

WGC(15)19

Report of the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the West Greenland 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, Mr Ted Potter (European Union), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Commission (Annex 1).
- 1.2 Opening Statements were made by Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and the United States (Annex 2).
- 1.3 An Opening Statement was made on behalf of the NGOs (Annex 3).
- 1.4 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, WGC(15)10 (Annex 4).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

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

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 a report on the scientific advice on salmon stocks in the West Greenland Commission area, CNL(15)8. His presentation to the Commission is available as document WGC(15)11. The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) report, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page xx of this document. The Chairman noted that the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had presented a report on the 2014 fishery at the inter-sessional meeting of the Commission (Annex 5 of document WGC(15)3). An update on the 2014 fishery at West Greenland was presented including the findings of a telephone survey of fishermen who participated in the 2014 fishery (see CNL(15)18).
- 4.2 The representative of the United States noted that not all fishermen had been contacted as part of the telephone survey undertaken in Greenland and asked whether it would be correct to make an extrapolation to estimate the catch by those who had not been

contacted. If so this would indicate a potential additional 8 - 16t catch from that part of the fishery. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that this was a correct assumption. The representative of the United States suggested that with 58t of reported catch and an additional 12.2t reported during the phone survey, an assumed 8 - 16t catch by those fishermen that had not been contacted and an assumed 10t unreported catch, and taking into account that the survey did not account for private consumption, the total catch for the fishery in 2014 might have been 90 - 96t. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that this was not a correct assumption as some of the catch that had not been reported by fishermen would have been reported by factories.

4.3 The Chairman thanked the representative of ICES for the presentation.

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 5) and Canada, NAC(15)3 (Annex 6), 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 IP period to implement NASCO's agreements.

5.3 The representative of the United States stated that the United States has no Mixed-Stock Fisheries and that the United States had tabled a paper 'Efforts to conserve Atlantic salmon in the United States' (WGC(15)6). He asked Canada to clarify whether it was correct that 6% or less of Canada's fisheries were in the coastal environment. The representative of Canada confirmed that this was correct.

6. Report of the Inter-sessional Meeting of the Commission

6.1 The Chairman introduced the report of the February 2015 inter-sessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission, (WGC(15)3) (Annex 7). He presented a brief summary of the information and issues considered at that meeting. He noted that the key areas of focus had been to:

- review the report of the Working Group on Monitoring and Control including the six tenets for effective management, tabled by the United States, that had been utilised as a basis for evaluation of the management of the West Greenland fishery;
- consider the potential application of the six tenets to other Commission Members' fisheries and those of NASCO Parties more widely;
- agree a Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the Salmon Fishery in Greenland; and
- agree a Framework for a Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017 (see Annex 8 of

WGC(15)3) as a basis for discussions aimed at agreeing a new regulatory measure for the West Greenland fishery at the Annual Meeting.

- 6.2 The *Ad hoc* Working Group on Monitoring and Control had recommended that all Members of the West Greenland Commission, and possibly all NASCO Parties, should consider completing the matrix to evaluate the management and control systems in place for their fisheries against the six tenets. The Group had recognised that there would be a need to consider how this might best be achieved in order that the evaluation was consistent with that undertaken for the salmon fishery at West Greenland. At the inter-sessional meeting, presentations were made showing how the evaluation was undertaken for UK (England and Wales) and the Republic of Ireland and the need for some fine tuning to adapt the process to make it more usable by other Parties/jurisdictions and to reduce subjectivity in how the evaluation is conducted was noted. There was support, in principle, for taking the approach forward within the Commission after further consultation and consideration of the approach to be adopted prior to and at the Annual Meeting.
- 6.3 The representative of the European Union supported adoption of the six tenets by the Commission and suggested that jurisdictions should apply the tenets as they were applied to West Greenland, on a trial basis, to identify further possible changes to improve their application to all Commission Members.
- 6.4 The representative of the United States emphasised the need not to lose sight of the initial aim of the six tenets, which was to apply them to the West Greenland fishery specifically, and suggested that exploration of their potential wider adoption should not delay their use for that purpose.
- 6.5 The representative of Canada emphasised that the initial idea for the six tenets was for a simple evaluation tool and that this should be borne in mind as their wider application is considered further.
- 6.6 The Commission agreed that all jurisdictions of the Parties to the Commission should apply the tenets to their fisheries as they stand, taking account of the changes made by those two jurisdictions who had already applied them to their fisheries ahead of the inter-sessional meeting, and that this would inform evaluation of the six tenets applicability to all jurisdictions ahead of meeting in 2016 and with a view to their formal adoption over the longer term.
- 6.7 Terms of Reference for the West Greenland Commission *Ad hoc* Working Group on the Application of the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery, WGC(15)23 (Annex 8) was adopted by the Commission.

