

## WGC(03)10

### ***Report of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization 2-6 June 2003, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK***

#### **1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 The Secretary opened the meeting and informed the Commission that the Chairman, Mr Rollie Schmitt (USA), had advised that, regrettably, he would be unable to continue to act as Chairman. In accordance with the Commission's Rules of Procedure, an election was held and Ms Patricia Kurkul (USA) was elected to serve for the remaining term of office. The Chair welcomed delegates to Edinburgh.
- 1.2 An opening statement was made on behalf of the NGOs by their Chairman. He indicated that the NGOs welcome the five-year conservation agreement with KNAPK to suspend the commercial salmon fishery at West Greenland and hope that this can become a permanent arrangement. He stated that, against this background, and in the context of the continued particular weakness of North American stocks, the NGOs urge the Commission to set a zero commercial quota, as recommended in the scientific advice from ICES, subject to an allowance for subsistence consumption.
- 1.3 A list of participants at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions is included on page 215 of this document.

#### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, WGC(03)11 (Annex 1).

#### **3. Nomination of Rapporteur**

- 3.1 The Commission appointed Ms Julia Barrow (Canada) as its Rapporteur for the meeting.

#### **4. Review of the 2002 Fishery and ACFM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area**

- 4.1 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented a report, WGC(03)5 (Annex 2), on the 2002 salmon fishery at West Greenland. In accordance with the 2002 *Ad hoc* Management Programme the quotas available would have been between 20-55 tonnes of commercial landings to fishing plants during up to two harvest periods, depending on the observed commercial CPUE during the first harvest period. Shortly before the opening date of the 2002 fishing season, the Organisation for Fishermen and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK) and the North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF) came to an agreement to suspend all commercial fishing for Atlantic salmon with the purpose of supplying fishing plants, factories, shops, grocers, smokehouses and marketing associations or export. The Greenland Home Rule Government decided to set a national quota for commercial landings of

Atlantic salmon to fishing plants of 0 tonnes for 2002. Exports of Atlantic salmon from Greenland were prohibited. However, a fishery for local sales to the open markets, hospitals, restaurants, etc. and a fishery for private consumption (the subsistence fishery) were permitted. A catch of 2.6 tonnes was reported for private consumption and a catch of 6.4 tonnes was reported sold at local markets, hotels, institutions, etc. In total there was a reported and unreported catch of Atlantic salmon in the subsistence fishery of approximately 20 metric tonnes in 2002.

- 4.2 The representative of ICES, Dr Walter Crozier, presented the scientific advice from ICES relevant to the West Greenland Commission, prepared in response to a request from the Commission at its Nineteenth Annual Meeting. The ACFM report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page 127 of this document. Dr Crozier's overhead presentation to the Commission is contained in document CNL(03)44.
- 4.3 The representative of the United States complimented ICES for the clear and comprehensive presentation of the advice. She referred to the sampling programme at West Greenland and asked for clarification as to why catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) could not be calculated for the 2002 fishery and what information would be required to allow such an assessment. The representative of ICES indicated that CPUE could not be calculated for the subsistence fishery in 2002 because some information on catch had been reported late and could not, therefore, be assigned to a particular standard week. Furthermore, some catches by vessels had been combined with those of other vessels. With regard to the information required, he indicated that previous *ad hoc* management measures developed by the Commission relied on the relationship between CPUE and pre-fishery abundance. The validity of this relationship depends on the accuracy of historical information and, following analysis, ICES had indicated that more information was needed to better understand the dynamics of the relationship. In particular, information concerning variation in CPUE by standard week at different times of the fishing season and for all NAFO divisions is desirable. Information on soak time of individual nets is required to establish the unit of effort. The very small and dispersed nature of the fishery in 2002 did not provide the opportunity for investigation of fishing effort parameters, such as soak times.
- 4.4 The Chair noted that, for North American stocks, ICES had provided advice in relation to the probability of achieving conservation requirements in the four northern regions and the probability that returns to southern regions would increase by at least 10% relative to the returns of the previous five years. She noted that the representative of ICES had cautioned about the appropriateness of this five-year baseline period for providing catch advice since, during a period of progressively declining returns, the baseline for stock rebuilding would also be declining. The representative of ICES stated that the scientists would welcome a clear statement from the managers of their objectives for stock rebuilding in order to facilitate the provision of appropriate advice. The representative of the European Union suggested that the baseline period could be extended to perhaps ten years. The representative of ICES agreed that this would be an improvement.

