



***Report of the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the
West Greenland Commission***

By Video Conference

14 – 15 December 2021

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chair, Stephen Gephard (USA), opened the meeting and welcomed participants.
- 1.2 He noted that at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission the ‘Interim Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland in 2021’, [WGC\(21\)18](#), was agreed. This applied to the fishery at West Greenland in 2021 only. Paragraph 8 states:

‘The Commission shall meet inter-sessionally, beginning in 2021 and concluding before the 2022 Annual Meeting, to explore additional measures to be implemented by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) with the objective of, inter-alia, improving the monitoring of the TAC uptake to prevent overfishing.’

- 1.3 The Chair said that the meeting had been convened in line with this requirement. He informed participants that the aim of the meeting was to consider the West Greenland Atlantic salmon fishery in 2021 and progress made in implementing the interim regulatory measure. Participants would also consider whether another inter-sessional meeting was required in 2022, at which there could be discussion about a regulatory measure covering future years.
- 1.4 Written Opening Statements were provided by Canada, the European Union, and the United States (Annex 1).
- 1.5 A list of participants is included as Annex 2.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its Agenda, [WGCIS\(21\)25](#) (Annex 3).

3. Preliminary Report on the West Greenland Atlantic Salmon Fishery in 2021

- 3.1 The Chair reminded delegates that since the Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission in June 2021, a ‘Letter from Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) regarding the Salmon Fishery in Greenland’, [WGC\(21\)20](#) had been published on the NASCO website. This provided a link to the ‘Management plan for Atlantic salmon in Greenland’ and annexed an unofficial English translation of the associated ‘Government of Greenland Executive Order no. 33 of 30 July 2021 on Salmon Fishery’. The letter also provided information on how the quota, agreed in the interim regulatory measure, [WGC\(21\)18](#), had been divided between management areas in Greenland.
- 3.2 The Chair noted that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) (DFG)

had provided paper ‘2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland’, [WGC\(21\)21](#), prior to the meeting. This gave a preliminary report of the 2021 Fishing Season. The representative of DFG presented an overview of the report and progress in implementing the interim regulatory measure (Annex 4). The Chair invited questions from members of the Commission.

- 3.3 The representative of the European Union (EU) noted the reduction in the level of reporting of catch within the fishery. He requested more information on factors that might explain this. A representative of DFG explained that reports were provided both automatically (online) and manually (with paper reports being submitted to municipal offices who forwarded them to Greenland's Fisheries License Control Authority (GFLK)). The speed with which these reports were received by GFLK differed, with manual reports taking longer. A representative of DFG explained that manual reports were delayed because of lack of internet access, because there are fewer fisheries officers on the ground due to Covid, and because the fisheries officers did not see fishers face to face as much as usual. He explained that information, such as reporting requirements and dates of the season, were communicated to this group largely via media campaigns. The representative of DFG explained that new licence holders may take time to learn how the salmon fishery operates, especially as it is different to all other fisheries in Greenland. She noted that DFG needs to explore these issues further.
- 3.4 The representative of Canada referred to the 30% unreported catch rate set out in the ‘2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland’, [WGC\(21\)21](#), and noted that the actual harvest may be significantly higher than the approximately 40 tonnes reported. He also noted that much of the overharvest seemed to lie with professional licence holders. He asked why this was the case and whether DFG might consider limiting or eliminating professional licence holders from the fishery to address this. A representative of DFG explained that many professional fishers did not have internet access and, therefore, provided manual reports. Occasionally, a professional fisher submitted a relatively large catch (for example, of up to 1 tonne) which had an immediate and significant impact on overall quota uptake. If this was reported manually, the report to the GFLK would be delayed. The representative of DFG said she thought it was unlikely that the Government of Greenland would accept eliminating professional licence holders.
- 3.5 The representative of the UK noted that the negotiations for the 2021 interim regulatory measure had been challenging, not least because DFG reported significant overharvest in all three years of the previous regulatory measure. She noted that the UK had welcomed the development of the new Management Plan and Executive Order as tools to improve the management of the fishery. She acknowledged that new measures take time to embed but had hoped they would lead to improved reporting and reduced overharvest. She noted that the UK was, therefore, disappointed in the almost 13 tonnes of overharvest in West Greenland, with significantly higher catch than in the past two years. The representative of the UK asked whether modelling would be considered to help determine when to close the fishery in future years. A representative of DFG stated that modelling was already conducted, but, because of the manual reports, there were challenges. He said that DFG would continue to use models next year, although the difficulties associated with manual and late reports may remain. He noted that, knowing there will be a lag between catch and reporting, next year DFG will work on communicating with licence holders more effectively. He also noted the unpredictable nature of the fishery, impacted by many factors, including climate change. The representative of DFG explained that good weather, and the melting of the pack ice in

the north, had led to more people fishing for salmon and a higher catch in 2021.