7. Progress Report on the Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland

- 7.1 In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the *Ad hoc* Working Group on Monitoring and Control, as contained in document WGC(14)8, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had presented a Draft Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the Salmon Fishery in Greenland, WGCIS(15)3 at the 2015 inter-sessional meeting of the Commission. The measures set out in the

Draft Plan were considered by the Commission at that meeting in relation to the six tenets for effective management: *Known pool of participants; Effectively limiting catch; Accurate, effective and timely reporting; Effective communication of management rules; Control and enforcement; and Sampling.* In the light of the discussions at that inter-sessional meeting, a revised plan, WGCIS(15)5 had been agreed by the Commission. It was agreed that in addition to a telephone survey of licensed fishermen in 2014, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) would report at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Commission on progress on the following actions:

- (1) all salmon fishermen will require a licence and will be categorised as either licensed professional fisherman or licensed non-professional fishermen; only licensed professional fishermen will be authorised to sell salmon;
- (2) only designated fish factories will be authorised to accept landings of salmon, and fishermen should be advised that landing of salmon at non-authorised factories is not permitted. Fish factories will report landings no less frequently than on a weekly basis;
- (3) supervisors at the large open air markets will report all salmon offered for sale on a weekly basis;
- (4) reports of all catches, including zero catch reports, will be required within 1 month of the end of the salmon fishing season at which time fishermen may apply for a licence for the following season;
- (5) failure to report catches as specified in (4) will result in no licence being issued for the following year(s) even in the case of zero catch;
- (6) it will be a condition of the licence that fishermen should allow samplers to take samples of their catches upon request; and
- (7) information will be provided to fishermen and supervisors at open air markets about the sampling programme and the findings of the programme to date through the members' magazine of the Fishermen and Hunters Organization (KNAPK) and press releases.

7.2 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) provided updates in respect to these actions indicating that: a Working Group had been convened to make changes to the Executive Order to implement actions (1) and (4); the requirement for authorisation of fish factories that land salmon (2) was already in place; the Greenland Government was presently in dialogue with its municipalities regarding reporting of salmon offered for sale at the markets (3); and that conditions will be added to licences for the 2015 season to implement (5), (6) and (7), with information regarding the sampling programme to be made available to fishermen via a new brochure (see Section 7.6 below).

7.3 Additionally, the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture agreed to undertake the following:

- (1) provide additional information on the dependency of communities in Greenland on the salmon fishery before the 2015 Annual Meeting (see section 8 below);
- (2) consider delaying the opening date of the fishing season to 1 September for the 2015 fishery;

