

IP(20)09_UK – Northern Ireland

November 2020 Evaluation of the Revised Implementation Plan under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024) from the Review Group to UK – Northern Ireland

NASCO considers that the provision of Implementation Plans, together with annual reporting of progress on actions contained within them, is one of the most valuable mechanisms that it has developed. It is a vitally important mechanism to strengthen implementation of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. Parties to NASCO have committed to the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon. Parties’ / jurisdictions’ Implementation Plans set out their planned actions and these are reviewed by an expert Review Group. Reporting is carried out annually on these Plans (see <https://nasco.int/conservation/implementation-plans-and-reporting/>).

The Council of NASCO agreed, in September 2020, that all Implementation Plans would be reviewed again in November 2020, in line with the Enhanced Guidance from the Council, CNL(20)55. This meant, in each case, that the most recent version of each Implementation Plan was reviewed, whether updates had been provided in 2020 or not, even where the Review Group had previously found the Implementation Plans to be satisfactory.

The Review Group thanks UK – Northern Ireland for submitting their revised Implementation Plan, and for revising their Plan following the previous evaluations from the Review Group.

In line with the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’, [CNL\(18\)49](#), (the IP Guidelines) and the ‘Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans’, [CNL\(20\)55](#), the infographic below shows the overview of the Review Group’s evaluation, in November 2020, of UK – Northern Ireland’s Implementation Plan. Sections / areas considered to be ‘satisfactory’ are shown in green, and those which are ‘unsatisfactory’, in red.

	Questions on Salmon Management				Threats / Challenges to Wild Salmon			SMART Actions			
	Introduction / Background	Management of Salmon Fisheries	Habitat Protection & Restoration	Aquaculture, Introductions & Transfers & Transgenics	Management of Salmon Fisheries	Habitat Protection & Restoration	Aquaculture, Introductions & Transfers & Transgenics	Management of Salmon Fisheries	Habitat Protection & Restoration	Aquaculture, Introductions & Transfers & Transgenics	Mandatory Actions
UK - Northern Ireland											

The Review Group reassessed the responses to questions, the threats / challenges and the actions in conjunction with the Enhanced Guidance, CNL(20)55, looking in greater detail at, and providing feedback relating to the achievement of, NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The Review Group, therefore, considered that UK – Northern Ireland's Implementation Plan requires some further work to achieve a satisfactory rating across all sections / areas of the Plan.

The Review Group considered the response to question 2.5 to be a very clear response to describing how socio-economic factors are taken into account in making decisions on management of salmon fisheries. The Review Group considered the response to question 4.9 to be a very clear answer, responding very clearly to each of the eleven recommendations in the 'Road Map'.

Questions on Salmon Management: the Review Group considered that all of the responses to the questions asked were satisfactory. Previously, two responses, to questions 4.2 and 4.3, were considered to require revision and the Review Group considered that UK – Northern Ireland had addressed their concerns by addressing the wording in the revised responses.

Threats / Challenges to Wild Salmon: the Review Group considered that the identified threats and challenges to the management of wild Atlantic salmon identified under each theme all related clearly to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

SMART Actions: all of the 'Management of Salmon Fisheries' actions within the Plan were considered to be both SMART and satisfactory, i.e. the Review Group considered that those actions move UK – Northern Ireland clearly towards the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. Four of the five 'Habitat Protection and Restoration' actions were considered to be both SMART and satisfactory; however, one – action H5 – was considered to be neither SMART nor satisfactory. All six of the actions on 'Aquaculture, Introductions & Transfers & Transgenics' were considered to be SMART actions; however, action A1 was considered to be unsatisfactory.

Mandatory Actions: this section was considered to be unsatisfactory overall because none of the actions on sea lice relate to the management of the impacts of sea lice on wild Atlantic salmon from salmon farming. The International Goal for sea lice in the Best Management Practice Guidance, SLG(09)5, states '*100% of farms to have effective sea lice management such that there is no increase in sea lice loads or lice-induced mortality of wild salmonids attributable to the farms*'. For this section to be considered as satisfactory, an action on effective sea lice management is required.

In the following Evaluation Form, the Review Group has provided guidance on its recommendations for improvements.

