

Council

CNL(04)57

***Guidelines for incorporating social and economic factors in decisions under
the Precautionary Approach***

CNL(04)57

Guidelines for incorporating social and economic factors in decisions under the Precautionary Approach

The principal objective of NASCO and its Contracting Parties in applying the Precautionary Approach to the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon is to protect the resource and preserve the environments in which it lives. Under the Precautionary Approach priority should be given to conserving the productive capacity of the resource.

These Guidelines form a framework for incorporating social and economic factors into decisions which may affect the wild Atlantic salmon and the environments in which it lives. The guidelines have been developed on the basis that all decisions in relation to:

- management of salmon fisheries;
- habitat protection and restoration;
- aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics;
- stock rebuilding programmes;
- by-catch

will be taken in the context of the Precautionary Approach as adopted by NASCO and its Contracting Parties. In applying these Guidelines there may be a need for expert social and economic advice.

These Guidelines are intended for use by those who have responsibility for managing the wild Atlantic salmon and its environments. However, they are also intended to be used for communicating concerns to other sectors whose proposals could impact on the wild salmon and its environments.

The means by which social and economic factors may be incorporated in decisions under the Precautionary Approach is through socio-economic impact assessments. In these guidelines, the purpose of socio-economic impact assessments is to support and inform decision-making, rather than to provide a mechanism for making the decision.

The impacts from a particular proposal may affect not only the salmon. For example, schemes to improve salmon habitat are likely to benefit wildlife in general. On the other hand, actions designed to benefit the Atlantic salmon (e.g. predator control) may have other environmental costs.

The following steps should be followed in carrying out a socio-economic impact assessment of a proposal that could affect the wild Atlantic salmon and its environment:

1. Describe the proposal, its objective and the options within the relevant legislative framework for achieving the objective.

The proposal should first be considered in the light of the appropriate NASCO agreement on application of the Precautionary Approach. The objective of the proposal should be identified together with an appropriate range of options, within the relevant legislative framework, for achieving that objective. It should be borne in mind that rejecting the proposal is always an option. The options should then be subject to the socio-economic evaluation that follows.

- (a) What is the proposal, its objective and how would it affect the wild Atlantic salmon and the environment in which it lives?
- (b) How does the proposal conform with the appropriate NASCO agreement on application of the Precautionary Approach?
- (c) What is the range of options available, within the relevant legislative framework, that would achieve the objectives of the proposal?

2. Assess for each option whether there is a risk of serious or irreversible deleterious impact on the salmon and its environments.

Under the Precautionary Approach, it is the responsibility of the proponent of a proposal to provide all necessary information to allow a thorough assessment of the risks associated with that proposal. There is a need to avoid deleterious impacts that are serious or irreversible. Deleterious impacts that are neither serious nor irreversible should not, however, be ignored and should be subject to evaluation albeit that this may be less rigorous. The impacts of these options on the salmon and its environments should be clearly stated.

- (a) What information has been provided by the proponent of the proposal which will allow for a thorough assessment of the risks to the salmon and its environments?
- (b) What is the impact of each option on the salmon and its environments?
- (c) Do any of the options involve the risk of serious or irreversible damage to the salmon and its environment and what are these risks?

3. Identify the stakeholders and how their behaviour might be affected by each option.

In principle the potential stakeholder constituency should be as wide as possible but subsequent analysis should focus on those stakeholders who will be directly or indirectly affected.

- (a) Who are the stakeholders who will be directly or indirectly affected by each option?
- (b) What is the likely impact of each option on the behaviour of those stakeholders?

4. Assess the changes in social, economic and environmental costs and benefits, both short- and long-term, associated with each option, and determine the economic impacts of those changes. This should be done for each group of stakeholders. The scale of the assessment should be proportionate to the scale of change.

The economic and social values associated with salmon and the different groups of stakeholders associated with these are listed in NASCO Council document CNL(03)18. It is appropriate to consider whether and to what extent these values and each stakeholder group will be affected. It may also be appropriate to consider the economic impacts for local, regional or national economies.

While it may be theoretically possible, though difficult, to put an economic value on all costs and benefits, in practice this may not be feasible. The assessment may therefore include a number of different units of value, monetary and non-monetary. The non-monetary elements of value may be difficult to assess but may be highly significant.

The level of assessment should be proportionate to the scale of change proposed and its likely impact. For major changes, detailed quantitative analysis would be appropriate whereas for smaller changes the analysis would be semi-quantitative or even qualitative.

The time period over which the benefits and costs are being considered should be explicit. The assessment should also indicate how costs and benefits will change over that period. For example, stricter fishing regulations may impose short-term costs but generate economic benefits in the long term.

- (a) What are the key elements of value, monetary and non-monetary, which should be incorporated into the assessments?
- (b) To what extent is the scale of the assessment being conducted proportionate to the scale of the change proposed and the potential impact of the proposal?
- (c) What are the changes in social, economic and environmental costs and benefits, both short- and long-term, associated with each option for each group of stakeholders?
- (d) What are the impacts of those changes for each option and for each group of stakeholders?

5. Rank options and consult with stakeholders as appropriate.

The options should be ranked on the basis of costs and benefits and presented to the stakeholders who would be affected by each of the options.

- (a) What is the ranking of all the options on the basis of costs and benefits?
- (b) What was the outcome of the consultations with stakeholders who will be affected by these ranked options?

6. Review the options, including mitigation measures or compensation where appropriate.

Where these options may have social, economic or environmental costs the possibilities for mitigation or compensation should be explored.

- (a) Where there are social, economic or environmental costs what are the possibilities for mitigation or compensation?

7. Choose option and implement.

On the basis of steps 1-6 above, the option with the highest social, economic and environmental benefits would normally be chosen and implemented, but the decision maker will have the responsibility for assigning weightings to the various costs and benefits.

- (a) Which option has been chosen and was it selected on the basis of it having the highest social, economic and environmental benefits or on some other basis? If the selection was not on the basis of the highest social, economic and environmental benefits, on what basis was it made?
- (b) What is the timescale for implementation?

8. Monitor impacts and consider need for further mitigation.

After implementation of the chosen option its social, economic and environmental impacts should be monitored, proportionate to the scale of the change and its potential impact, to ensure conformity with the Precautionary Approach and the need for mitigation measures considered. Under the Precautionary Approach, where there is a risk of a serious or irreversible deleterious impact, corrective measures should be implemented without delay and should be designed to achieve their purpose promptly.

- (a) What steps have been taken to monitor the social, economic and environmental impacts of the chosen option following its implementation to ensure consistency with the Precautionary Approach?
- (b) What procedures have been developed for introducing corrective measures, in the event that monitoring reveals unanticipated, undesirable impacts?