

	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2020</i></p>	<p>CNL(21)10</p> <p>Agenda Item 3b</p>
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***Report on the Activities of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2020***

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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 2020, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions, the reports of the September and December Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Council and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, NASCO cancelled the face-to-face element of its Annual Meetings for the first time in the Organization's history. Instead, the Organization conducted its work through inter-sessional correspondence, virtual Annual Meetings of the Council, Commissions and Finance and Administration Committee held in June, and virtual Inter-sessional Meetings of the Council held in September and December. Some planned business was cancelled or postponed. This report summarises the activities of the Organization at those meetings, focusing on the actions taken.

2. Council

2.1 The Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Council was held by video conference during 1 – 5 June 2020. In the absence of the President, the Acting President, Serge Doucet (Canada) presided over the Meeting. Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), three Inter-Governmental Organizations and 18 accredited Non-Governmental Organizations participated in the meeting. Further Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Council were held during 9 – 11 September and on 10 December 2020 under the Presidency of Mr Doucet. These Inter-Sessional Meetings were also attended by all of NASCO's Parties and representatives of some of NASCO's accredited NGOs.

Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean

2.2 The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) acceded to the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean (the Convention) on 27 November 2020.

2.3 Council unanimously agreed that the UK may become a member of both the North-

East Atlantic and West Greenland Commissions. Council further agreed that the UK could nominate representatives for such NASCO bodies as:

- the Framework of Indicators Working Group for the North-East Atlantic Commission;
- the Framework of Indicators Working Group for the West Greenland Commission;
- the Finance and Administration Committee;
- the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group;
- the Standing Scientific Committee;
- the *G. salaris* Working Group; and
- Special Session Steering Committees.

2.4 The UK was represented at the December Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Council and was able to participate in the latter stages of the November meeting of the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Review Group (see 2.6 below).

Evaluation of Implementation Plans under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)

2.5 In 2019, the Council had agreed a revised schedule for review of Implementation Plans (IPs). Following this schedule, the second review of IPs under the Third Reporting Cycle by the IP / APR Review Group took place in November 2019. Two IPs had been fully accepted by the Review Group. A Special Session on the Evaluation of the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans had been scheduled for the 2020 Annual Meeting. However, it was agreed during the Covid-19 planning process that this would not be possible.

2.6 At the 2020 Annual Meeting, Council agreed that the IP / APR Review Group would meet in November 2020 to review the Implementation Plans. Council also agreed that a webinar would be held following the November meeting of the IP Review Group, likely in spring 2021, to discuss the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans fully. This webinar would be held as an inter-sessional Special Session, in which NASCO's Parties and accredited NGOs would be able to participate. There would be a time-limited period for inter-sessional correspondence prior to the Special Session to facilitate questions and answers, with the aim of making the webinar as efficient as possible. However, questions could still be raised during the webinar. The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group would present the report of the November 2020 IP / APR Review Group meeting at the inter-sessional IP Special Session. He would also present the outcome of the webinar to the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Council.

2.7 At the September Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Council, all Parties agreed that the provision of IPs, together with annual reporting of progress on actions contained within the IPs, is one of the most valuable mechanisms that NASCO has developed. They considered it vitally important as a mechanism to strengthen implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. Parties agreed that they wanted to ensure the process worked well and was robust given its importance. Parties confirmed their commitment to a strengthened IP process in the third reporting cycle yet acknowledged that some revision to it was needed to enable the process to work better. They highlighted the positive elements of the IP process, including that:

- IPs in the third reporting cycle are a significant improvement on those submitted in

the first and second reporting cycles;

- in the preparation of the IPs there was, in general, broader consultation with stakeholders than in the past;
- the IPs are the vehicle to strengthen implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and enable all Parties / jurisdictions to be transparent and accountable in their actions to conserve wild Atlantic salmon;
- review of the IPs has provided clear, strong signals to Parties / jurisdictions so they can understand how they must improve; and
- the transparent nature of the process applies pressure, to encourage Parties / jurisdictions to improve continuously.

