

CNL(20)12

Report of the Nineteenth Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board

By Video Conference

27 May 2020

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chair, Ciaran Byrne (European Union), opened the meeting and welcomed members of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board), their scientific advisers and observers to the video conference. He thanked all participants for their flexibility and willingness to participate in this extraordinary year.
- 1.2 The Chair explained that in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the face-to-face meeting planned for Edinburgh in June 2020 was cancelled. Business for 2020 was being conducted through inter-sessional correspondence and video conference. The Chair reminded participants that the period for inter-sessional correspondence had run from 8 May until 22 May. Board members had been able to use this time to consider the documents issued under each Agenda item and ask, and respond to, questions on the various Agenda items. The aim of this inter-sessional correspondence had been to streamline the work of the video conference as much as possible to enable Board members to work as effectively as possible under the circumstances. An Annotated Agenda, [ICR\(20\)10A](#), was issued on 26 May to Heads of Delegations, members of the Board and their advisors, SAG nominees, and those who attended the 2019 Board and SAG meetings, to help planning for the meeting. No issues were raised during the inter-sessional correspondence period.
- 1.3 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Board adopted its Agenda via correspondence on 8 May, [ICR\(20\)10](#) (Annex 2).

3. Report of the Working Group for the Review of SALSEA-Track and the Inventory of Research

- 3.1 At the Annual Meeting of the Board in 2019 it was agreed that a Working Group would be established to review both the Inventory and the SALSEA-Track programme and to consider how the Inventory could be best updated and managed going forward. The Working Group to Review the SALSEA-Track Programme and the Inventory of Research Relating to Salmon Mortality in the Sea met in London from 18 – 20 February 2020.
- 3.2 The Chair introduced document [ICR\(20\)07](#), which contained the Report of the Working Group for the Review of SALSEA-Track and the Inventory of Research.
- 3.3 The Board agreed that:
 - 1) the SALSEA-Track Programme, in its current form, should be closed. A final report should be written and circulated to Parties / jurisdictions and the co-ordinators of projects linked to the SALSEA-Track programme;
 - 2) any successor to SALSEA-Track should have the following attributes: be problem

focused with a clearly defined internationally relevant question, which is not solely developed based on the newest technology available; have clear SMART objectives; have clear timelines; have a clear budget; be at the basin-scale; and have an identified owner / co-ordinator. Additionally, it should address issues such as: data gaps / climate change / commonalities across the jurisdictions / mechanisms for supporting new technologies;

- 3) survival at sea is still a principle focus for the Board's work. The representative of the European Union asked whether the word 'sea' needed to be clarified. The Chair stated that this meant from estuarine waters to the ocean;
 - 4) the Inventory will no longer be presented on the website in a series of static PDF documents, but that a single spreadsheet be posted so that users can more easily interrogate the Inventory;
 - 5) in order to update the Inventory, the relevant portion of the spreadsheet be sent to the Parties in early November with a request that they update it. Parties should be asked to return the update by the end of December. The Secretariat should post an updated Inventory spreadsheet on the website at the end of January. The Board also agreed that this process begins in November 2020;
 - 6) only the following categories are included in the Inventory: Country; Title; Status (completed / ongoing / new); Summary of Objectives (which the Parties will provide); Start Date; Topic Area; Geographic Area (of the research); Collaborating Countries; Contact Point (the relevant member of the Board); Project Hyperlinks (where available);
 - 7) should the new process of updating the Inventory be implemented, Parties be asked that particular care is taken when a new project is added. Additionally, that the current Board member of the submitting Party verifies that the project meets the criterion of relating broadly to marine mortality prior to its submission to the Secretariat;
 - 8) the Secretariat engages with the web designer and works to improve the prominence, searchability and utility of the new Board website and the presentation of the Inventory on that site;
 - 9) the Secretariat considers how the utility of the updated website can best be evaluated with the use of hit statistics and related metrics, and that these statistics should be presented to the Board annually to understand the extent to which the Inventory is used; and
 - 10) the metadatabase be reviewed and consideration be given as to whether other areas of the Board's work require review, and that this review be conducted by the Board.
- 3.4 The Board member for Norway asked when and how a review of the metadatabase might take place. The Chair suggested that it could take place before the next meeting of the Board, but that it would depend on the wider NASCO workload.
- 3.5 The Board agreed that the timing of the review of the metadatabase should be agreed by the Chair and the Secretary, as and when NASCO business allows. The review will be conducted by correspondence, preferably before the next Annual Meeting of the Board.
- 3.6 The Chair informed the Board members that the Working Group had proposed that Board members could canvass colleagues on a potential successor to SALSEA-Track if the ROAM programme was not deemed a feasible candidate successor.
- 3.7 The member for the European Union enquired whether the Board had a timeline in

mind for canvassing for other programmes. In this regard, he asked the member for the United States for a progress update on the ROAM programme. The United States member said that there had been some delays in starting field trials. He noted that the trials were intended to piggyback on a survey of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution but with the pandemic, all field activities have been cancelled or delayed. He reported that as long as the original plan moved forward as the restrictions were lifted, there was no reason why the ROAM trials would not happen, but he could provide no clear schedule as to when the trials would take place, as these discussions are currently underway.