Evaluation in 2020 of Revised Implementation Plans Based on Enhanced Guidance from the Council

Under NASCO's third reporting cycle the Review Group is asked to evaluate the Implementation Plans submitted by Parties / jurisdictions in three key areas of assessment, by:

- 1. identifying whether the answers by each Party / jurisdiction to the questions posed in the Implementation Plan template are satisfactory;*
- 2. identifying clearly that the threats and challenges to the management of wild Atlantic salmon identified under each theme are related to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines; and*
- 3. assessing the description of each action to ensure that it adheres to the 'SMART' descriptors such that progress over time can be assessed objectively.*

This is described in detail in the 'Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress', [CNL\(18\)49](#).

- 1. Answers to each question in the Implementation Plan template, [CNL\(18\)50](#), are to be assessed as:*
 - 1. Satisfactory answers / information;*
 - 2. Unsatisfactory (including unclear or incomplete answers / information or clear omissions or inadequacies).*
- 2. NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines as they apply to the third cycle of reporting are listed throughout the Implementation Plan template, [CNL\(18\)50](#).*
- 3. The Review Group will be required to assess the description of each action using the 'SMART' criteria laid out in the new Guidelines document, [CNL\(18\)49](#), thereby assessing the quality of each of the actions, not just how clearly the actions are stated.*

Additionally, in 2020, the Council has provided enhanced guidance to the Review Group in their 'Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans' ([CNL\(20\)55](#)) whereby each section / area of the Implementation Plan will be scored as satisfactory or unsatisfactory; the actions will also be assessed on their ability to move the Party / jurisdiction clearly towards the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

Through this process it will be possible to determine whether the Implementation Plan provides a fair and equitable basis for assessing the progress that the Party / jurisdiction will make in implementing NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

Where a section / area is deemed by the Review Group to be unsatisfactory, the Implementation Plan will be returned to the Party / jurisdiction. The Review Group will provide a clear explanation of its decision to the Party / jurisdiction and, where feasible and appropriate, offer specific suggestions / recommendations for how it could be improved. The tables below, for each of the three main areas to be assessed, provide a template for evaluation in each case.

Party: United Kingdom

Jurisdiction/Region: Northern Ireland

Assessment area 1. Are the questions posed in the Implementation Plan template answered satisfactorily?

#	Question in IP Template	Assessment (1 or 2)	Draft feedback on any improvements required (for answers assessed as 2)	Comments relating to previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?
1. Introduction				
1.1	What are the objectives for the management of wild salmon?	1	However, the Review Group sought clarification on management objectives for secondary rivers.	
1.2	What reference points (e.g. conservation limits, management targets or other measures of abundance) are used to assess the status of stocks?	1		
1.3	What is the current status of stocks under the new classification system outlined in CNL(16)11?	1		
1.4	How is stock diversity (e.g. genetics, age composition, run-timing, etc.) taken into account in the management of salmon stocks?	1		
1.5	To provide a baseline for future comparison, what is the current and potential quantity of salmon habitat?	1	The Review Group would welcome quantitative information on salmon habitat which would act as a baseline.	
1.6	What is the current extent of freshwater and marine salmonid aquaculture? <i>Append one or more maps showing the location of aquaculture facilities and aquaculture free zones in rivers and the sea.</i>	1		
1.7	Please describe the process used to consult NGOs and other stakeholders and industries in the development of this Implementation Plan.	1		
Overall score by Review Group for 1. Introduction			Satisfactory	

2. Management of Salmon Fisheries: <i>In this section please review the management approach to each of the fisheries in your jurisdiction (i.e. commercial, recreational and other fisheries) in line with the relevant NASCO Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. For Parties / jurisdictions that prosecute mixed-stock fisheries, there should be at least one action related to their management.</i>				
2.1	What are the objectives for the management of the fisheries for wild salmon?	1		
2.2	What is the decision-making process for the management of salmon fisheries, including predetermined decisions taken under different stock conditions (e.g. the stock level at which regulations are triggered)?	1	The Review Group considered it is important from a biodiversity perspective that all catchments should have a level of	

			assessment, including catchments with small populations.	
2.3	(a) Are fisheries permitted to operate on salmon stocks that are below their reference point (e.g. Conservation Limits)? If so, (b) how many such fisheries are there and (c) what approach is taken to managing them that still promotes stock rebuilding?	1	The Review Group requested that a response is given to parts b) and c).	
2.4	(a) Are there any mixed-stock salmon fisheries? If so, (b) how are these defined, (c) what was the mean catch in these fisheries in the last five years and (d) how are they managed to ensure that all the contributing stocks are meeting their conservation objectives?	1	The Review Group requested that a response is given to parts c) and d).	
2.5	How are socio-economic factors taken into account in making decisions on management of salmon fisheries?	1		
2.6	What is the current level of unreported catch and what measures are being taken to reduce this?	1		
2.7	Has an assessment under the Six Tenets for Effective Management of an Atlantic Salmon Fishery been conducted? If so, (a) has the assessment been made available to the Secretariat and (b) what actions are planned to improve the monitoring and control of the fishery? (c) If the six tenets have not been applied, what is the timescale for doing so?	1		
Overall score by Review Group for 2. Management of Salmon Fisheries			Satisfactory	

3. Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat:				
<i>In this section please review the management approach to the protection and restoration of habitat in your jurisdiction in line with the relevant NASCO Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.</i>				
3.1	How are risks to productive capacity identified and options for restoring degraded or lost salmon habitat prioritised, taking into account the principle of 'no net loss' and the need for inventories to provide baseline data?	1		
3.2	How are socio-economic factors taken into account in making decisions on salmon habitat management?	1		
3.3	What management measures are planned to protect wild Atlantic salmon and its habitats from (a) climate change and (b) invasive aquatic species?	1		
Overall score by Review Group for 3. Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat			Satisfactory	

<p>4. Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transgenics <i>Council has requested that for Parties / jurisdictions with salmon farms, there should be a greater focus on actions to minimise impacts of salmon farming on wild salmonid stocks. Each Party / jurisdiction with salmon farming should therefore include at least one action relating to sea lice management and at least one action relating to containment, providing quantitative data in Annual Progress Reports to demonstrate progress towards the international goals agreed by NASCO and the International Salmon Farmers Association (ISFA):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of farms to have effective sea lice management such that there is no increase in sea lice loads or lice-induced mortality of wild salmonids attributable to the farms; • 100% farmed fish to be retained in all production facilities. <p><i>In this section please provide information on all types of aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics (including freshwater hatcheries, smolt-rearing etc.</i></p>			
4.1	(a) Is the current policy concerning the protection of wild salmonids consistent with the international goals on sea lice and containment agreed by NASCO and ISFA? (b) If the current policy is not consistent with these international goals, when will current policy be adapted to ensure consistency with the international goals and what management measures are planned to ensure achievement of these goals and in what timescale?	1	
4.2	(a) What quantifiable progress can be demonstrated towards the achievement of the international goals for 100% of farms to have effective sea lice management such that there is no increase in sea lice loads, or lice-induced mortality of wild salmonids attributable to sea lice? (b) How is this progress monitored, including monitoring of wild fish? (c) If progress cannot be demonstrated, what additional measures are proposed and in what timescale?	1	
4.3	(a) What quantifiable progress can be demonstrated towards the achievement of the international goals for achieving 100% containment in all (i) freshwater and (ii) marine aquaculture production facilities? (b) How is this progress monitored, including monitoring of wild fish (genetic introgression) and proportion of escaped farmed salmon in the spawning populations? (c) If progress cannot be demonstrated, what additional measures (e.g. use of sterile salmon in fish farming) are proposed and in what timescale?	1	
4.4	What adaptive management and / or scientific research is underway that could facilitate better achievement of NASCO's international goals for sea lice and containment such that the environmental impact on wild salmonids can be minimised?	1	
4.5	What is the approach for determining the location of aquaculture facilities in (a) freshwater and (b) marine environments to minimise the risks to wild salmonid stocks?	1	The Review Group sought clarification on the present applicability of the EU legislation in the context of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

4.6	What progress has been made to implement NASCO's guidance on introductions, transfers and stocking?	1		
4.7	Is there (a) a requirement to evaluate thoroughly risks and benefits before undertaking any stocking programme and (b) a presumption against stocking for purely socio-political / economic reasons?	1	The Review Group sought clarification on statements in the response to question 1.6 where no salmon production in freshwater is mentioned, to question 4.3(a)(i) which states ' <i>There is no aquaculture facility within this jurisdiction for farmed salmon in freshwater stage of the life cycle</i> ', and to question 4.6 which states ' <i>Marine Harvest do have a Hatchery at the top of the River Derg system for commercial salmon farming only.</i> '	
4.8	What is the policy / strategy on use of transgenic salmon?	1		
4.9	<i>For Members of the North-East Atlantic Commission only:</i> What measures are in place, or are planned, to implement the eleven recommendations contained in the 'Road Map' to enhance information exchange and co-operation on monitoring, research and measures to prevent the spread of <i>Gyrodactylus salaris</i> and eradicate it if introduced, including the development and testing of contingency plans?	1		
Overall score by Review Group for 4. Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics			Satisfactory	

Assessment area 2. Are the threats and challenges to the management of wild Atlantic salmon identified under each theme related clearly to NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines?