- 3.6 The representative of the US expressed concern that many licence holders did not report their catch. She asked for confirmation that if a fisher did not report in one year, they would be denied a licence the following year, but that the fisher would then be permitted a licence in the third year. The representative of the US asked what action would be taken to ensure the fisher knew why the licence was denied. The representative of DFG explained that Greenland had an automated system which blocked a licence for a fisher who had not reported the previous year. She noted that frustration and inability to fish would ensure that the fisher learnt their lesson, but that DFG could consider how to provide better information to those re-applying, in such circumstances. This would require data on how many people this involved and how they might best be contacted.
- 3.7 The representative of the US also noted that text messages had not been sent out in 2021 to provide information to licence holders. She asked why not. A representative of DFG replied that this had been due to a technical issue that had been resolved late in the season. However, he noted that the lack of a text was unlikely to be a serious issue, since the main challenge was reaching licence holders without a phone, rather than those with one.
- 3.8 A representative of Canada asked about the requirement for the fishers to report each time they tend their nets, which was likely to be once a day. He noted that if fishers reported daily, it should be possible to get more timely reporting to the central fisheries authorities. The representative of DFG said that she thought that licence holders were getting better at reporting when they tend their nets, because there was an increase of 70% in catch reports with actual catch submitted.
- 3.9 The representative of Canada asked whether DFG has data on the number of fishers who will not get a licence in 2022. The representative of DFG referred to Table 3 in '2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland', [WGC\(21\)21](#). It indicated that up to 410 people will be blocked automatically from obtaining a licence in 2022. This figure includes the 296 licence holders who have not reported and 114 licence holders who reported late. Some of the licence holders reporting late might have submitted a catch report already and these cases would have to be handled independently, as they would not be blocked automatically. This includes both online and in-person applications at the local municipal offices. In response to a question from Canada, the representative of DFG noted that the Minister did not have discretion to allow licences to fishers who would otherwise be blocked. Only the Government could change this, as it was set out in the Management Plan and the Executive Order.
- 3.10 The representative of the UK asked whether the concept of individual quotas had been considered as a way to address reporting challenges. The representative of DFG replied that this had not been considered, and such an approach would require a change to the Fisheries Act.
- 3.11 The representative of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) noted that Table 4 in '2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland', [WGC\(21\)21](#), referred to the fishery for 2020 rather than 2021. He further noted that overharvest was mainly due to the professional fishers, and it would be helpful to have the reporting broken down by professional / recreational licence holder and management area. The representative of DFG agreed to provide this breakdown before the next inter-sessional meeting of the Commission.
- 3.12 The representative of the NGOs noted that approximately 300 licence holders did not

report in 2021. He asked what action DFG had taken. He suggested that these licence holders could be contacted by telephone to ask why they had not reported. The representative of the NGOs said that there was still an opportunity to conduct this research. The representative of the US agreed that this would be useful. The representative of DFG explained that they had conducted collective follow up with campaigns and through GFLK, but not individual follow up. They could consider that course of action but were hampered by lack of staff resources.

- 3.13 The representative of the NGOs noted that with only 70% of licence holders reporting their catch, total catch could be calibrated to provide an estimate of total catch plus unreported catch (which he estimated to be approximately 57 tonnes based on the data in [WGC\(21\)21](#)). The representative of DFG stated that they could consider unreported catch estimates, but that it would be challenging and likely inaccurate. She noted that DFG would rather focus on the increasing the number of reports including catch data. The representative of DFG agreed to provide a breakdown of the licence holders who had not reported before the next inter-sessional meeting of the Commission.

