

	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Secretary's Report</i></p>	<p>CNL(21)09</p> <p>Agenda Item 3a</p>
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Secretary's Report

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to provide information on procedural, administrative and financial matters and issues relating to public relations and relations with other international bodies.

2. Covid-19 Pandemic

- 2.1 On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization declared the Covid-19 virus a pandemic. Since then, restrictions have been in place at various times, in many countries around the world. Due to these restrictions, since March 2020, the NASCO Secretariat has been working from home, in accordance with Scottish Government guidance. All business has been conducted by correspondence or 'virtually'.
- 2.2 2020 was the first time ever that the NASCO Annual Meeting was conducted by correspondence and video conference, and not face-to-face. Following the Annual Meeting, all meetings up to and including the 2021 Annual Meeting will have been conducted 'virtually'. This includes: two Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Council; the Implementation Plan /Annual Progress Report Review Group meeting to evaluate the revised Implementation Plans; the West Greenland Commission Inter-Sessional Meeting; the Meeting of the *Gyrodactylus salaris* Working Group; the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Group Meeting to evaluate the Annual Progress Reports; and the Implementation Plan Special Session webinar.
- 2.3 NASCO has developed new ways of working throughout the pandemic, some of which may be adapted for future use, to increase the efficiency and sustainability of the Organization. Upgrading of the broadband infrastructure and computer hardware in the NASCO Headquarters in the last year means that the Secretariat is now better equipped to conduct business virtually.

3. Status of Ratifications of, and Accessions to, the Convention and Membership of the Regional Commissions

- 3.1 Until 31 January 2020, the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean (the Convention) applied to the UK by virtue of its membership of the EU. The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020 and was in an 'Implementation Period' until 31 December 2020, when EU law (largely) continued to apply to the UK.
- 3.2 On 27 November 2020 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) became the seventh contracting Party to NASCO. The UK deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean and joins Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States as Parties to NASCO.
- 3.3 The Council of the European Union is the depositary of the Convention. [The website of the depositary](#) has been updated and contains the formal information about the Convention, its signature, entry into force, ratifications, and other observations.

- 3.4 On [10 December 2020](#), Council agreed unanimously that the UK may become a member of the West Greenland Commission and the North-East Atlantic Commission.

4. Receipt of Contributions for 2021

- 4.1 In accordance with Financial Rule 5.5, the Secretary is required to report on the receipt of contributions and on any arrears. Due to uncertainty surrounding the timing of the UK becoming a Party to NASCO, the request for contributions was made later than usual. At the time of writing, contributions have been received from all but two Parties. The Secretary proposes to update the Parties on the status of contributions during the Annual Meeting in June.

5. Observers at NASCO's Meetings

- 5.1 In May 2020 a new application for observer status to NASCO was received from the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, Iceland (NASF Iceland). This application was received after the completion of the 2020 Secretary's Report.
- 5.2 In its application, NASF Iceland explained that its mission is to return Atlantic Salmon to a state of natural abundance through six objectives, which are: (i) negotiating net buy outs with commercial net fisheries on an economic, fair and sustainable basis; (ii) assisting policy makers in responsible management of salmon fisheries; (iii) promoting sustainable aquaculture to minimise or eliminate unintended gene flow and the transfer of disease and parasites to wild salmon; (iv) habitat protection and restoration; (v) outreach to inform the public and policy makers about challenges to the survival of North Atlantic salmon, and options for their conservation; and (vi) encouraging co-operation between all NGOs with the same objectives as NASF Iceland. To this end, NASF Iceland works with a network of people and organizations both locally and internationally to try and save the Atlantic Salmon.
- 5.3 Following consultation with the (then) Acting President, NASF Iceland was granted observer status to NASCO on 19 May 2020.
- 5.4 NASCO has 45 accredited NGOs, as listed on the [website](#).

6. Fishing for Salmon in International Waters

- 6.1 Under the 'Resolution on Fishing for Salmon on the High Seas', [CNL\(92\)54](#), the Secretary is requested to obtain and compile information on sightings of fishing activities on the high seas of the North Atlantic which may undermine the conservation measures adopted by NASCO.
- 6.2 The Norwegian and Icelandic coastguards were contacted to obtain details of any surveillance operations in the area of international waters north of the Faroe Islands where fishing for salmon by non-NASCO Parties had been observed in the past. The Icelandic Coast Guard informed NASCO that it logged no surveillance flights in international waters north of the Faroe Islands (commonly referred to as 'Banana Hole'), between 1 March 2020 and 2 February 2021. The Icelandic Coast Guard also stated that they have been active and more focused on surveillance in the Irminger sea rather than other areas of NEAFC convention areas outside their EEZ. The Norwegian Coast Guard provided details of the surveillance patrols with vessels it conducted in the Norwegian Sea and Barents Sea in 2020. It stated that it conducted no flights in international waters in 2020 and had no observations on salmon fishing.
- 6.3 This year it was brought to our attention that surveillance flights were also carried out by the EU. We were informed by the representative of the European Union that...