2.8 Threats identified to wild salmon and challenges for management associated with their exploitation in fisheries, including bycatch of salmon in fisheries targeting other species	Assessment (yes / no)	Draft feedback on any improvements required	Comments relating to Previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?
Threat / challenge F1	Yes		
Threat / challenge F2	Yes		
Threat / challenge F3	Yes		
Threat / challenge F4	Yes		
Threat / challenge F5	Yes		
Threat / challenge F6	Yes		
Overall score by Review Group for 2.8: threats / challenges associated with exploitation in fisheries, including bycatch of salmon in fisheries targeting other species			Satisfactory

Copy and paste lines to add in other challenges in the relevant Implementation Plan

3.4 Threats identified to wild salmon and challenges for management in relation to estuarine and freshwater habitat.	Assessment (yes / no)	Draft feedback on any improvements required	Comments relating to previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?
Threat / challenge H1	Yes		
Threat / challenge H2	Yes		
Threat / challenge H3	Yes		
Threat / challenge H4	Yes		
Threat / challenge H5	Yes		
Overall score by Review Group for 3.4: threats / challenges in relation to estuarine and freshwater habitat			Satisfactory

Copy and paste lines to add in other challenges in the relevant Implementation Plan

4.10 Threats identified to wild salmon and challenges for management in relation to aquaculture,	Assessment (yes / no)	Draft feedback on any improvements required	Comments relating to previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?

introductions and transfers, and transgenics.			
Threat / challenge A1	Yes		
Threat / challenge A2	Yes		
Threat / challenge A3	Yes		
Threat / challenge A4	Yes		
Threat / Challenge A5	Yes		
Threat / Challenge A6	Yes		
Overall score by Review Group for 4.10: threats / challenges in relation to aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics			Satisfactory

Copy and paste lines to add in other challenges in the relevant Implementation Plan

Assessment area 3. Does each action adhere to the ‘SMART’ descriptors laid out in the new Guidelines document, CNL(18)49?

As a reminder, the ‘SMART’ approach includes reporting on both quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative information is expected wherever possible and should be presented to demonstrate progress made over the period of the plan towards NASCO’s goals. This should be clear and concise. Where a deviation must be made from a quantitative metric, the reason for the deviation should be explained.

2.9 What SMART actions are planned during the period covered by this Implementation Plan (2019 – 2024) to address each of the threats and challenges identified in section 2.8 to implement NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for the management of salmon fisheries?								
#	Action in IP Template	Is the action clearly related to stated threat / challenge?	Is it ‘SMART’? (yes / no)	If ‘no’, which descriptor needs to be reflected more clearly in the action?	If the proposed monitoring is qualitative (as allowed in the Guidelines), is the reason and proposed non-quantitative alternative for monitoring progress acceptable?	Does the action move the Party / jurisdiction clearly towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines?	Given the previous question, is the action considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory overall?	Comments relating to previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?
F1	The target is to manage the 18 primary rivers affected by both commercial and recreational fisheries to exceed their CLs	Yes	Yes. However, the Review Group sought clarification on how secondary rivers are managed.			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, section 2.5a	Satisfactory	
F2	Update Conservation limits and Management targets for 3 primary salmon rivers in Northern Ireland using	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, section 2.4a	Satisfactory	

	refreshed habitat data							
F3	Maintain the Long Term Monitoring of Wild Salmon Stock on the R Bush - used as an Index River for NI	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, sections 2.2 and 2.5c	Satisfactory	
F4	To assess mortality of wild salmon smolts moving from the freshwater to the marine environment	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, section 2.5c	Satisfactory	
F5	To improve recreational catch returns and statistics from the current baseline of 5 - 10% to 30%	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, section 2.2a	Satisfactory	
F6	To protect wild salmon stocks from illegal activity	Yes	Yes. However, the Review Group requests clarification on whether this refers to all illegal activity or just illegal fishing.		Yes	Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(09)43, section 2.3a	Satisfactory	
Overall score by Review Group for 2.9: SMART actions to implement NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for the management of salmon fisheries							Satisfactory	

