

NAC(00)13

Report of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization 5-9 June 2000, Miramichi, Canada

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Dr Ray B Owen, Jr. (USA), opened the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission and welcomed participants to Miramichi.
- 1.2 A list of participants at the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page [] of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its Agenda, NAC(00)11 (Annex 1), with the addition of a new Item 7, “Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Work of the Commission” and a new Item 13, “Sampling”.

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 The Commission nominated Mr Mike Calcutt (Canada) as Rapporteur.

4. Election of Officers

- 4.1 The Commission elected Mr Pierre Tremblay (Canada) as Chairman and Dr Andrew Rosenberg (USA) as Vice-Chairman.

5. Review of the 1999 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM), Mr Tore Jakobsen, presented the scientific advice from ICES relevant to the North American Commission, (CNL(00)12), prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Sixteenth Annual Meeting. This included an overview of fisheries on a national basis within the NAC area, a review of composition and origin of catch, an indication of stock status in terms of returns, North American spawner requirements, pre-fishery abundance, egg deposition and smolt production. The ACFM Report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page [] of this document.
- 5.2 Effects of the closure of the Newfoundland commercial fisheries resulted in increased escapement in some areas, higher catches in the recreational fishery as well as increased spawning escapement, but not necessarily increased smolt production. Expected benefits to spawning escapement have not been realized due to low marine survival.

- 5.3 A review of catch options for the 2000 fisheries (composite North American fisheries) on 2SW maturing salmon indicated no harvest possibilities at forecasted levels which would be considered risk neutral or risk averse. However, on individual rivers where spawning requirements are being achieved, river catches corresponding to surplus escapement can proceed.
- 5.4 An overview of returns on a regional basis was provided which indicated a range of results from exceeding conservation requirements in SFA18 to insufficient returns to meet conservation requirements in SFA19-23 and in all US rivers.
- 5.5 Data deficiencies, monitoring needs and research requirements were identified and included the need for: increased monitoring in Labrador and remote areas of Quebec; developing habitat-based spawner requirements in Labrador; additional information on smolt-to-adult survival rates; research on spatial and temporal distribution of salmon and their predators at sea.
- 5.6 Noting that no US origin tags were detected in Canada, the representative of the US asked if there were any sources of data available to determine whether there have been changes to migration patterns of US origin salmon. The representative of ICES indicated he would look into this question for next year.

6. Review and Discussion of the 2000 Canadian and US Salmon Management Measures as they relate to the Mandate of the Commission and to the Findings of the ACFM Report from ICES

- 6.1 The representative of Canada tabled a short summary of Canadian management measures for 2000, NAC(00)10 (Annex 2). Highlights included the following: there are no longer any commercial fisheries for salmon on Canada's east coast; the licence retirement program on the Lower North Shore of Quebec was completed at a cost of \$1.4M; an additional \$0.7M was spent to retire the remaining seven licences in Gaspé; all other commercial fisheries moratoria remain in place; in Newfoundland and Labrador the second year of a multi-year plan is being implemented. Conservation measures are in place, including a river classification system, and no retention of MSW salmon in insular Newfoundland; in the Maritimes and Gulf regions there are no MSW salmon fisheries permitted; work is underway for a recovery plan for stocks in the Inner Bay of Fundy; in Quebec, a multi-year plan has been announced which establishes conservation limits and management targets for each river.
- 6.2 The representative of Canada acknowledged concern with respect to unreported catch levels in Canada and indicated that fishery managers are addressing this important issue in order to decrease unreported catches. One example of this is in relation to a local directed fishery for char and sea trout which occurs in specific areas of Labrador. To minimize by-catch of Atlantic salmon, managers have curtailed the length of the fishing season. To ensure appropriate control of the level of Atlantic salmon by-catch, a minimum number of tags will be issued which will allow improved monitoring. Every effort will be taken to minimize the mixed stock fishery focusing on in-river fisheries. Additionally, resources for enforcement for fisheries in general have been augmented by approximately 25%. It is expected that some of this increase will be directed at monitoring the Atlantic salmon resource.

- 6.3 The representative of the US acknowledged Canada's openness on the subject of unreported catches and asked if there was any prospect of improved scientific monitoring in Labrador. The representative of Canada acknowledged that the closure of the commercial fishery in 1998 had eliminated a primary source of data in Labrador. However, there were three rivers monitored in 1999 and Canada is currently reviewing plans for 2000. The representative of the US indicated interest in further discussions with Canada on sampling both in Greenland and in Labrador.
- 6.4 The representative of the US asked for clarification of Canadian tag returns from the Faroe Islands and was advised that there were no recent returns of Canadian tags. It was explained that in the past, fish caught at the Faroe Islands were tagged, and based on recapture of the tags in Canadian waters, it had been previously estimated that 7% of the fish in the Faroe Islands fishery were of Canadian origin.
- 6.5 The representative of the US presented a review of catches and conservation measures for Atlantic salmon in the US in 1999, NAC(00)12 (Annex 3). In summary, highlights include: documented total adult salmon returns to US rivers in 1999 amounted to 1452 salmon, 18% fewer than in 1998; in excess of 13 million juvenile salmon were stocked in US rivers in 1999; four obstructions to fish passage were removed in Maine allowing for a significant increase in access to all anadromous fish. As well, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fishery Service conducted an updated review of the status of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon, including a review of the first year of implementation of the Maine Conservation Plan. Based on this review, it was concluded that the Gulf of Maine distinct population segment of Atlantic salmon is in danger of extinction and on November 17, 1999, it was proposed to be listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The comment period on this proposal has now closed and a decision as to whether or not to finalize the listing action is expected on or before November 17, 2000.
- 6.6 The representative of Canada commended the US for its focus on habitat restoration and other work in progress.

7. Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Work of the Commission

- 7.1 The representative of the US indicated that he believed the decision structure provisionally adopted by the Council has application in the North American Commission area. The decision structure should, therefore, be worked through for a number of rivers with stocks in different conditions. While the decision structure is designed principally for use in management of salmon fisheries, he indicated that there are no salmon fisheries in the US. The US delegation would, however, undertake to see how the recent decision to close the catch and release fishery in Maine conformed to the decision structure. There would be a need to gain experience in working with the decision structure and to review this experience within the Commission. He indicated that a similar decision structure might be developed in relation to the protection and restoration of habitat.
- 7.2 The representative of Canada referenced activities underway in Canada to develop a risk management approach in Canadian fisheries generally, in relation to the Precautionary

Approach. Canada will be working with the provisional decision structure adopted by NASCO, on a pilot basis using a limited number of rivers of different status.

- 7.3 The Canadian representative agreed with the representative of the US that it would be useful if the Margaree River, for which a worked example had already been developed in the report of the SCPA, could be included in the rivers selected, so that updated information was available.
- 7.4 In their reports to the Commission for 2001 it was agreed that each Party would refer to the provisional decision structure adopted by the Council, in order to provide an explicit summary of the steps they have taken to address the Precautionary Approach in respect of domestic salmon management.

8. The St Pierre et Miquelon Salmon Fisheries

- 8.1 The Secretary introduced document NAC(00)4 (Annex 4) providing provisional catch statistics for St Pierre et Miquelon in 1999. The catch of 2.322 tonnes was the highest since 1994 and was above the thirteen-year mean catch of 1.991 tonnes. Last year the Commission had requested that the Council write to the French authorities advising them of the Commission's serious concerns caused by the continuing fishery at St Pierre et Miquelon. The Secretary referred to Council document CNL(00)29 which contained details of the response received from France.
- 8.2 The representative of the US introduced a Draft Resolution concerning harvest levels at St Pierre et Miquelon, NAC(00)9 (Annex 5), urging France (in respect of St Pierre et Miquelon) to cooperate with NASCO to rebuild salmon stocks of North American origin by setting harvest limits for the 2000 salmon fishery to the lowest possible level consistent with the advice provided by ICES and informing NASCO accordingly. The representative of the United States also indicated that it would be useful for St Pierre et Miquelon to be made aware of the measures taken at West Greenland in restricting the fishery to the amount used for internal consumption, and suggested that the Resolution also be considered by the West Greenland Commission. The Resolution was adopted by the North American Commission.
- 8.3 The representative of Canada proposed that France (in respect of St Pierre et Miquelon) be invited to become a Contracting Party to NASCO, as is the case in some other international fishery Commissions.
- 8.4 The Commission decided that the Resolution should be made available for consideration by the West Greenland Commission and the Council. The Commission also recommended to the Council that France (in respect of St Pierre et Miquelon) be invited to become a member of NASCO.

9. Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 9.1 Dr Dan Kimball, Co-Chair of the Scientific Working Group on Introductions and Transfers, presented a summary of the Report of Activities of the Group. Details of the Group's activities are contained in NAC(00)8 (Annex 6).

- 9.2 The representative of the United States asked Canada to follow up with additional information on the origin of ISA occurrences in New Brunswick. The representative of Canada agreed.
- 9.3 The representative of Canada updated the Commission on the federal-provincial process for addressing the Introductions and Transfers Policy in Canada. As well, the Department conducted an independent review of submissions which commented on the proposed Revisions to the Protocols. Recommendations on revisions to the NAC Protocols will be considered following conclusion of the federal-provincial process mentioned above.
- 9.4 The representative of the US indicated that the Scientific Working Group may wish to consider the work of the Risk Assessment Management Committee of the U.S. Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

10. Acid Rain

- 10.1 The representative of Canada introduced document NAC(00)6 (Annex 7) on the Effects of Acid Rain on Atlantic Salmon of the Southern Upland of Nova Scotia.
- 10.2 This report was prepared by DFO following a workshop in March 2000. The report identifies that natural reproducing Atlantic salmon are no longer present in many of the 65 rivers of the Southern Upland due to acid toxicity and low marine survival. Significant reductions in toxicity are not anticipated in the near future and further declines in salmon production and losses of stocks are expected. The report identifies management options as: liming to neutralise river acidity, stocking of hatchery fish, live gene banking and further restrictions on exploitation.
- 10.3 The report recommends support for a further 75% reduction in SO₂ emission limits in eastern Canada and the US.
- 10.4 The representative of the US indicated that some research studies are underway in the US concerning impacts of acid rain on Atlantic salmon.
- 10.5 The US and Canada agreed to investigate the possibility of contacting the Committee on Environmental Cooperation of NAFTA regarding the potential for acid rain to impact salmon.

11. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 11.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's prize of \$1,500 was Mr A Hillier, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

12. Recommendations to the Council on the Request to ICES for Scientific Advice

- 12.1 The Commission reviewed the relevant sections of document SSC(00)3 and agreed to recommend them to the Council as part of the annual request to ICES for scientific

advice. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, CNL(00)60, is contained in Annex 8.

13. Sampling

- 13.1 The representative of the US emphasised the importance of sampling in the Labrador fishery and asked the representative of Canada about plans for sampling in this year's fishery. The representative of Canada indicated that three rivers were monitored in 1999 and plans for 2000 are under review. It may also be possible to collect additional data in Labrador from tags in the trout and char food fishery. The representative of Canada promised to monitor this issue closely.

14. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 14.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting during the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Council, 4-8 June 2001.

15. Consideration of the Draft Report of the Meeting

- 15.1 The Commission agreed a draft report of the meeting, NAC(00)5.