‘We are aware of the following 2020 EU deployments in the NEAFC regulatory area of the ‘Banana Hole’, which took place in the context of the NEAFC Joint Deployment Plan: EU-DE deployed a patrol vessel over the ‘Banana Hole’, which entered the regulatory area on 15 August and exited the ‘Banana Hole’ on 1 September; EU-SE performed 4 flights on 21-22 July and 12-13 August. During these flights, there was no sightings of vessels targeting salmon. Please note that it is nevertheless common to detect in this area legitimate activities by vessels authorised to fish for various pelagic stocks. We would therefore appreciate to have an opportunity to discuss the relevance of requesting the sightings information from the Parties.’

- 6.4 No new information has been obtained from ports or about landings and transshipments since last year’s report to suggest that there has been any fishing for salmon by vessels from non-NASCO Parties.
- 6.5 The last known incidences of fishing for salmon in international waters by non-NASCO Parties were in the early 1990s. Liaison with NAFO, NEAFC and ICCAT on IUU fishing has continued. NAFO informed NASCO that there is no evidence in 2020, as in the past years, of IUU fishing activity in the NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA). Also, from the Daily Catch Reports (CATs) and Observer reports, in 2020 there is no evidence of NAFO authorized vessels having salmon bycatch. No information has been received from NEAFC and ICCAT at the time of writing, further information, if available, will be provided in CNL(21)20, the ‘Report on Progress in Implementing the ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’, CNL(13)38’.
- 6.6 The report on the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon in 2020 indicates that the measures in place for that fishery mean that unreported salmon catch there is unlikely.

7. Scientific Research Fishing

- 7.1 There have been no requests to conduct scientific research fishing since the last Annual Meeting.

8. Rivers Database

- 8.1 In 2016, the Council adopted a [new stock classification system](#) for use with the NASCO Rivers Database and requested that Parties / jurisdictions update the information held in the Rivers Database using this new classification system, by 31 December 2017. All Parties / jurisdictions provided some data on the status of their rivers. However, many did not use the agreed stock classification categories and most of the data requested was not received until early 2019.
- 8.2 The river status information contained in the Rivers Database provided data used in the ‘State of North Atlantic Salmon’ report, published in December 2019. Work on the web-based Rivers Database is ongoing, as unresolved mapping and quality issues remain. An item ‘Consideration of the NASCO Rivers Database’ is on the Council Agenda this year given that Council agreed in 2020 that there should be an exploration of why Parties / jurisdictions had not used the Rivers Database as had been agreed in 2016.

9. Public Relations

NASCO and Board websites

- 9.1 The redesign of the NASCO website is complete and is available here: [North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization – NASCO](#). All comments and suggestions are welcome, to enable further improvement of the site. In the period 1 April 2020 – 25 March 2021, there were approximately 17,102 valid visits to the NASCO website, an increase of approximately 35% on the same period in 2019 / 2020. New visitors accounted for 58% of visits. The number of pages viewed averaged three per session.
- 9.2 The redesign of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board website is also complete and is available here: [North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization – Salmon at Sea](#). All comments and suggestions are welcome, to enable further improvement of the site. The number of visits from April 2020 until October 2020 were approximately 1,000. New visitors accounted for 56% of visits. The number of pages viewed averaged two per session. Capability to provide comparable website statistics was applied to the new Board site in March 2021. Statistics will be available in future.
- 9.3 NASCO’s twitter account is now up and running and available here: North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization @NASCO_Sec, with over 900 followers. Please let the Secretariat know your twitter address so that we can make sure we are following you. Also, we request that you include us or tag us in any tweets, so that we can increase NASCO’s reach.

Liaison with other RFMOs

- 9.4 During the last year the Secretary has remained in close contact with other RFMOs, including NAFO, NEAFC, NPAFC, ICCAT, CCAMLR and IWC. The Secretariats of these organizations have shared information about conducting business in the context of a global pandemic. This has allowed NASCO to learn from other RFMOs to improve practices and allowed other RFMOs to learn from NASCO.
- 9.5 This close contact will continue after the 2021 Annual Meeting, to share experiences and improve working practices.

10. Conference and Meetings

- 10.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many external meetings and conferences were cancelled, postponed or held virtually. However, members of the Secretariat attended the following events.
- 10.2 The Secretary attended ‘ICES reflections: Understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on fisheries, markets, communities, and management’ on 16 September 2020; the UK-Based International Organizations (UKBIO) meeting on 28 October 2020; the Eighth Meeting of the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats’ Network (RSN) on 24 February 2021; and the Fisheries Management Scotland Conference on 23 March 2021.
- 10.3 The Assistant Secretary attended the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon Working Group (WGNAS) as an observer, from 22 to 26 March 2021. These days covered the country reports on salmon stocks and provided an overview of the current status of the wild north Atlantic salmon.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
9 April 2021