2.8 Parties noted that the work documented in the third reporting cycle was benefiting wild Atlantic salmon. Many IPs highlighted the work conducted and planned to conserve wild Atlantic salmon, such as significant actions on the management and restoration of salmon habitat and the closure of various net and mixed-stock fisheries. Parties agreed that this progress and positive work identified in the IPs should be acknowledged, whilst also being clear where further improvement is needed.

2.9 Council agreed that 'Enhanced Guidance from the Council of NASCO for the Review of Implementation Plans' be developed. This document contains three sections:

- the first section confirms the decision by the Council regarding its commitment to the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines under the third reporting cycle (2019 – 2024). This includes (among other things) the agreement that the President will send letters to the relevant Minister, or other nominated official, of all Parties / jurisdictions about the strengthened IP process and the importance of demonstrating progress towards the attainment of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines;
- the second section provides enhanced guidance for the IP / APR Review Group confirming that where a Party / jurisdiction does not submit a revised IP, the most recent revision of their IP shall form the basis for review in November 2020. It includes (among other things) that there will be no overall classification of an IP as 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable'. Instead, sections / areas of the IP should be categorised as either 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'. It also confirms that the IP / APR Review Group has the flexibility to review IPs to consider if the actions contained within them provide a basis for Parties / jurisdictions to make progress in implementing NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines; and
- the third section sets out a process for ongoing follow-up in future years.

Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans

2.10 The Annual Progress Reports (APRs) submitted in 2020 were the first to be submitted under the third reporting cycle. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting of the IP / APR Review Group, scheduled for April 2020, and the Special Session on the evaluation of the APRs, planned for the 2020 Annual Meeting, were cancelled. Furthermore, the Parties agreed, inter-sessionally, that the APRs submitted in 2020 would not be reviewed and the schedule would resume as normal in 2021, including a Special Session at the 2021 Annual Meeting.

The Process for the Third Performance Review

- 2.11 At its 2018 Annual Meeting, Council agreed that the process to consider conducting the third Performance Review of NASCO should commence in 2019, with a view to holding the review in 2021.
- 2.12 A Special Session to inform the process for arranging the Performance Review, planned to take place in 2020, was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the invited speakers were still able to contribute their papers and these were considered by Council.
- 2.13 Following discussion by inter-sessional correspondence and at each of the virtual meetings of the Council, Council agreed that:
- due to the impacts of Covid-19 the third performance review would be deferred, with reporting in 2023 for consideration at the 2023 NASCO Annual Meeting;
 - the Review Panel will be composed of three external experts who are ‘not directly affiliated’ with NASCO, and who, together, have expertise in the three categories: fisheries science, salmon management and conservation, and marine / fisheries law;
 - ‘not directly affiliated’ generally means – not a current or former NASCO officer, not members of NASCO delegations or accredited NGOs, and not working in an industry related to salmon;
 - ‘officer’ means - individuals who have held an office such as President, Vice-President, Chair, Vice-Chair etc.
 - the following process and timeline for agreeing the Review Panel was adopted¹:
 - Parties and the NGO Co-Chairs may nominate up to three candidates for the Review Panel, in the categories stated above, to the Secretariat, by 31 January 2021;
 - the Secretariat will compile and circulate the list of proposed Review Panel candidates as quickly as possible;
 - Parties will rank the experts, by 28 February 2021;
 - the proposed Review Panel candidates with the highest rankings in each category of expertise will be contacted by the Secretariat for their availability, in March 2021. Alternatives to be contacted if necessary;
 - the final Review Panel members will be agreed by Council, by April 2021, by correspondence.
 - the maximum length of time allocated to Panel members to conduct the review will be 30 working days, which may be reviewed by Council if necessary; and
 - the daily consulting fee for any Panel member requiring one will be £650, with a maximum of £750, if requested. All Panel members will receive the same fee. The maximum daily fee may be reviewed by Council if necessary.
- 2.14 Council also discussed the Terms of Reference for the performance review and agreed that:
- a small Working Group will be convened quickly to finalise the Terms of

¹ N.B. This process was not Norway’s preferred alternative for agreeing the Review Panel. However, Norway accepted this as the view of the majority of Parties.

