

Council

CNL(09)7

Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2008

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Note: This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 2008, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

*Report on the Activities of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2008*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 NASCO held its Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting in Gijón, Spain, at the invitation of the Spanish Government on behalf of the European Union. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Council was held during the period 3 -6 June 2008, under the Presidency of Dr Ken Whelan (European Union) and Vice-Presidency of Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland). Representatives of all the Parties, and observers from two inter-government organizations, from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) and 14 non-government organizations, attended the meetings.

Next Steps for NASCO

- (a) *Report of the First Ad Hoc Review Group on the Parties' Implementation Plans*

- 2.2 The final report of the First *Ad Hoc* Review Group was presented. The Group reported that it considered that most of the sixteen Implementation Plans that it had assessed were now satisfactory and that any remaining issues could be dealt with in the Focus Area or Annual Reports. The Council was advised that no Implementation Plans had been submitted for two jurisdictions (EU-Portugal or EU-Spain). The Group had considered that the process of developing and reviewing Implementation Plans had a number of benefits including:

- improving clarity on how jurisdictions are managing their salmon stocks;
- providing a basis for demonstrating progress with implementing NASCO's Agreements;
- providing a first step in peer-reviewing management approaches and facilitating an exchange of best practice;
- providing the basis for greater clarity in reporting on management activities.

(b) *Report of the second Ad Hoc Review Group on Fisheries Management*

- 2.3 The interim report of the second *Ad Hoc* Review Group was presented. The Group had been asked to: assess the extent to which the information provided in the Fisheries Management Focus Area Reports (FARs) indicates that NASCO's goals are being, or will be, achieved; highlight issues to be raised and questions to the Parties and jurisdictions; and prepare a short report to be submitted to the President in the course of the 2008 Annual Meeting suggesting additional actions to ensure consistency of fisheries management efforts with NASCO Agreements. Twelve FARs had been made available to the Group which had developed a list of issues and questions for the Parties and jurisdictions. However, the Group felt that it would not be possible in the time available at the Annual Meeting to develop a fair and balanced assessment of any additional actions required to ensure consistency of fisheries management efforts with NASCO Agreements. It had, therefore, proposed that it develop its report by 31 October 2008. The Council encouraged any Parties which had not produced a Fisheries Management FAR to do so, in order that these may also be reviewed in the Group's report.
- 2.4 Presentations on Fisheries Management FARs were made by Canada, Denmark (Greenland), EU (Finland), EU (France), EU (Germany), EU (Ireland), EU (Sweden), EU-UK (England and Wales), EU-UK (Northern Ireland), EU-UK (Scotland), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the USA. During the general discussion of the FARs it was recognised that while valuable information had been presented it would be important to take the opportunity to develop an overview of the approaches to managing salmon fisheries.

(c) *Future Focus Area Reviews*

- 2.5 The Council asked the Parties to provide responses to the fisheries management FAR Review Group's questions in writing to the Secretariat by 31 July 2008. The Group would complete its remit by providing a report on any additional actions needed by 31 October 2008. The Council encouraged jurisdictions that had not submitted FARs and Implementation Plans to do so. The Council also asked the Group to extend its work by preparing a comparative overview of the fisheries management FARs highlighting best practice, and challenges and approaches to addressing these challenges in the management of salmon fisheries. The Group's overview would be presented to the Council prior to the 2009 Annual Meeting.
- 2.6 The Council decided that the next stage of the 'Next Steps' process would be to focus on the area of habitat protection and restoration in the Implementation Plans. An *Ad Hoc* Review Group to review this focus area was set up with terms of reference, composition and a timeframe. The Council also agreed that draft Terms of Reference for the third focus area, aquaculture and related activities, developed during the Annual Meeting should be made available to the Parties by 1 July 2008 and any comments forwarded to the Secretariat by 1 April 2009. Any revisions to the Terms of Reference would then be issued prior to the 2009 Annual Meeting.

- 2.7 At its 2007 Annual Meeting the Council had considered proposals for a performance review of NASCO in the light of the 'Next Steps for NASCO' review process, which has been carried out in an open and public fashion. The Council decided to establish a Review Group at its 2010 meeting to review the 'Next Steps' process and any other topics it deems relevant in the spirit of the UNGA Resolution 61/105. It would also advise the Council on the need for, and format of, a further performance review.