3.8 The Board recognised that the process of considering a new programme can happen alongside developments of the ROAM programme.

3.9 The Chair thanked the member for the United States and said the Board could revisit progress under this Agenda item at its meeting in 2021.

4. Final Report on Projects / Workshops during the International Year of the Salmon

4.1 2019 was the focal year of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS), with some efforts continuing into 2022. The aim of the IYS was to raise awareness of the factors driving salmon abundance, the environmental and anthropogenic challenges they face and the measures being taken to address these.

4.2 The Chair referred to the following reports which had been submitted in 2020 on projects and workshops that took place during the IYS:

- Report on Pacific Projects and Workshops during the International Year of the Salmon, [ICR\(20\)09](#);
- Progress Report on the Likely Suspects Framework Project, [ICR\(20\)11](#);
- Summary of the ICES / NASCO Workshop for North Atlantic Salmon at Sea Mortality (WKSalm), [ICR\(20\)12](#);
- Report on Inland Fisheries Ireland's National Salmon Scale Project during the International Year of the Salmon, [ICR\(20\)13](#); and
- Report on the SAMARCH Project International Salmonid Coastal and Marine Telemetry Workshop, 5-6 November, 2019, [ICR\(20\)14](#).

4.3 The Chair thanked the authors for their efforts in writing and submitting the reports.

4.4 Further, the Chair noted that the Council of NASCO had agreed in 2018 that the Likely Suspects Framework Project could be considered as a signature project of the IYS. Council noted in 2019 that it would be an IYS activity that would continue beyond the end of the 2019 focal year. The Board had asked the Secretary in 2018 to investigate joint ICES / NASCO workshops to inform the work of the Likely Suspects Framework Project.

5. Review of the 2020 Updated Inventory of Research and the Metadatabase of Salmon Survey Data and Sample Collections

Research Inventory

5.1 The Inventory of Research Relating to Salmon Mortality in the Sea is updated annually. It is a tool that may be used in the development of research priorities for potential funding and in better co-ordinating existing research efforts.

5.2 The Chair asked the Secretary to provide an update on the Inventory. The updated

Inventory, [ICR\(20\)06](#), showed that for 2020 the total annual expenditure on the 62 ongoing projects (2 of which are uncosted) is approximately £8.7 million. 12 new projects were included in the Inventory in 2020 as follows:

Canada

- Potential bottom-up effects on survival of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) inferred by contrasted marine growth profiles of salmon feeding at West Greenland to salmon survivors to homewaters;
- Synoptic of Fish Health of Atlantic Salmon;
- Expanding acoustic tracking to Labrador coast;
- Tag retention and survival of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) smolts surgically implanted with dummy acoustic transmitters during the transition from fresh to salt water;
- Marine migration and survival of smolt and kelt from Newfoundland and Labrador Rivers;
- Identifying genomic evidence of ecologically induced genetic change associated with Atlantic Salmon aquaculture in Newfoundland;
- Identifying the genomic basis of age at maturity in salmon in Atlantic Canada: applications for fisheries and aquaculture management;
- Interactions between migration, marine survival, and disease susceptibility in Atlantic salmon;
- Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture – Survival, distribution and environmental preferences of Atlantic Salmon smolts (*Salmo salar*), post-smolts and kelts, from the inner Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia; and
- Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture – ‘A seafood diet’ – using stable isotopes to reveal fifty-year trends in the marine feeding ecology of Atlantic salmon.

European Union

Denmark

- SMOLTrack III.

Ireland

- Currane Sea Trout Assessment And Monitoring Plan 2019-2022 (STAMP).

5.3 The Board agreed that the Secretary should ask members to update and check the information held in the Inventory relevant to their Party / jurisdiction in November 2020. Board members should return their updates to the Secretariat by 31 December 2020. The Secretary should then post an updated Inventory spreadsheet on the website by 31 January 2021.