Reference, including the review criteria;

- the Secretariat will work with Heads of Delegations from the EU, the Russian Federation, the UK, the United States and the NGO Co-Chairs to identify the members of the Working Group and agree on meeting dates before 18 December 2020;
- the Working Group will finalise the Terms of Reference, including the review criteria, by the end of January 2021; and
- the Council will approve the draft Terms of Reference, including the review criteria, by correspondence by the end of February 2021.

2.15 The Secretariat was asked to take forward the arrangements for the third performance review based on the decisions taken and to update Council at the Annual Meeting in June 2021 on progress made. It is anticipated that the performance review Terms of Reference will incorporate addressing the recommendations of the Tromsø Symposium Steering Committee.

The International Year of the Salmon

2.16 The focal year of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) was 2019, 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.

2.17 Council received a ‘Final Report on the Activities in the International Year of the Salmon’.

2.18 Council made the following decisions:

- that the IYS website would stay operational until at least the end of 2022, funded solely by the NPAFC;
- that the Secretariat repurposes the IYS twitter account to a NASCO twitter account;
- that the Secretary work with the Parties / jurisdictions to explore why they had not used the Rivers Database as had been agreed in 2016;
- that, although NASCO and NPAFC had different objectives for the IYS, a joint NASCO / NPAFC IYS Concluding Symposium should be held in Vancouver, Canada, in September 2022, if possible, or October 2022 at the latest; and
- to accept the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee of the joint NASCO / NPAFC IYS Concluding Symposium.

2.19 Canada, the EU and the NGOs offered to nominate individuals to serve on the Steering Committee, who would ensure that the NASCO contributions and priorities were part of the Symposium programme. It was also agreed that the scale of the Symposium should remain commensurate with the budget allocated by NASCO, and that its preparation should not have a disproportionate impact on the Secretariat resources. Parties also agreed that the possibility of recording parts of the Symposium should be explored so that it might have as wide a reach as possible. The view that it was unfortunate that the Symposium could not take place in the North-East Atlantic was expressed, as this would restrict the participation of the NASCO Parties as well as the impact of the Symposium.

Theme-based Special Session

- 2.20 The Council had agreed previously a that a Theme-based Special Session (TBSS) would be held during its 2020 Annual Meeting on the topic of aquaculture. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 TBSS was cancelled. At the 2020 Annual Meeting, Council agreed to hold a TBSS on aquaculture in 2021. The Steering Committee convened to plan the 2020 TBSS was repurposed to plan the 2021 TBSS and conduct its business in the usual way. Council agreed that only Parties and accredited NGOs could be represented on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee could, however, take up an offer of support and advice from the International Salmon Farmers' Association (ISFA), and may invite ISFA to make a presentation at the Special Session.

Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management

- 2.21 One new study relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon had been reported in 2020. Additionally, the socio-economic study commissioned to support some of the content in the State of North Atlantic Salmon Report had been published since the 2019 Annual Meeting by the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA).

Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.22 In 2013, the Council had agreed that an item should be retained on its Agenda entitled 'Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry', during which a representative of ISFA would be invited to participate in an exchange of information on issues concerning impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon. ISFA was represented at the 2020 Annual Meeting and submitted a statement to the Council.

Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.23 A report on the Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery was submitted by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) and considered during the inter-sessional correspondence period and by both Council and the North American Commission.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.24 A proposal regarding scientific research fishing had been received from the Norwegian Environment Agency in 2019. Parties were informed and no objections were received. The report of this scientific research fishing, including its results, was provided to the Council in 2020.

Scientific Advice

- 2.25 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, ICES had advised inter-sessionally that the meeting of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) had to be carried out by correspondence and this had impacted the capacity of the Group to respond fully to the Terms of Reference. Advice production was, therefore, prioritised over other tasks. Changes had to be made to section 1.2: 'Report on significant new or emerging threats to, or opportunities for, salmon conservation and management'; and 1.4: 'Identify relevant data deficiencies, monitoring needs and research requirements'. Information on these issues was not included in the advice in 2020. However, some information on emerging threats to salmon conservation and management was included in the Report of the WGNAS. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2021.

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

- 2.26 As set out in paragraph 2.25 above, ICES had advised that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not able to provide a full response to the request for advice in 2020. Changes had to be made to section 1.2: ‘Report on significant new or emerging threats to, or opportunities for, salmon conservation and management.’ The WGNAS had focused on red skin disease, which is reported in Section 2.3 of the WGNAS but was not included in the ACOM Report. Relevant information had also been included in the ‘Summary of Annual Progress Reports under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans’.

