

NEA(04)12

Report of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization 7-11 June, 2004, Reykjavik, Iceland

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Arni Olafsson (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)), the Vice-Chairman, Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway), opened the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission and welcomed delegates to Reykjavik.
- 1.2 An opening statement was made on behalf of the Non-Government Organizations attending the Annual Meeting (Annex 1).
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Twenty-First Meeting of the Council and Commissions of NASCO is included on page XXX of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, NEA(04)11 (Annex 2). The Chairman indicated that under item 10, 'Other Business', he would seek a progress report from Norway on the pilot project for the synchronised release of tagged farmed salmon approved by the Commission at its last Annual Meeting.

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 The Commission appointed Dr Niall Ó Maoiléidigh (European Union) as its Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Election of Officers

- 4.1 The Commission unanimously elected Mr Steinar Hermansen (Norway) as its Chairman and Mr Andrew Thomson (European Union) as its Vice-Chairman.

5. Review of the 2003 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Dr Walter Crozier, presented the scientific advice relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(04)9, prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Twentieth Annual Meeting. The ACFM Report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page XX of this document.

- 5.2 The representative of Iceland noted that the status of Icelandic multi-sea-winter (MSW) stocks appears to be similar to that of southern MSW salmon stocks and he asked ICES for clarification as to whether they were included in the southern MSW stock grouping. The representative of ICES agreed that the status was more similar to that of southern European stocks, but that Icelandic stocks were included in the Northern stock complex for the purposes of the assessments. However, he suggested that it may be appropriate to reconsider the groupings.
- 5.3 The representative of Norway expressed his appreciation to ICES for the progress made in relation to assessing the by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries which will encourage the development of more reliable estimates in future.
- 5.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked for confirmation that the post-smolts caught in experimental trawls in the Norwegian Sea originate from southern European countries and that pre-fishery abundance estimates for these stocks have been used in the correlations with catches in the pelagic fisheries. The representative of ICES indicated that on the basis of the biological characteristics of post-smolts caught and tag recoveries, the majority of the post-smolts taken in the Norwegian research trawls are believed to originate from southern Europe. He stated that the correlations did not reveal any significant trend and that the comparisons had been with pre-fishery abundance estimates for both stock complexes. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that while there was a lack of disaggregated catch data for the pelagic fisheries, the current estimate from the catch screening analysis indicated a low level of post-smolt by-catch. The representative of ICES indicated that disaggregated catch data were required to make the estimate of by-catch more reliable although it could still be low. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested that not only would screening of commercial catches involve costs, it would also be virtually impossible to screen an entire catch of between 80 and 100 tonnes per day of pelagic fish. The representative of ICES agreed that if a high proportion of the catch was to be screened it would not be possible to handle the catch of a commercial pelagic vessel. One option would be to perform one tow of the trawl and screen the entire catch but it might then be necessary to compensate for the lost fishing opportunity.
- 5.5 The Commission agreed that efforts should be made by the Parties to facilitate improvement in the estimates of by-catch of post-smolts in pelagic fisheries in accordance with the Council's decision on by-catch. The representative of the European Union suggested that the NASCO Parties already co-operate at many levels in addressing the problem of salmon mortality at sea. He proposed that NASCO should write to the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to seek co-operation in obtaining disaggregated catch statistics from the NEAFC Parties involved in the pelagic fisheries. This was agreed by the Commission. The Chairman tabled a draft letter to the President of NEAFC. After a number of amendments this letter was approved by the Commission, NEA(04)8, (Annex 3).

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

- 6.1 The Secretary presented the Report of the Workshop on *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area, NEA(04)3 (Annex 4), and a draft road map, NEA(04)5, for taking

forward the recommendations of this Workshop. The draft road map includes Terms of Reference for a Working Group on *G. salaris*. The representative of Norway indicated that it had been assumed that Baltic salmon were resistant to *G. salaris* on the basis of studies conducted on salmon from the Neva River. However, recently published research indicated that salmon in another Baltic river, the Indalselven, may be susceptible to the parasite.