Metadatabase

5.4 The Board decided previously that it could play an important role with regard to marine salmon survey data and sample co-ordination by establishing a metadatabase of existing datasets and sample collections of relevance to mortality of salmon at sea. A metadatabase was established in 2014. In 2015, the Board agreed that information on archival scale collections should also be included in the Board’s metadatabase. The SAG had noted that these collections may be lost when individual scientists retire, unless appropriate arrangements are in place to archive them and ensure their safe

storage so that they may be available for analysis. Even if the scales themselves are not lost, the information accompanying them could be or they could be damaged while in storage. In 2017, it was recognised that the Board could play a role in identifying such scale collections, raising their profile with a view to safeguarding them for future use. The Board agreed that information on these scale collections should, as a first step, be included in the Board's metadatabase. The Board also agreed that information on the West Greenland Sampling Programme Biological Characteristics database should be included in the metadatabase. Accordingly, Parties / jurisdictions were requested to provide details to the Secretariat of any archival scale collections.

- 5.5 Four jurisdictions had responded to the Secretariat's request for updates to the metadatabase in 2020. Three jurisdictions provided requests to update the metadatabase, with accompanying data on scale collections, these were EU – Sweden, EU – UK (England and Wales) and EU – UK (Northern Ireland). The Board noted that the metadatabase would be updated accordingly in due course.
- 5.6 The Board encouraged Parties and jurisdictions to contribute information on scale collections of relevance to the mortality of salmon at sea for inclusion in the metadatabase.
- 5.7 As set out above in paragraph 3.5, the Board agreed that the timing of the review of the metadatabase should be agreed by the Chair and the Secretary, as and when NASCO business allows. The review will be conducted by correspondence, preferably before the next Annual Meeting of the Board.

6. Developments in relation to SALSEA-Track

- 6.1 In 2014, the Board endorsed the need for an international telemetry programme and adopted a Resolution ([ICR\(14\)10](#)) encouraging Parties to continue the development of local collaborative telemetry projects, encouraging the development of large international collaborative projects building on local efforts and encouraging Parties to make efforts to identify funding sources. The Board noted that the telemetry programme should build on the success and identity of the SALSEA Programme and recognised that there may be a role for the Board in co-ordinating efforts and supporting fund raising initiatives. A Telemetry Workshop organized by the Board developed 12 outline project proposals utilising telemetry. In 2015, the Board had recognised the high value of the SALSEA brand and the strong impact of NASCO as the international forum for consultation and co-operation on wild Atlantic salmon. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to an international telemetry project under the SALSEA brand, namely SALSEA-Track. Specifically, the Board agreed to support SALSEA-Track as a continuing commitment to understanding the factors affecting the mortality of salmon at sea, to make funds available to prepare a vision statement for SALSEA-Track and to advance existing initiatives towards an integrated collaborative telemetry programme. In 2016, the Board confirmed that it endorsed the 12 projects.
- 6.2 In 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Board had received updates on the outline project proposals and additional projects related to SALSEA-Track. The Chair referred to document [ICR\(20\)05](#), which contained updates for 2020 on the 12 outline project proposals and the four projects funded under the European Union's 'Grants for an Action' which include the three SMOLTrack projects: SMOLTrack I: Understanding and comparing early mortality of European salmon populations at sea; SMOLTrack II: Comparing mortality of European salmon populations at sea using multiple-method telemetry studies; and SMOLTrack III: Quantifying smolt survival from source to sea: informing management strategies to optimise returns, and the LICETTrack project 'Sea lice model for the sustainable development of Atlantic salmon fisheries and

aquaculture.