Election of Officers

- 2.27 The Council elected Serge Doucet (Canada) as its President and elected Arnaud Peyronnet (European Union) as its Vice-President.

Reports on NASCO’s Activities

- 2.28 The Council adopted a report on the activities of the Organization in 2019.
- 2.29 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.30 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) (see section 6 below). On the recommendations of the Finance and Administration Committee, the Council agreed to extend the MoU with ICES for one additional year (i.e. through 2021) and that the Secretary would circulate the revised MoU to the Committee for inter-sessional review and comment as soon as it is available, to facilitate its adoption at the latest in 2021. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council agreed to establish a ‘Periodic Projects Special Fund’ to help avoid large swings in NASCO’s budget from year-to-year where monies are needed to support necessary and higher cost intermittent activities. The ceiling for the new Special Fund would be £100,000 and initial funding would include:
- the IYS Fund surplus of £60,800;
 - any surplus funds available at the end of the 2020 financial year (and subsequent financial years) which are not needed for the Working Capital Fund or Contractual Obligation Fund; and
 - the sum of £15,000 included in the 2021 budget.
- 2.31 Council was advised, at its Annual Meeting in June, that while NASCO’s 2019 accounts were audited, due to administrative delays by NASCO’s bank the auditors had not been able to sign off the audited accounts. The Secretary had, therefore, circulated financial statements to the President, Heads of Delegations and FAC Members for consideration. Council agreed to adopt the 2019 Audited Accounts at its December Inter-Sessional Meeting.
- 2.32 The Council received the report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board. The Board had approved all the recommendations of the Working Group for the Review of SALSEA-Track and the Inventory of Research. Therefore, the SALSEA-Track Programme, in its current form, would be closed.
- 2.33 The Secretary made a report on a number of administrative and procedural matters, including: the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions; the contributions for 2020; and NASCO’s

Public Relations work.

- 2.34 The Council received an update on progress in implementing the 2013 ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’.

Observers

- 2.35 The Council was advised that the North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) Iceland had been granted observer status to NASCO. This brought the total to 45 NASCO accredited NGOs.

Other Business

- 2.36 The Council agreed to add an Agenda item to its next face-to-face meeting, to discuss the use of alternative procedures for NASCO’s business drawing on experience gained through working virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.37 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of £1,500 was Ståle Brevik from Trondheim, Norway.
- 2.38 At its 2020 Annual Meeting, the Council agreed to encourage Parties to continue bilateral discussions with Iceland, with a view to them rejoining the Convention. At the September Inter-Sessional Meeting, the Council was advised that the United States had made contact with Iceland on this matter.
- 2.39 The Council agreed that its Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting would be held virtually during 1 – 5 June 2021. The Council confirmed the dates for its Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting as 7 – 10 June 2022.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held by video conference, during 1 – 5 June 2020. The Meeting was chaired by Pat Keliher (USA).

Review of the 2019 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2019 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES during a webinar at which the ICES advice for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions. This item had also been discussed during the inter-sessional correspondence period.

The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had tabled a report on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery which was discussed during the inter-sessional correspondence period and at the Council meeting.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.4 The United States and Canada tabled reports on issues of mutual concern, including the number of disease incidences, the number of breaches of containment, any introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area and transgenics. The United States noted that the Greig Placentia Bay project was still under review and had not yet been authorised. The United States clarified that, during the inter-sessional correspondence period, they had not requested information not currently available but noted that a status update would be greatly appreciated. The United States considered information about the project important and to be relevant to the work of the NAC and

NASCO more generally, given the terms of the Williamsburg Resolution and the NAC protocols. The United States encouraged Canada strongly to consider including information on the project in its NASCO reporting in the future. This comment was acknowledged by Canada.