Copy and paste lines to add in other actions in the relevant Implementation Plan

3.5 What SMART actions are planned during the period covered by this Implementation Plan (2019 – 2024) to address each of the threats and challenges identified in section 3.4 to implement NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for the Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Atlantic Salmon Habitat?								
#	Action in IP Template	Is the action clearly related to stated threat / challenge?	Is it ‘SMART’? (yes / no)	If ‘no’, which descriptor needs to be reflected more clearly in the action?	If the proposed monitoring is qualitative (as allowed in the Guidelines), is the reason and proposed non-quantitative alternative for monitoring progress acceptable?	Does the action move the Party / jurisdiction clearly towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines?	Given the previous question, is the action considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory overall?	Comments relating to 1st round review: changed as requested by IP RG?
H1	To assess and provide fishery advice for 100% of River drainage maintenance schemes to protect salmon habitat and to incorporate mitigation / improvement measures where possible	Yes	Yes. However, the Review Group considered that the approach suggested to reporting is qualitative.			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(10)51, section 3.6.	Satisfactory	
H2	Management and control of water quality in salmon producing rivers in NI - the target is to have 70% of rivers at good ecological status by 2021.	Yes	Yes. The Review Group sought clarification on the present applicability of the EU legislation in the context			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(10)51, section 3.5	Satisfactory	

			of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.					
H3	To identify and assess the impact of barriers on 18 primary salmon rivers in NI by 2024.	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(10)51, section 3.5.	Satisfactory	
H4	To update inventory of current and potential salmon habitat on 3 primary salmon rivers in NI.	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with CNL(10)51, section 3.1.	Satisfactory	
H5	To enhance degraded habitat or improve salmon habitat on primary salmon rivers in NI with rivers below CL being prioritised	Yes	No	Specific and Measurable need to be reflected more clearly. For example, an estimate of the amount of habitat to be improved should be provided in the 'description of action'.		No. The Review Group was unable to determine the extent to which this action will improve salmon habitat to understand if it moves Northern Ireland clearly towards the achievement of NASCO's Habitat Guidelines, CNL(10)51.	Unsatisfactory	
Overall score by Review Group for 3.5: SMART actions to implement NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for the Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Atlantic Salmon Habitat							Unsatisfactory	

Copy and paste lines to add in other actions in the relevant Implementation Plan

4.11 What SMART actions are planned during the period covered by this Implementation Plan (2019 – 2024) to address each of the threats and challenges identified in section 4.10 to implement NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics?								
#	Action in IP Template	Is the action clearly related to stated threat / challenge?	Is it ‘SMART’? (yes / no)	If ‘no’, which descriptor needs to be reflected more clearly in the action?	If the proposed monitoring is qualitative (as allowed in the Guidelines), is the reason and proposed non-quantitative alternative for monitoring progress acceptable?	Does the action move the Party / jurisdiction clearly towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines?	Given the previous question, is the action considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory overall?	Comments relating to previous review round: changed as requested by IP RG?
A1	Assess baseline sea lice levels on R Bush wild salmon remote from NI Aquaculture production as advised in the BMP guidance	Yes	Yes			No. The Review Group considered that the action described does not address the challenge because it remains unclear how monitoring adult salmon returning to the River Bush addresses the challenge outlined.	Unsatisfactory	
A2	Monitor for Non NI escapee aquaculture salmon in a wild salmon stock in N. Ireland.	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with SLG(09)5.	Satisfactory	
A3	Monitoring sea lice levels in aquaculture	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this	Satisfactory	

	salmon in N. Ireland					is in line with SLG(09)5.		
A4	Monitoring levels of genetic introgression of aquaculture salmon into wild stocks in NI	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with SLG(09)5.	Satisfactory	
A5	To assess marine aquaculture sites annually	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with SLG(09)5, and requested information on the standards against which cages are reviewed (codes of containment and technical standards).	Satisfactory	
A6	To establish long term monitoring through the establishment of a sea lice-mortality risk index in wild anadromous salmonids in an area with aquaculture production.	Yes	Yes			Yes. The Review Group considered that this is in line with SLG(09)5.	Satisfactory	
Overall score by Review Group for 4.11: SMART actions to implement NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and demonstrate progress towards achievement of its goals and objectives for aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics							Unsatisfactory	

Copy and paste lines to add in other actions in the relevant Implementation Plan

Mandatory action check	Is such a mandatory action required for this Party / jurisdiction?	Is such an action contained in the Implementation Plan?
For Parties / jurisdictions that prosecute mixed-stock fisheries, there should be at least one action related to their management.	No	No
Each Party / jurisdiction with salmon farming should include at least one action relating to sea lice management.	Yes	No
Each Party / jurisdiction with salmon farming should include at least one action relating to containment.	Yes	Yes
Overall score by Review Group		Unsatisfactory