Progress in Implementing a Public Relations Strategy

- 2.8 In 2007, the Council had decided that in the first instance it would upgrade and improve the website of NASCO and of the IASRB and that the Secretary would produce a model 'State of the Salmon Stocks' report using information from the Parties and from ICES. The Parties had also been asked to provide details of educational programmes concerning Atlantic salmon for inclusion in a database of such programmes. A report outlining progress in implementing a Public Relations Strategy for NASCO was presented. In order to progress this issue the Council established a PR Sub-Group that met during the Annual Meeting with the following objectives:
- propose a structure and contents for the 'State of Salmon Stocks' report on NASCO's website taking into account the elements recommended in CNL(08)14 and any additional components recommended;
 - propose the 'Next Steps' on a Communications Strategy.
- 2.9 The Council recognised that there was a need to identify its target audiences and the products needed to assist NASCO in its outreach programme.

With regard to the 'State of Salmon Stocks' report and the website design the Council decided to proceed with the first four elements listed on page 2 of document CNL(08)31. The Public Relations Group would remain in existence and work at subsequent Annual Meetings to prepare a communications plan for the following twelve months that would highlight the events taking place over that period indicating the jurisdiction that might take responsibility for a particular outreach activity and note dates for preparation of media releases. A network of key contacts within each jurisdiction (media professionals) would be identified by the Parties and information relative to that event would be circulated to them for drafting or revision with a local flavour as appropriate.

Annual Reports on Implementation Plans

- 2.10 A report on the annual returns made on the Implementation Plans was presented. The aim of reporting the returns is to track the progress being made in implementing the actions contained in the Implementation Plans. The need to keep the reporting burden to an appropriate level was recognised and the Council asked the Secretary to develop a simple reporting structure to be used in 2009.

Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers, and Transgenics

(a) The Williamsburg Resolution

- 2.11 The Council had adopted the Williamsburg Resolution at its 2003 Annual Meeting on the understanding that it would evolve in the light of experience with its implementation, consultations, improved scientific understanding of the impacts of aquaculture and developments in measures to minimise them. There were no proposals for changes to the Resolution.

(b) Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.12 Following the 2007 Liaison Group meeting a discussion document had been developed by the International Salmon Farmers Association (ISFA) entitled 'Incentivising the Industry'. The Council had agreed to respond to ISFA indicating that there were proposals in their paper that would be acceptable, some that could be the subject of cooperation and others that would need further consideration. To advance this initiative, the Council had agreed to propose to ISFA that a joint Technical Task Force be set up with membership from the two Secretariats and two or three nominated experts from NASCO and ISFA. The Council decided that while it wished to continue dialogue with the industry it was not ready to reconvene the Liaison Group until it had identified and agreed on a series of best practice recommendations to address continuing impacts of salmon farming on wild salmon stocks. To this end, the Council decided to proceed with a Task Force comprising representatives of the Parties and an NGO representative and to which ISFA experts would be invited to participate. The Terms of Reference for the Task Force would be to develop a series of best practice recommendations to address the continuing impacts of salmon farming on wild salmon stocks designed to achieve impact targets. The Secretary was asked to liaise with the Parties, the NGOs and ISFA on arrangements for the meeting. Recognising the importance of a close relationship with the industry in addressing continuing impacts of aquaculture on the wild stocks the Council agreed to consider the timing for the next Liaison Group meeting in the light of the findings of the Task Force.

New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management

- 2.13 Reference was made to the detection of resistance of sea lice to treatments at farm sites in Norway. The US presented information on the threat from Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis virus and on a range of opportunities relating to salmon management.

Interim Report of the Working Group on Socio-Economics

- 2.14 An Interim Report of the Working Group on Socio-Economics was presented. All delegations recognised the importance of developing more knowledge on socio-economic values relating to wild salmon. It was recognised that the Group had further work to undertake in developing appropriate methodologies and approaches for incorporating socio-economic factors into management decisions in a balanced manner. The Council agreed to hold a Special Session on socio-economics. The EU

urged the Group to focus more on examining the use of socio-economic information in fisheries management.