4. Progress in Implementing the Interim Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland in 2021, WGC(21)18

- 4.1 The Chair noted that paper ‘2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland’, [WGC\(21\)21](#), provided information on the implementation of the interim regulatory measure, [WGC\(21\)18](#). He invited the representative of DFG to present this. The representative of DFG referred participants to her previous presentation (Annex 4). The members of the Commission discussed the progress in implementing the interim regulatory measure.
- 4.2 The representative of the US asked whether an in-season pause or an end of season buffer (e.g. reserve quota) might be useful, in light of recent and ongoing overharvest in the fishery. The representative of DFG reiterated that DFG had introduced new measures and was keen to focus on establishing those, rather than introducing new ones. She explained that an in-season pause would be almost impossible – practically – and would likely lead to a reduction in reporting and additional challenges. She repeated that DFG was cautious about introducing new measures constantly, particularly measures which made the salmon fishery different from other fisheries in Greenland.
- 4.3 The representative of the EU asked about the modelling and timing of the buffer that DFG used in management of the fishery. The representative of DFG explained that their modelling was improving each year and each year DFG closed the fishery before it estimated the agreed quota would be reached. This was challenging because of the complexities already discussed. She noted that DFG always tried to improve its estimate of when the quota would be reached. For example, this year weather charts were consulted to estimate the impact that weather events might have on catch. When the fishery is monitored in real time, the data on catch do not grow in a linear pattern. The representative of DFG stated that they do their best to close the fishery before 100% of the quota is reached, as they are aware of past experience of overharvest. In 2021 they aimed to announce the closure when the declared catch had reached 78% of the quota.
- 4.4 The representative of the NGOs referred again to the professional fishers, asking whether there was an alternative approach to obtaining data on catch. He suggested sales data might be used. The representative of DFG noted that there were no sales data that could be used, since all factory landings have been stopped and it was only from such landings that sales were reported.

- 4.5 The representative of Canada asked whether DFG would consider restrictions on gear for professional licence holders. The representative of Canada also asked if the reporting could include the number of nets used by the licence holder with the reported harvest. The representative of DFG said that there were gear restrictions in the professional fishery. Whilst previously there had been no limit on the number of nets allowed, now there was a 20-net limit, and further gear restrictions could be considered in future when more data are available. The representative of DFG agreed to provide the Commission with the ‘reporting schedule’ that professional licence holders were required to complete (which contains detailed information about their fishing activity) and statistics on how many nets were used by professional licence holders in 2021.
- 4.6 Finally, the representative of the UK asked DFG when they thought they would regularly meet, rather than exceed, the agreed quota. The representative of DFG expressed her belief that long-term stable management of the fishery would result in the quota being met regularly within the four years remaining of the Management Plan.

5. Other Business

- 5.1 There was no other business.

6. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 6.1 The Chair noted that provisional agreement was reached in summer 2021 for an in-person, inter-sessional meeting of the Commission on 24 and 25 March 2022. The members of the Commission confirmed their strong preference that the next inter-sessional meeting be held face to face. Given ongoing restrictions due to the pandemic, members of the Commission agreed to postpone the inter-sessional meeting until 21-22 April to try to ensure a face-to-face meeting. They also agreed that a decision on whether to hold a virtual meeting should be taken six weeks in advance of the dates scheduled for a face-to-face meeting.
- 6.2 The Chair noted that DFG had offered the facilities of the Greenland representation in Copenhagen for a face-to-face meeting and thanked it for this. The representative of DFG stated that this facility had the ability to hold a hybrid meeting.
- 6.3 The members of the Commission asked the Secretariat and Chair to make arrangements to facilitate a hybrid meeting as discussed.

7. Report of the Meeting

- 7.1 The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.

8. Close of the Meeting

- 8.1 The Chair closed the meeting.

Opening Statements Submitted by Members of the Commission

Opening Statement to the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission submitted by Canada

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice Chair, Fellow Delegates:

The Canadian delegation is looking forward to contributing to this week's inter-sessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission (WGC). We expect this meeting to provide an opportunity to continue a constructive exchange with Denmark (in respect of the Faroes Islands and Greenland) about the implementation of the Interim Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland in 2021.

It is unfortunate that we are again in a situation where the interim regulatory measure has not played a sufficient role in protecting Atlantic salmon populations, especially in light of yet another season of overfishing in West Greenland.

Canada strongly believes that increased conservation efforts are still needed to reverse declining trends across the range of Atlantic salmon stocks, including reducing harvest to sustainable levels. We hope DFG will commit to fully implement and enforce its fisheries management controls in order to reduce harvest in line with agreed to limits as soon as possible.