- 3.5 The NGOs noted that Canada's Annual Progress Report stated that there were no reported escapes of farmed salmon in Newfoundland and asked whether any farmed salmon had been detected at the DFO salmon counting fences in the south of Newfoundland. Canada responded that no such salmon had been detected in 2019 from DFO counting fences in Newfoundland.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 3.6 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs).
- 3.7 Canada had tabled a paper which provided a description of the Labrador subsistence food fishery, including information on the management, reported annual harvests, sampling of the fishery catches and the origin and composition of the catches. This was considered during the inter-sessional correspondence period.

Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.8 The Commission was advised that information on the sampling programme had been provided both in the ICES advice and in the paper on the Labrador subsistence food fishery (see paragraph 3.7 above). This item had also been discussed during the inter-sessional correspondence period.
- 3.9 The United States noted that during the inter-sessional correspondence period, Canada had stated that there were additional analyses that could be conducted to further understand how effective the sampling program is in identifying rare events such as harvest of U.S.-origin salmon. The United States noted its appreciation for this offer and strong support for these analyses being undertaken to provide further information on whether U.S.-origin fish are being caught in the fishery. Canada agreed to conduct these additional analyses as described in the inter-sessional correspondence.

Other Business

- 3.10 The Commission elected Kim Blankenkoper (USA) as its Chair and re-elected Tony Blanchard (Canada) as its Vice-Chair.
- 3.11 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Roger F. Rubeor, New Hampshire, United States.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held by video conference, during 1 – 5 June 2020, chaired by Viktor Rozhnov (Russian Federation).

Review of the 2019 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission reviewed the 2019 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES during a webinar at which the ICES advice for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions.

- 4.3 In response to a question from the NGOs, Norway indicated that they review their fishery regulations annually and that every five years a major revision is conducted. The five-year revision process had begun, and new regulations would be in place from 2021. New instructions from the Ministry required that the process focus particularly on the risk of overharvesting small stocks, applying in both coastal and in-river fisheries. The proposal for the revised regulations was to be laid before a public hearing in June 2020.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 4.4 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs). The European Union (EU), Norway and the Russian Federation had submitted papers providing an update on the information on MSFs, including a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.
- 4.5 A Joint Statement was provided on behalf of the EU and Norway regarding the implementation of the bilateral agreement between Norway and Finland on the fisheries in the Tana / Teno river, which includes MSFs.
- 4.6 A Joint Statement on behalf of Norway and the Russian Federation relating to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fisheries (Russian Federation) on co-operation on management of, and research on, wild Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk region (Russian Federation), which was signed in 2015, was also provided.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.7 In 2018 the Commission adopted a 'Decision Regarding the Salmon Fishery in Faroese Waters in 2018 / 2019, 2019 / 2020 and 2020 / 2021'. Under this Decision, the Commission agreed not to set a quota for the salmon fishery in the Faroese Fisheries Zone for 2018 / 2019, acknowledging that Faroese management decisions will be made with due consideration to the ICES advice concerning the biological situation and the status of the stocks contributing to the fishery. The Decision would also apply in 2019 / 2020 and 2020 / 2021 unless application of the Framework of Indicators (FWI) showed that a reassessment was warranted. The Commission had agreed that the procedure used for applying the FWI previously should continue under the new Decision.
- 4.8 The Commission was advised that the FWI Working Group had concluded that the results of the NEAC FWI assessment in 2020 (based on indicator values for 2019) did not suggest that the PFA forecast had been underestimated. Therefore, the FWI Working Group had concluded that no reassessment of the existing management advice for the Faroese fishery was required from ICES in 2020. The Commission confirmed that the Decision adopted in 2018 would continue to apply to the fishery in 2020 / 2021.

Risk of Transmission of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area

- 4.9 At its 2018 Annual Meeting, the North-East Atlantic Commission adopted a 'Road Map' to enhance information exchange and co-operation on monitoring, research and measures to prevent the spread of *G. salaris* and eradicate it if introduced'. Under this

‘Road Map’, the Commission retains an item on *G. salaris* on the agenda for its Annual Meetings to facilitate reports by Commission members / jurisdictions and the Working Group on *G. salaris* on measures to prevent the further spread of the parasite and to eradicate it in areas where it has been introduced, and on other aspects of the ‘Road Map’. Papers containing updates had been submitted by EU – Ireland, EU – UK (England and Wales) and Norway.