## 5. Regulatory Measures

- 5.1 There were no initial statements from the Parties.

- 5.2 Following discussions by the Heads of Delegations, the Chair tabled a document “Proposal from the Chair for a Regulatory Measures for the Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for 2003”, WGC(03)7. There were no comments from the Parties on the proposal. The regulatory measure was adopted, WGC(03)9 (Annex 3).
- 5.3 The representative of the European Union expressed the gratitude of the European Union to Greenland for their cooperation in agreeing to restrict their catch to a subsistence fishery. The European Union recognizes the sacrifices made by the people of Greenland and their restraint from fishing in the interest of wild salmon conservation. The European Union looks forward to continued future cooperation and improvements in the abundance of wild salmon as a result.
- 5.4 The representative of the United States noted the continuing decline in returns to United States rivers and the clear and compelling scientific advice from ICES that supported all action to reduce harvests to the lowest possible level. She expressed appreciation that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) could agree to limit its fishery in 2003 to internal subsistence. While indicating her general support, she indicated that the United States would not be in a position to vote in favour of the regulatory measure given the potential that any fishery off West Greenland could harvest US-origin Atlantic salmon.
- 5.5 The representative of Canada also recognized the sacrifice that Greenland is making to reduce their salmon fishery as well as the excellent cooperation of all Parties in reaching agreement on the regulatory measure.

## **6. Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Work of the Commission**

- 6.1 The Secretary referred to the initiatives of the Council in relation to application of the Precautionary Approach. The Commission agreed that this item could, in future, be removed from the Commission’s agenda and should be dealt with in a uniform manner at Council, but recognised that the Commission will continue to apply the Precautionary Approach in its work in establishing regulatory measures for the West Greenland salmon fishery.

## **7. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery**

- 7.1 The representative of the United States presented a report on the North American/European Union sampling programme at West Greenland in 2002, WGC(03)4 (Annex 4). The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) complimented the United States for the presentation which provided accurate and honest observations on the nature of the fishery and the sampling programme concluded during 2002. He confirmed that Greenland would be willing to participate in a sampling programme in 2003.
- 7.2 All of the Parties agreed to participate in an international cooperative sampling programme for the West Greenland subsistence fishery in 2003. A sampling agreement for 2003 is attached, WGC(03)8 (Annex 5).

- 7.3 The representative of Canada indicated that Canada, in partnership with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, will be providing a sampler for the sampling programme in 2003.

## **8. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize**

- 8.1 The Chair reported that, for the second year in succession, no tags were entered into the annual award scheme for the West Greenland Commission and so there could be no award. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked ICES for clarification as to the reasons for the absence of any tag returns from Greenland. The representative of ICES stated that the vast majority of the tags currently being applied are internal, coded wire tags which do not rely on return by the fishermen and are not eligible for entry into the scheme. Furthermore, with a relatively low catch in a subsistence-only fishery the probability of recapture of an externally tagged salmon is very low.

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

- 9.1 The Commission reviewed the relevant sections of document SSC(03)2 and agreed to recommend it to the Council as part of the annual request to ICES for scientific advice. The request, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(03)12 (Annex 6).

## **10. Other Business**

- 10.1 There was no other business.

## **11. Date and Place of Next Meeting**

- 11.1 The next meeting of the West Greenland Commission will be held during the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Council from 7-11 June 2004.

## **12. Report of the Meeting**

- 12.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting, WGC(03)10.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page 97, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of West Greenland Commission papers is included in Annex 7 on page 125 of this document.