The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (IASRB)

- 2.15 The report of the IASRB was presented by the Chairman of the Board, Dr Ken Whelan. He reported that the Board had: updated its inventory of research related to salmon mortality in the sea; received advice from its Scientific Advisory Group; and a progress report on implementing and promoting the SALSEA programme, including updates on the SALSEA-Merge, SALSEA-North America and SALSEA-West Greenland initiatives. The Board had agreed a process for improving coordination of the SALSEA initiatives in the North-East and Northwest Atlantic. The Board had also agreed to fund:
- a continuation of a Canadian study funded in 2007/2008 to examine changes in trophic levels of Atlantic salmon through the marine phase of their life-cycle (approximately £20,000);
 - the participation of two scientists in the proposed ICES Study Group to continue to identify and collate further information on biological characteristics of salmon from river populations and fisheries throughout the North Atlantic (up to £5,000).
- 2.16 The Board agreed that it should propose to NPAFC that the ‘Salmon Summit’ originally planned for 2010 should be postponed until spring 2011 when the SALSEA-Merge project will be completed. The Board had appointed its Steering Group members for the ‘Salmon Summit’ and had established a group to review the inventory of research, identify areas where coordination of research might be improved and identify gaps where new research might benefit the SALSEA Programme.

St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.17 A report on consultations with France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) was presented. A second report from France providing information on the management of the fishery, details of catches and of the number of licences issued, and details of the scientific sampling programme was also tabled. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that, a process of consultation has commenced with regard to acceding to the NASCO Convention. The Council welcomed the cooperation of France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon).

Progress with the Development of the Database of Salmon Rivers

- 2.18 A report on progress with the development of the database was presented. The Council encouraged the Parties to validate the data at their earliest opportunity as the database is now available on the Organization’s website.

Scientific Advice

- 2.19 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES to be presented in 2009.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.20 The Council was advised that there had been an application from the SALSEA-Merge project to conduct scientific research fishing. In accordance with the Resolution on Scientific Research Fishing this had been approved following consultations with the Parties.

Impacts of Acid Rain on Atlantic Salmon

- 2.21 The Council noted that the next FARs would address habitat protection and restoration and that it would be useful if the *Ad Hoc* Review Group on this focus area could provide information on best practice with regard to mitigating impacts of acid rain.

Election of Officers

- 2.22 Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland) was elected President of NASCO and Ms Mary Colligan (USA) was elected Vice-President. The Secretary, Dr Malcolm Windsor, was offered an extension of three years to his contract which he accepted.

Other Business

- 2.23 The Council agreed to seek close cooperation on matters concerning Baltic salmon through the European Union and Russia.
- 2.24 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.25 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee and the 2007 audited accounts (see section 6 below).
- 2.26 The Council adopted the report to the Parties on the Activities of the Organization in 2007.
- 2.27 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize was Mr Henning Øverås, Norway.
- 2.28 The Council had previously accepted an invitation from Norway to hold its Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting at a venue to be decided in Norway during 2 - 5 June 2009. The Council agreed to hold its Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting during 1 – 4 June 2010 at a place to be decided.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Gijón, Asturias, Spain, during the period 3-6 June 2008 under the Chairmanship of Mr George Lapointe (USA)

Review of the 2007 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2007 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Commission agreed a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2009.

Review and Discussion of the 2008 Salmon Management Measures

- 3.3 Canada tabled an overview of the fisheries and stock status of Atlantic salmon in Eastern Canada for 2007. This indicated continuing low returns, particularly in southern areas (where many populations are threatened with extirpation) and for large salmon, although returns of small salmon declined sharply from 2006. Low abundance cannot be attributed to changes in freshwater production. The US presented a report on Atlantic salmon management and research activities in 2007.

The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.4 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) presented a report providing details on the fishery, the regulatory framework, the management measures in place and planned and the scientific monitoring programme at St Pierre and Miquelon. Consultations are underway regarding France's accession to the Convention in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon.
- 3.5 The US indicated that it was interested in working cooperatively to expand the sampling programme and Canada reported on its treaty with France that includes an annual meeting to discuss fisheries and other bilateral issues.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.6 The US presented a document describing the management of commercial Atlantic salmon aquaculture on the East Coast of the United States and on the East Coast of Canada, including details for inventory tracking and control, disease testing and management, containment management systems, escapes reporting and marking. The Parties supported a continuing exchange of information on the issues identified in the document and agreement was reached to formalize reciprocal reporting procedures in the event of escape of farmed fish. The US indicated it intends to have the ability to identify farmed salmon at a site specific level by the end of 2009.
- 3.7 With regard to the Commissions Protocols on Introductions and Transfers it was agreed that after the NASCO meeting a Working Group be established to compile information and to prepare a report on the issues and questions in document NAC(08)4 no later than two months before the 2009 Annual Meeting.

Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.8 Canada advised the Commission that it would provide resources for sampling at Labrador and a detailed program description was presented.

Election of Officers

- 3.9 Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada) was elected as Chairman and Mr Steve Gephard (USA) was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

Other Business

- 3.10 The winner of the North American Commission prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Ms Yvonne Troake, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.
- 3.12 Canada provided details of the Atlantic Salmon Endowment Fund; a \$30 million Fund that has the goal of helping to achieve healthy and sustainable wild Atlantic salmon populations and their habitat in the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Gijón, Asturias, Spain during the period 3-6 June 2008 under the Chairmanship of Mr Richard Cowan (European Union).

Review of the 2007 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission noted that there had been no fishery at Faroes in 2007. The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES and agreed a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2009.

Risk of Transmission of Gyrodactylus salaris in the Commission Area

- 4.3 The report of the Commission's Working Group on *G.salaris* was presented. In view of the serious threat posed by *G.salaris* the Commission agreed to retain this item on its agenda for the 2009 Annual Meeting so that it could monitor developments.

Final Report of the Pilot Study to Improve understanding of the Migration, Dispersal and Survival of Farmed Salmon

- 4.5 The final report and findings of the pilot study were presented to the Commission. The objective of the research was to investigate the fate of 'escaped' farmed salmon and examine differences in the distribution of tag recoveries from fish released simultaneously from different countries. A number of problems had delayed the start of the project but in 2006 Scotland and Norway had released individually tagged large farmed salmon. It was noted that although the findings were of interest, there may be difficulties in expanding the project.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.6 The Commission adopted a decision concerning fishing of salmon in Faroese waters in 2009.

Election of Officers

- 4.7 The Commission unanimously re-elected Mr Richard Cowan as its Chairman and elected Mr Andras Kristiansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-Chairman.

Other Issues

- 4.8 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Bjørn Rønningen, Norway.
- 4.9 The NGOs recommended that NASCO encourage the introduction of a marking system for farmed salmon.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Gijón, Asturias, Spain during the period 3-6 June 2008, under the Chairmanship of Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada).

Review of the 2007 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 2007 fishery at West Greenland and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Commission adopted a request to ICES for scientific advice to be presented in 2009.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.3 The Commission agreed that, as the framework of indicators signaled that no change to the management advice previously provided by ICES is required for 2008, the multi-annual regulatory measure adopted in 2006 would remain in place for the 2008 salmon fishery at West Greenland.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.4 There was support from all Parties to continue the sampling program in the West Greenland Fishery in 2008. A Sampling Agreement for 2008 was adopted.

Election of Officers

- 5.5 Mr Guy Beaupré (Canada) was re-elected as Chairman and Mr Alan Gray (European Union) was re-elected as Vice-Chairman.

Other Issues

- 5.6 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Gerth Jack Storer, Nuuk, Canada.

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the Council under the Chairmanship of Dr Boris Prischepa (Russian Federation).

Relationship with ICES

- 6.2 ICES has made considerable progress in addressing NASCO's concerns about the timeliness and quality of presentation of the scientific advice. Under the MoU agreed in 2007, and reviewed every three years, there is the potential for cost savings if only a limited request for advice is made. The Committee considered the arrangements for providing advice developed by ICES over the last year and while these were not expected to affect the quality of NASCO's advice agreed that they should be kept under review.

2009 Budget

- 6.3 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2009 Budget and Schedule of Contributions.

Audited Accounts

- 6.4 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the 2007 audited accounts. The Committee recommended to the Council the re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers of Queen Street, Edinburgh, as auditors for the 2008 audited accounts, or such other company as may be agreed by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee. However, it was agreed that at its next meeting, the Committee would consider the desirability of changing auditors in the light of information from the Secretary on the cost and other implications of such a change.

Election of Officers

- 6.5 The Committee unanimously re-elected Dr. Boris Prischepa (Russian Federation) as its Chairman and Mr Arni Isaksson (Iceland) as its Vice-Chairman.

Secretary
Edinburgh
7 April 2009