- 6.3 The Chair noted that, given the decision taken under Agenda item 3, the SALSEA-Track Programme would be closed. The Secretary would produce a final report and circulate it to Parties and jurisdictions, and the co-ordinators of projects linked to the SALSEA-Track programme. The Board agreed that this item would, therefore, be removed from its Agenda in future years.
- 6.4 The Chair also noted that this Agenda item has provided the opportunity in recent years to report on the various EU-grant funded projects on smolt mortality. The Board discussed that they would like to continue to receive updates on these and other projects of interest and agreed, in future, to retain an Agenda item to enable this.
- 6.5 The member for the European Union asked whether project leaders should offer updates or the Board should request updates from project leaders. The Secretary noted that ahead of the Review Group meeting in February she had sought information from relevant projects, but little information was received. She asked how the Secretariat should canvass for information and from whom, for this proposed Agenda item. She further asked how the Secretariat would know which projects to seek information from.
- 6.6 The member for the United States suggested that the Board might seek updates for projects it has direct involvement in, such as ROAM and the SMOLTrack projects, and he proposed that updates from other projects are not sought. His view was that if the Board became relevant within the scientific community, researchers would come to the Board and information would be provided.
- 6.7 The NGO representative noted two good conduits for obtaining project updates: firstly, Board members who would, in any case, be checking and supporting submissions related to the Inventory; secondly, SAG members and their network. He proposed that the Board ask SAG members about new and emerging projects.
- 6.8 The members for the European Union and the United States agreed that it can be a burden to provide updates, especially if researchers have no link to NASCO and that the Board needs to respect the effort that would be involved.
- 6.9 The members agreed that the Board should retain an Agenda item, focused on projects where NASCO has some ownership (such as EU-funded projects, the SALSEA-Track successor and the Likely Suspects Framework) and that if SAG and Board members know relevant projects, those researchers can be invited to contribute information.
- 6.10 The Board asked the Secretary to provide updates on the first category of projects (i.e. where NASCO has some ownership), and, through the Board and SAG members to seek information on new and emerging projects that would be of interest to the Board and its work.

7. Finance and Administrative Issues

Rules of Procedure

- 7.1 At its 2019 Annual Meeting, the Board had discussed proposed revisions to its Rules of Procedure. The Board had proposed that it would work inter-sessionally to consider and revise further the proposed revisions. This was agreed by Council. The Board agreed and Council adopted revised 'Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group' [ICR\(20\)03](#), during the inter-sessional period. This formalises the structure of the Board and sets out that the SAG will meet at the request of the Board and not every year.

Accounts

- 7.2 The Secretary referred to the Board's 2019 accounts, [ICR\(20\)02](#). The decision had been taken not to have the 2019 accounts audited. The total value of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund as at 31 December 2019 was £480,090.04. Of this, approximately £428,877 was ring-fenced for the EU-funded projects. Of the remaining £51,212, £40,150 was a voluntary contribution from the United States to fund projects under the SALSEA-Track or ROAM initiatives. The Grand Prize Tag winner had again donated their winnings to the Fund in 2019. After accounting for an adjustment for an incorrectly paid bill in 2019, the Board had an available balance of £12,044.30. In 2018 the Board had agreed to make a sum of up to £4,000 of the Board's funds available towards a second ROAM workshop if needed. This money is yet to be spent. The Board had previously indicated that it was desirable to retain a reserve of £4,000 - £5,000.
- 7.3 The Board agreed to adopt the 2019 accounts.
- 7.4 At its 2006 Annual Meeting, the Board recognised that it was not necessary to have the accounts audited annually and agreed that, in future, the Board's accounts should be audited as required in relation to the funds held. For years in which an audit is not conducted, details of the Board's income and expenditure statements would be circulated to the members of the Board and discussed at its Annual Meeting.
- 7.5 The Board agreed that it should have its 2020 accounts audited, noting that it would likely involve costs of around £2,500. The Board decided that it would have its 2020 accounts audited by NASCO's auditors, Saffery Champness (Edinburgh).

8. Other Business

- 8.1 There was no other business.

9. Report of the Meeting

- 9.1 The Board agreed a report of its meeting.

10. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 10.1 The Board agreed to hold its next meeting in advance of the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

11. Close of the Meeting

- 11.1 The Chair thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

2020 Board List of Participants

Canada

**Tony Blanchard
Martha Robertson

Denmark (In respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

**Sissel Fredsgaard

European Union

Ciaran Byrne (Chair)
**Cathal Gallagher
Jaako Erkinaro
Niall Ó Maoiléidigh

Norway

**Raoul Bierach
Helge Dyrendal
Heidi Hansen
Peder Fiske

Russian Federation

**Alexander Khatuntsov
Maria Amelina
Sergey Prusov

United States

**Tim Sheehan
Dan Kircheis

IGOs

Mark Saunders

NGOs

Ken Whelan (nominated NGO representative)
Dave Meerburg
Nigel Milner

Secretariat

Emma Hatfield
Wendy Kenyon

**Nominated Board Member



ICR(20)10

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By Video Conference

Wednesday 27 May 2020

Agenda

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2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Report of the Working Group for the Review of SALSEA-Track and the Inventory of Research
4. Final Report on Projects / Workshops during the International Year of the Salmon
5. Review of the 2020 Updated Inventory of Research and the Metadatabase of Salmon Survey Data and Sample Collections
6. Developments in Relation to SALSEA-Track
7. Finance and Administrative Issues
8. Other Business
9. Report of the Meeting
10. Date and Place of the Next Meeting
11. Close of the Meeting