- (3) evaluate the costs and benefits of conducting a pilot carcass tagging project in one or more communities in conjunction with other Members of the Commission who may be able to provide information on the application of carcass tagging.
- 7.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) provided the following updates in respect of each of these actions. The first is covered in detail in Section 8, below. The Working Group mentioned in Section 7.2, above, was currently in discussion about potentially delaying the opening of the West Greenland salmon season (2), whilst (3) had not yet been commenced as making changes to the Executive Order had taken priority.
- 7.5 The representative of the European Union asked what sanctions etc. would apply if a fisherman was found with salmon without the appropriate licence. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that this would take the form of a fine which would be proportionate to the nature/scale of the offence e.g. number of fish in their possession.
- 7.6 As there have been some difficulties in recent years in obtaining samples of salmon harvested in the fishery at West Greenland, a Working Group was established by the Commission (comprising Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union), Ms Katrine Kaergaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Mr Carl McLean (Canada), Mr Tim Sheehan (USA) and Mr Paul Knight (NGO)) to work with the Secretary to develop a brochure on the West Greenland Sampling Programme and why it is important to allow samples to be taken. The brochure has been developed both in Greenlandic and English. Ms Katrine Kaergaard presented the English text of the brochure, WGC(15)5.
- 7.7 An updated Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland (WGC(15)20) (Annex 9) was adopted by the Commission.

8. Up-dated report on the socio-economic importance of the salmon fishery in West Greenland

- 8.1 The inter-sessional meeting had discussed a document tabled by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) at the *Ad hoc* Working Group meeting entitled 'Economic and Social Impacts of Salmon Fishery and Landings in Greenland'. Article 9 of the Convention requires that the interests of communities dependent on salmon fisheries are taken into account, and at the inter-sessional meeting the importance of clarifying the socio-economic aspects of the fishery and individual communities was stressed as part of the basis for agreeing a limit on the fishery.
- 8.2 The representative of the United States had noted that while the report presented by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was considered helpful, it was also vague and it was noted that it would be important to substantiate the conclusions of the report about the socio-economic importance of the salmon fishery if the report is to form part of the basis/rationale for a new regulatory measure. For example, the report noted that salmon comprise 2.2% of income to fishermen, but is said to have 'enormous value' but this is not explained; similarly it is not explained why the fishery has great social and economic benefit for local communities. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had indicated that establishing the socio-economic importance

of the salmon fishery more clearly was made difficult by the fact that various activities utilising living marine resources were, in combination, socio-economically important for small communities in Greenland, making it difficult to extract information relating to the importance of the salmon fishery in particular. However, others noted the importance of understanding how dependency on the salmon catch had changed over the last 15 years and whether and how this justifies the increases in catches over that period. Greenland agreed to provide additional information on the dependency of communities in Greenland on the salmon fishery before the 2015 Annual Meeting.

- 8.3 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented an updated report (WGC(15)4) providing further information on the settlements which fished for salmon and their reliance on the fishery etc., based on case studies of two settlements that land salmon.
- 8.4 The representative of the United States stated that it should be an aim to consider information from the report in the context of NASCO guidance on managing fisheries, considering socio-economics alongside scientific information, as required under the NASCO Convention, to develop a rationale for managing salmon fishing in Greenland that is consistent with the Convention. He asked whether there is a standard definition of a Greenland ‘small settlement’ when considering which communities are reliant upon salmon. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that poor fishermen should be able to fish for salmon throughout Greenland including in cities, and that management would need to cover all such fishermen regardless of location.
- 8.5 The representative of Canada asked how Greenland defines ‘subsistence’. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that this applied to small settlements where hunting and fishing was for survival and to secure food for the winter. The Chair asked for clarification as there are differences between fishing to generate income or to secure a food supply, which may vary between locations. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) responded that this applies to all small settlements in Greenland.
- 8.6 The representative of Canada noted that selling in markets is subtly different to selling to factories, but in both situations fishermen are selling fish to generate income.
- 8.7 The representative of the European Union noted that only a small number of people appear reliant on the salmon fishery to make a living, and that fishing to allow all people in Greenland to enjoy salmon, as stated in the report, would imply that fishing is not only for subsistence. She asked why the quota was not met in 2012 and 2013, and whether this indicates salmon are not as abundant in the fishery as some perceive them to be.
- 8.8 The representative of Canada explained how a balance has been struck between the exploitation of various living resources by native communities, with trading cod for char between communities creating dietary diversity and helping to limit subsistence consumption of salmon. He asked whether cod consumption could be promoted in Greenland to limit reliance on salmon. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) explained that the situation was complicated as a fisherman/hunter needs to generate income to procure and maintain his equipment. The

representative of Canada stated income generation should not necessarily mean making money from endangered salmon stocks, and that all parties must play their part in conserving this shared resource.