- 4.10 In 2019 it was agreed that Chair of the Working Group on *G. salaris* would contact the Working Group to discuss the of synonymisation of the *Gyrodactylus* species *G. thymalli* and *G. salaris*. This discussion took place inter-sessionally. The Chair of the Working Group on *G. salaris* had tabled a paper on this matter which concluded that what was formerly *G. thymalli* (parasites from grayling) would not be diagnosed as *G. salaris* by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and that the synonymisation would, therefore, have no practical consequences for NASCO Parties / jurisdictions.
- 4.11 The Commission had agreed in 2018 that the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* should meet again in 2021 and agreed its Terms of Reference. The Commission was advised that the Secretariat would work with the Working Group Chair to organize and conduct the meeting. Members of the Commission were asked to confirm their nominations for the Working Group for 2021 inter-sessionally.

Other Business

- 4.12 The Commission re-elected Victor Rozhnov (Russian Federation) as its Chair and Svein Magnason (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) as its Vice-Chair.
- 4.13 The winner of the Commission’s £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Sergey Bystrov from the Russian Federation.
- 4.14 The NGOs noted that European Union had expressed disappointment in its Opening Statement at the at the cancellation of the Special Session on aquaculture planned for the NASCO Annual Meeting this year. The NGOs asked the European Union to expand on this aspect of their Opening Statement, and whether the NGOs might consult the representative of the European Union after the meeting on this issue, as they were concerned by the recently published document ‘[Second Recommendation on the Future Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture](#)’ from the Aquaculture Advisory Council. The European Union replied that its Opening Statement reflected the general view within the EU delegation that if progress is to be made on the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon there is a need to examine issues around aquaculture, and that this is not a view only held by the European Union, but also further afield. The European Union noted that each year the knowledge base on the interaction between wild and farmed salmon grows and stated that an update on this knowledge was required, along with an assessment of how NASCO can utilise it, in order to progress with its work. The representative of the European Union indicated that he would be happy to engage with the NGOs after the meeting on this issue.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was by video conference during 1 – 5 June 2020, chaired by Carl McLean (Canada).

Review of the 2019 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 2019 fishery and considered the scientific advice from

ICES during a webinar at which the ICES advice for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions.

- 5.3 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had submitted a report describing the events in the 2019 fishery prior to the inter-sessional correspondence period. The review of the fishery took place during the inter-sessional correspondence period.
- 5.4 The United States asked whether the unreported catch estimate of 5.8 t was due to knowing the pool of participants, given the mandatory license requirements, and whether it included all potential fishers. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that the unreported catch estimate was based on knowing the pool of participants. As the number of fishers who did not report was known, it was possible to use the average catch of those who did report to calculate the likely catch of those who did not report. The United States asked whether applications for salmon licenses were evenly distributed across cities and both large and small communities or whether there was potential for unlicensed fishing in small communities that would not be accounted for in the unreported catch estimate. In response, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that there will always be people who fish without a license as happens in all fisheries. She noted that Greenland is the largest island in the world and has only 16 fishery inspectors, so it is not possible for them to cover everything.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.5 At its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting (2018), the Commission had adopted a Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for the calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020.
- 5.6 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had submitted papers outlining the proposed measures for the 2020 fishery prior to the inter-sessional correspondence period. These papers were discussed by the Commission during that period.
- 5.7 The United States noted that there was some confusion regarding the level of catch in the 2019 fishery given that ICES reported 29.8 t (an overharvest of 10.3 t), the report on the fishery submitted by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) reported a 30.4 t harvest (an overharvest of 10.9 t) and the APR for Greenland included a reported catch of 28.8 t (an overharvest of 9.3 t). The United States asked whether there were plans to simplify the reporting process in the future to avoid possible confusion about the final reported catch. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) replied that, as stated in the proposed measures for the 2020 fishery, the Government of Greenland had adopted a quota of 20.7 t for the 2020 fishery, based on the 2019 catch of 28.8 t. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had sent a proposal to NASCO earlier in the year to include an item on the Commission's Agenda on the issue of the timing of Greenland's reporting. However, following discussion with the Secretary and Chair of the West Greenland Commission, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had agreed to defer this proposal until 2021, given the special nature of the 2020 Annual Meeting.
- 5.8 The United States noted that the 2019 report on the fishery stated that improvements would be made to the calculation model for when to close the fishery, and that Hunter T. Snyder would present his results in June. The United States noted that it was hopeful that the planned steps to improve monitoring and control would be effective in