- 6.2 The representative of the European Union stated that the report of the Workshop was extremely useful and that it had been circulated to appropriate authorities in Brussels for their consideration. He suggested an amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Working Group. The representative of Norway suggested adding a new Term of Reference to enable the Working Group to consider other fish health issues of relevance to the wild Atlantic salmon. Both proposals were accepted by the Commission. The road map, including the amended Terms of Reference for the *G. salaris* Working Group, as adopted by the Commission, NEA(04)13, is contained in Annex 5. The Working Group will be chaired by Norway.
- 6.3 The representative of Norway indicated that the European Union is in the process of implementing a Directive on biocides, a consequence of which will be a potential ban on the use of rotenone from 1 September 2006. He pointed out that the use of rotenone is a key tool in Norway for the eradication of *G. salaris*. He noted that the use of rotenone for the treatment of *G. salaris* had been recommended by the Workshop. Rotenone is important in the contingency plans of the Parties, including countries which are free of the parasite. The representative of Norway informed the Commission that Norway will be taking an initiative to the European Commission in order to clarify how rotenone and other control measures can continue to be used after 2006. The representative of the European Union advised the Commission that the proposed regulations were obligatory not just for European Union Member States but for all European Economic Area countries. While he agreed that it was an issue which would need attention, he was not authorised to make any statements on the proposed Directive as it did not form part of the Common Fisheries Policy, which was his area of authority. However, he undertook to bring the Norwegian concern to the attention of the relevant authorities in Brussels. He also suggested that any Party affected by the proposed Directive should also record its concerns in writing to the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General (Directorate General SANCO) in Brussels.
- 6.4 The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the participants in the Workshop, many of whom had not previously participated in NASCO meetings.

7. Regulatory Measures

- 7.1 The representative of the European Union stated that the purpose of NASCO is to regulate the distant-water fisheries in the West Greenland and North-East Atlantic Commission areas. He noted that it had been some time since a regulatory measure had been agreed in the North-East Atlantic Commission and this is a deep concern for the European Union delegation. He asked how the Parties could meet their obligations under various international agreements, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly

Migratory Fish Stocks Agreement (the Fish Stocks Agreement), if regulatory measures were not established. He referred to the Decision adopted by the Commission at its last Annual Meeting. The European Union delegation felt that this Decision did not fulfil the Commission's obligations. It is the function of NASCO to put order into fishing for salmon in areas where it has authority. He indicated that the Fish Stocks Agreement refers to the need to strengthen the role of fishery Commissions and he asked how that could be achieved if regulatory measures are not established. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) reminded the Commission that there had been no commercial fishery for salmon carried out at Faroes in recent years and that they had been very precautionary.

- 7.2 The Commission considered a proposal from the Chair for a Decision regarding the salmon fishery at Faroes in 2005. After a number of amendments, the Commission adopted the Decision, NEA(04)10, Annex 6. The representative of the European Union stated that he could accept the Decision but he referred to the European Union position on this matter at last year's Annual Meeting which remained unchanged. He asked that this be reflected in this year's report in order to explain to his authorities why, as head of the European Union delegation and after consulting fully with the European Union Member States in his delegation, he was willing to accept the Decision which was better than having nothing at all.
- 7.3 The representative of Norway expressed his appreciation that the Faroes had acted in a precautionary manner and in accordance with the scientific advice from ICES. He indicated that he would also have preferred a regulatory measure for the 2005 fishery and expressed a desire to see a research fishery at Faroes with a small quota allocated to it. He could, therefore, accept the Decision as he was convinced that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) would continue to act in a responsible manner.
- 7.4 The representative of Iceland stated that he could accept the Decision as amended. The representative of Russia also accepted the Decision and emphasised the importance of scientific research fishing. He also drew attention to recent regulations in Russian coastal waters reducing the salmon quota from 60t to 48t.
- 7.5 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) thanked the Parties for their supportive words and reiterated that the Faroes have always managed marine resources in a responsible manner and they have no problem in complying with Article 66 of the Law of the Sea Convention.

8. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 8.1 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize was Mr Jury Alexeevich Evdokimov, from Murmansk, Russia. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

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

- 9.1 The Commission reviewed the relevant sections of document SSC(04)02 and agreed to recommend it to the Council as part of the annual request to ICES for scientific advice. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, CNL(04)13, is contained in Annex 7.

10. Other Business

- 10.1 The representative of Norway indicated that at the Commission's last Annual Meeting it had been agreed that a pilot study involving a simulated escape of farmed salmon should be undertaken to improve understanding of the migration, dispersal and survival of farmed salmon in the North-East Atlantic. Dr Lars Petter Hansen was appointed as the coordinator for the project. It had been agreed that between 500-1,000 tagged farmed salmon would be released by a number of countries in the Commission area. However, some countries had experienced some practical difficulties in carrying out the releases in 2004 so it had been decided to postpone the experiment until 2005.

11. Date and Place of Next Meeting

- 11.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next Annual Meeting in conjunction with the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council during 6-10 June 2005.

12. Report of the Meeting

- 12.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting, NEA(04)12.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page XXX, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of North-East Atlantic Commission papers is included in Annex 8 on page XXX of this document.