- 8.9 The representative of the United States emphasised the need to develop a rationale for the Greenland salmon fishery consistent with the various NASCO documents. He noted that focusing only on fishing in small communities might be inappropriate if other aspects could be important for food security.

9. Regulatory Measures

- 9.1 At the inter-sessional meeting, the Chairman had tabled a Framework for a Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017, WGCIS(15)8.

- 9.2 The representative of the United States asked whether there was agreement regarding the dependence of Greenlandic communities on salmon, and considered that the Commission may be moving towards discussion of a regulatory measure in spite of a lack of consensus on this, and without sufficient clarity regarding the basis for agreeing a regulatory measure, for example taking such factors as the Precautionary Approach into account as necessary. The representative of the European Union noted that there is not much uncertainty in the science and there have been no catch options at West Greenland for several years, and that given this it is unlikely that the Precautionary Approach requires consideration.

- 9.3 The Chair asked for clarification regarding consideration of a delay to the opening of the salmon season (to September) which may allow for a similar tonnage harvest that exploited considerably fewer fish, given their rapid growth rate. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that changing the season time was still being considered, as part of wider changes to the Executive Order, and explained that, as such, it would not need to form part of a regulatory measure agreed by the Commission. The representative of the NGOs emphasised the potential importance of varying the season length and that this could amount to a 15-20% reduction in numbers of fish caught.

- 9.4 The Chair asked Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) whether the ban on exporting salmon would remain. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that it would.

- 9.5 The representative of the United States stated their support for work to inform implementation of spatial and temporal harvest restrictions to protect vulnerable stocks. The Chair noted that a mechanism for progressing this needs to be agreed.

- 9.6 The representative of the United States emphasised the importance of a means by which monitoring Greenland's progress in moving to full management control/accountability for the fishery could be monitored. He noted that the telephone survey was a good initiative. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that Greenland had committed to making such improvements to its fishery management.

- 9.7 The representatives of the European Union, the United States and Canada reemphasised their offer of sharing knowledge with Greenland to improve management of the Greenland salmon fishery. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that Greenland would be keen to work with them on any such opportunities.
- 9.8 The Chair noted that there was a desire within the Commission for a clearer catch limit for the West Greenland fishery than the indicative levels in place under previous regulatory measures, providing for full catch accountability alongside the improvements in management and reporting that were being taken forward via the Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland. The Chair asked Commission members for their views on what an appropriate catch limit might be.
- 9.9 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested a three-year multiannual measure with a catch limit of 45t covering all catches in West Greenland.
- 9.10 The representative of the United States stated that the United States was not able to accept a 45t quota given the scientific advice for a zero catch, but emphasised that the United States remained willing to work with Greenland to set a catch limit. He also emphasised the importance of the ‘payback condition’ in the regulatory measure which would ensure that any quota set would be the absolute maximum catch for any given year.
- 9.11 The representative of Canada also expressed reservations regarding a 45t quota, but expressed Canada’s support for Greenland looking to commit to an absolute total catch, and to taking the steps it has agreed to meet its commitment. He also emphasised Canada’s ongoing commitment to share its knowledge and experience of managing subsistence fisheries with Greenland.
- 9.12 The representative of the European Union stated that the European Union was not satisfied with a 45t quota but, like the United States and Canada, acknowledged the positive spirit and cooperative approach shown by Greenland. She emphasised the importance of continuing to take steps to improve monitoring and control in the fishery and offered the support of the European Union in this respect. She acknowledged that there is an internal consumption fishery at Greenland but suggested that the starting point for a catch limit should be the average over the last 15 years rather than the 45t suggested by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland).
- 9.13 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the suggestion of 45t was far lower than the 1,500t quota that the fishermen in West Greenland had themselves suggested.
- 9.14 A Multi-Annual Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2015, 2016 and 2017, WGC(15)21 (Annex 10) was adopted by the Commission. It was noted, however, that the measure does not include a catch limit as the Commission members could not reach agreement on an appropriate level. Nevertheless, Greenland committed to establishing a 45t catch limit for each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

10. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 The representative of the United States suggested that the Sampling Agreement should reflect the work of the Commission in other areas, such as the regulatory measures adopted for Greenland and the Plan for Implementation of Monitoring and Control Measures in the salmon fishery at West Greenland, and that a Working Group may need to be convened to explore this further. He also noted that developments in these areas at the Annual Meeting represent a change in the baseline regarding what was agreed at the inter-sessional meeting in February. He stated that the United States wants the potential to be considered for the sampling programme to collect both genetic data and fishery data that would support knowledge development contributing to full accountability in the Greenland fishery.
- 10.3 The representative of Canada confirmed that funding for the sampling programme as it stands has been secured.
- 10.4 The representative of the European Union confirmed that the European Union is able to contribute four samplers this year, two from Ireland, one from the UK (England and Wales) and one from the UK (Scotland).
- 10.5 The Commission adopted a West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2015, WGC(15)22 (Annex 11).

11. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 11.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the West Greenland Commission \$1,500 prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr James Larsen of Kangaamiut, Greenland. The winning tag had been applied to a smolt on the Penobscot River in the USA in 1984. It was recovered at West Greenland and returned in 2014. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

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

- 12.1 The Commission agreed that the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee in relation to the West Greenland Commission area should be considered by the Council. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(15)11 (Annex 12).

13. Other Business

- 13.1 Consistent with paragraph 9 of WGC(15)21, the representative of the United States requested a 'review' of the regulatory measure that was adopted by the Commission ahead of the 2016 Greenland salmon season, in order to assess progress on the

implementation of control measures and look at the catch/landing information for the 2015 season and results of any extra processes for validating the information reported e.g. further telephone surveys.

- 13.2 The representative of Canada, the representative of the European Union, and the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) supported this proposal.

14. Date and Place of Next Meeting

- 14.1 The Commission agreed to hold an inter-sessional meeting in or around February/March 2016 in order to undertake a review of the regulatory measure pursuant to paragraph 9 of WGC(15)21 and implementation of related reporting and accountability measures. The date for such a meeting would be agreed based upon when the relevant information on the salmon fishery in Greenland in 2015 would be available.
- 14.2 The Commission agreed to hold its next Annual Meeting during the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of the Council.

15. Report of the Meeting

- 15.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.
- 15.2 The Chairman made the following statement:

This has been a long meeting for the West Greenland Commission and we have burnt the midnight oil on more than one occasion. I have to be honest and say that we have not achieved everything that we had all hoped for and this is disappointing. While the Parties all recognise the dependence of Greenland upon their fisheries, particularly in small communities, a gap remains between the catch level that Greenland and the other Members think is appropriate for the West Greenland fishery. Nevertheless, I would like to leave this meeting on a positive note. We have continued to make progress in a number of areas. Greenland has continued to emphasise their commitment to improving the monitoring and control of the West Greenland fishery with the objective of moving quickly towards full catch accountability. In the spirit of fairness and transparency, all Members of the Commission have agreed to taking forward the application of a set of tenets for effective management to evaluate all fisheries exploiting salmon stocks that occur in the West Greenland Commission area. We have agreed improvements to the sampling programme which will further enhance the utility of the collected data. Furthermore we have agreed a regulatory measure reflecting many of the commitments made by the Commission Members. So my glass remains half full, not half empty. And I would, therefore, like to thank everyone involved in the negotiations over the past three days for their very hard work and the excellent spirit in which all discussions have been conducted. I would like also to thank our Rapporteur, the Secretariat and our hosts for their support. With that, I will close the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of this Commission and wish you all a safe and speedy journey home.

- 15.3 A closing statement was made jointly by Canada, the European Union and the United States (Annex 13).

15.4 A closing statement was made by the United States (Annex 14).

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 15.