preventing an overharvest in 2020 and that there would be no need to have to apply the overharvest payback provisions of the regulatory measure to the 2021 fishery. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was asked for further information on the improvements to the model and other approaches to be used to monitor and control landings in 2020 to ensure that there would be no overharvest. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that there had been no further work on the calculation model. Further improvements would be considered following Hunter T. Snyder's survey results. Consideration would be given to implementing suggestions from his survey in the 2020 fishery, which may be possible as the season start date had been delayed. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the Commission would be advised of any changes to the fishery.

- 5.9 It had been agreed that the regulatory measure agreed in 2018 would also apply to the fishery in 2019 and 2020 unless any member of the Commission requested its reconsideration based on the review of the annual report on the fishery, and / or subject to the application of the FWI. The Commission was advised that the FWI did not show a significant change in the indicators used and, therefore, that a reassessment of the ICES management advice for the 2020 fishery was not required. The Commission confirmed that the regulatory measure adopted in 2018 would continue to apply to the West Greenland salmon fishery in 2020.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.10 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs). Canada and the European Union tabled papers providing a description of the MSFs still operating in their jurisdiction, the most recent catch data, any updates to their Implementation Plans relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the IP period to implement NASCO's agreements. There are no directed wild Atlantic salmon fisheries in the United States.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.11 The Commission adopted a 'Statement of Co-operation on the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Program for 2020'.
- 5.12 The Chair noted that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was possible that the international samplers would not be able to travel to Greenland in 2020. He stated that there may, therefore, need to be a 'Plan B'. The members of the Commission agreed with this and noted that it would be important to begin discussion on what Plan B may entail as soon as possible. Canada indicated that it could name an individual familiar with the programme to serve on a Working or Technical Group, to ensure that work on an alternative plan could start immediately, if required. The Commission agreed that it would be pragmatic to establish these technical discussions as soon as possible. Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union and the United States appointed leads to work together to develop an alternative plan for the Sampling Programme, to be implemented in the event that the international samplers were not able to travel to Greenland. The Commission also agreed that there would be NGO representation on the Group.

Other Business

- 5.13 The Commission elected Stephen Gephard (USA) as its Chair and Katrine Kaergaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as its Vice-Chair.

- 5.14 The Commission agreed to hold an Inter-Sessional Meeting in 2021, given the need to consider a new regulatory measure for possible adoption at the 2021 Annual Meeting. It was agreed that the Secretary and Chair would work to establish a process for the Inter-Sessional Meeting given the ongoing restrictions surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.15 The NGOs noted that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had raised the issues of the impacts of habitat and predator concerns in home waters in Canada and the United States. The NGOs felt that aquaculture in the United States, Canada and the European Union could also have been mentioned. The NGOs noted that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) could also have asked what the homewater countries are doing to deal with these threats. The European Union reminded the Commission that their Opening Statement had noted that the EU felt it was unfortunate that the Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture could not go ahead. The European Union indicated that more discussion is needed on NASCO's role in relation to the management of aquaculture activities and the EU looks forward to that discussion.
- 5.16 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Paul Zeeb, Maniitsoq, Greenland.
- 5.17 The Commission appointed Sissel Fredsgaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as a representative to the SSC. The Commission's representatives on the SSC are Sissel Fredsgaard and Niall Ó Maoiléidigh (European Union).

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met by video conference prior to the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Council, chaired by Kim Blankenkaker (USA).

