery had been difficult but noted that the European Union considered that Greenland was acting in good faith in managing their fishery and that interests of the Parties were converging.
- 6.13 The representative of the United States also recognized that discussions had been difficult and noted his appreciation for the openness of the discussions. He acknowledged that the open air market landings had decreased in 2012. He also indicated satisfaction that factory landings resulted in improved reporting. He noted that 2012 was the first year of the new management approach in Greenland and it was not clear what impact this might have on the growth of the fishery. He stated that the year Greenland implemented new management was the same year that the United States had very poor returns. He explained that the status of US stocks was the reason the United States was urgently looking for ways to improve salmon conservation.
- 6.14 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) took note of the views expressed. She expressed her disappointment that the Parties could not understand Greenland's situation. She stressed that Greenland is entitled to a fair share of the resource and that some other jurisdictions are not doing as much as they should to conserve Atlantic salmon. She indicated that she intended to report on the discussions to her new government.
- 6.15 The NGO representative expressed extreme disappointment that no action was taken to limit Greenland's factory landings and stated the view that Greenland's fishery was occurring outside the NASCO regulatory agreement.

## **7. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery**

- 7.1 The West Greenland fishery sampling program provides valuable biological data to the stock assessments conducted by ICES that inform science-based management decisions for this fishery. The Parties to the West Greenland Commission have worked cooperatively over the past three decades to collect these biological data. Mr Tim Sheehan (US) presented the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2013, WGC(13)5 (Annex 6), noting that it was unchanged from the agreement adopted in 2012. The Commission adopted the agreement.
- 7.2 The representative of the NGOs welcomed the agreement and noted the difficulty of collecting catch statistics in Greenland given the remoteness of the communities and the nature of the fishery. He stressed, however, that accurate statistics on the fishery were critical for effective science and management. He urged the Parties to consider further enhancements to monitoring and data collection, including expanding the use of observers in a way that ensures a stratified approach and provides a linkage to genetic analyses. He indicated such actions could help further identify where salmon from weaker stocks most likely occur, including as bycatch in other fisheries, so management actions can be more accurately targeted to protect the most vulnerable populations.
- 7.3 Mr Sheehan noted that the current sampling program does provide broad coverage and an ability to discriminate among stocks. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that all fishermen are required to report their catches and that wildlife officers monitor Greenland, including in remote locations, to be sure reporting is occurring as required. In addition, she noted that the management approach recently implemented allowing landings at factories will most likely result in decreases in unreported catch levels. She stressed that additional fisheries observers in Greenlandic communities were not needed. The Chairman observed that such an approach would also likely have substantial resource implications.

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

- 8.1 The Chairman announced that the draw for the West Greenland Commission prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was made by the Auditor on 9 May 2013. The winning tag was of Canadian origin. The tag had been applied on 9 October 2011 to a two sea-winter female salmon, returning to the Miramichi River to spawn. It was recaptured in August 2012 at Nanortalik in Greenland. The winner of the Commission's prize of \$1500 was Ole Simonsen of Nanortalik, Greenland.

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

- 9.1 The Commission agreed to the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) in relation to the West Greenland Commission area. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(13)10 (Annex 7).

## **10. Other Business**

- 10.1 The Parties considered a US paper, Management Objectives for Atlantic Salmon in the United States (NAC(13)4), which is appended as Annex 8. Mr Tim Sheehan (US) introduced the paper and noted that the current management objectives for US stocks are out of step with NASCO agreements as well as domestic requirements and are in need of revision. He explained the rationale used to develop the new management objectives. The representative of the United States indicated that the United States was open to any feedback from the Commission and that the Commission's support would be appreciated.
- 10.2 The representative of Canada noted his support for the new management objective put forward by the United States. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked if this matter had been presented to ICES. The representative of the United States responded that the matter had not been put before ICES but that the United States would welcome ICES review of the implications of the new management objective. He noted the possibility that ICES would advise that the management objective was lower than the conservation limits on US rivers and, consequently, could suggest that the objective is not conservative enough.
- 10.3 The Chairman referred the issue to the SSC and asked that body to develop an appropriate question to ICES. The representative of the United States noted that this document had been put forward to ensure transparency and provide a record for the change in the US management objective. In response to a question from the Chairman, the representative of the United States noted that there may be a need to reconsider the management objective down the line.

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

- 11.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting at the same time and place as the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Council in 2014.

## **12. Report of the Meeting**

- 12.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page XX, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of West Greenland Commission papers is included in Annex 9.