Accounts

- 6.2 The Committee was advised at its Annual Meeting that while NASCO's 2019 accounts had been audited, due to exceptional administrative delays by NASCO's bank, the auditors had not been able to sign off the audited accounts. The Secretary had, therefore, circulated financial statements for consideration.
- 6.3 The Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000. The Contractual Obligation Fund had been reduced to £3,357 in 2017. However, with the incorporation of the 2019 year-end surplus, it had been rebuilt to its ceiling of £250,000. The Recruitment Fund, which had been reduced from its standing level of £60,000 due to the recruitment of the Secretary and previous Assistant Secretary, had been further utilised in 2019 due to the recruitment of a new Assistant Secretary. However, through budgetary provision this Fund had been rebuilt to £52,800 in 2019. The International Year of the Salmon Fund stood at £259,000, due to a grant payment of £148,005 from the European Union in addition to the budgetary provision.
- 6.4 The Committee was advised that while the circulated document was a record of the 2019 financial statements, it could not be signed by the auditors due to NASCO's bank not providing the requested information. The Secretary further advised that the financial statements would not change; they were signed by her on 14 February 2020. Given the exceptional nature of the delay in receiving the audited accounts, the Committee agreed as an interim step to recommend to the Council at its June meeting that it accept the financial statements. It was agreed that once the audited accounts were received, they would be forwarded as soon as possible, and within the required 14-day deadline, to the

Committee Members. The Committee further recommended to the Council that the Committee consider the audited accounts by correspondence once received, and that the Council consider its recommendations on the audited accounts at the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Council.

- 6.5 The Committee was advised that the Secretary had considered changing the bank in light of the difficulties receiving the needed information to finalise the audited accounts. In exploring this matter with others, an initial concern was that moving to another similar bank likely would not mean improved service. On the other hand, a private bank may provide a better service but would be expensive. The Chair noted that this was the first time this situation with the accounts had occurred and suggested the Committee see how things go over the next year. If problems continue, the Committee may wish to ask the Secretary to explore more seriously the possibility of changing the bank.
- 6.6 The United States noted the good standing of the Organization's finances and appreciated clarity in the financial statements on the various funds received.

Relationship with ICES

- 6.7 The MoU with ICES specifies recurrent requests for advice and procedures for *ad hoc* requests for advice, as well as key administrative procedures and financial aspects. The MoU has been extended four times since it was signed in 2007, with the most recent extension ending in 2020.
- 6.8 In 2019, ICES requested that the revision of the NASCO-ICES MoU be initiated in 2020 to enable it to be aligned with the new and revised agreements and MoUs that ICES had concluded with other advice requesters. The Committee had agreed to this and asked the Secretary to liaise with ICES inter-sessionally to discuss the MoU.
- 6.9 The Committee was advised that significant progress had been made with a revised NASCO-ICES MoU. However, due to delays resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, it had not been possible to complete that work and provide a revised document to the Committee for deliberations prior to the 2020 Annual Meeting. ICES had indicated that it was able, in the circumstances, to continue to provide its advice under the current NASCO-ICES MoU, while inter-sessional work on the revised MoU continues between the two Organizations to prepare it for adoption by NASCO in 2021.
- 6.10 It was agreed that the Committee would recommend to the Council that the current MoU with ICES be extended for one additional year (i.e. through 2021). The Secretary was requested to circulate the revised MoU to the Committee for inter-sessional review and comment as soon as it becomes available, to facilitate its adoption at latest in 2021.

Consideration of the 2021 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan

- 6.11 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2021 Draft Budget and 2022 Forecast Budget. Following the accession of the UK to the NASCO Convention, the Schedule of Contributions as agreed at the Annual Meeting was revised and agreed by Council.
- 6.12 The Committee agreed that a new Special Fund should be established, with an initial ceiling of £100,000. This Fund is intended to help avoid large swings in NASCO's budget from year-to-year where monies to support necessary and higher cost intermittent activities would be allocated. Any 2020 budget surplus would be transferred to the Special Fund after the audit of the 2020 accounts and £15,000 would be included in the 2021 budget as the initial contribution to the Special Fund.

- 6.13 The Committee asked the Secretary to prepare a comprehensive analysis of each budget line to ensure that the budget accurately reflects the current needs of the Organization in time for 2021 budget deliberations and to include information in future budgets on the most recent actual expenditures in the narrative section together with the current and proposed budget figures.

Other Business

- 6.14 The Committee elected Clemens Fieseler (European Union) as its Chair and Heidi Hansen (Norway) as its Vice-Chair.
- 6.15 The Committee was advised that negotiations were ongoing regarding how much of the costs for the cancelled 2020 Annual Meeting could be recouped against future meetings.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
9 April 2021