In closing, Canada looks forward to working with all members of the WGC over the next two days and trust that we will have productive discussions that will move us forward towards a mutually agreeable end.

Opening Statement to the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission submitted by the European Union

Mr Chairman, Ms Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The European Union is looking forward participating to this Intersessional Meeting of the NASCO West Greenland Commission and we would like to thank the Secretariat for organising this meeting still in these challenging conditions. This meeting provides us with an opportunity to improve our understanding of the latest state of play of the fishery at West Greenland in 2021, and on the progress in implementing the Interim Regulatory Measure adopted in June.

As already mentioned in the past, the European Union has a strong interest in promoting the sustainable management of the fishery at West Greenland. This mixed stock fishery exploits important components of often vulnerable European populations of Atlantic salmon. This occurs in the context of continued demands from many European coastal communities to reconsider the closure of several fisheries and to seek more coherence in the management of the various populations at the NASCO level. Therefore, while the European Union acknowledges the specificities and importance of the fishery at West Greenland, it is also important to ensure the rationality and effective implementation of the measures agreed in NASCO.

The European Union would also like to acknowledge the significant progress made by Denmark (in respect of Greenland) over the years, and the important efforts consented.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, the European Union is looking forward to working constructively with all Parties to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainability of Atlantic salmon stocks, in line with the NASCO's objectives.

Opening Statement to the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission submitted by the United States

Mr. Chair, Madam Secretary, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

The United States would like to express its appreciation to Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) for providing a detailed and transparent report on the outcome of 2021 West Greenland fishery in advance of this important intersessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission (WGC). In preparing for this meeting, we recall the 2021 Management Plan and Executive Order applicable to the 2021 fishery as well as DFG's assurances up to and during the 2021 NASCO Annual Meeting that this new domestic management scheme would result in more effective management of the fishery, including addressing longstanding data reporting delays and quota overharvests. Taking into account these domestic actions, DFG steadfastly refused to retain quota overharvest accountability measures in the previous regulatory measure or accept strengthened monitoring and control measures during the difficult negotiations for a new regulatory measure at the 2021 NASCO annual meeting. Unfortunately, despite the assurances given about the effectiveness of the new management scheme, 30% of the licensed fishers in 2021 did not report, which is an increase from the approximately 19% who did not report in 2019 and 2020. Most importantly, however, overharvest continued unabated. In 2021, the West Greenland total allowable catch (TAC) was overharvested by 13 t - almost 50% over the TAC agreed by this Commission. These continued shortcomings must be addressed in the next regulatory measure for the West Greenland fishery.

During this week's intersessional meeting, we look forward to hearing from DFG about why data reporting has, in fact, worsened and why there continues to be significant overharvest of the TAC. We would also hope to begin a discussion of actions that can be taken in the future to address these difficulties effectively. It will be critically important for the United States to understand the situation before we can begin discussing a new regulatory measure for the 2022 fishing season. The continued overharvest of the TAC by roughly 30-50% each year suggests that current approach to managing the West Greenland fishery is not adequate and, unfortunately, means that DFG is not living up to its international obligations. We look forward to working with DFG and the other members of the WGC to resolve this situation.

In closing, the United States anticipates a productive intersessional meeting that will advance our understanding of the management and dynamics of the 2021 West Greenland Atlantic salmon fishery and support future WGC discussions of a new regulatory measure. We welcome the opportunity this and future WGC meetings provide to work together to promote the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon through effective and responsible management of the West Greenland fishery.

*List of Participants at the December 2021 Inter-Sessional Meeting
of the West Greenland Commission*

*** Denotes Head of Delegation**

Canada

*Doug Bliss
David Dunn
Carl McLean
Julien April
Peter Cronin
Natalie Her
Isabelle Morisset
George Russel, Jr

Denmark (in respect of FI & G)

*Katrine Kærgaard
Sissel Fredsgaard
Maria Strandgård Rasmussen
Magnus Thunn Hansen

European Union

*Ignacio Granell
Clemens Fieseler
Isabel Figueira
Cathal Gallagher
Paddy Gargan
Denis Maher
John McCartney
Michael Millane
Niall Ó Maoiléidigh

United Kingdom

*Ruth Allin
Seamus Connor
Alan Walker
Charlotte Gildersleve

United States

*Kim Damon-Randall
Kimberley Blankenbeker
Erika L. Carlsen
Stephen Gephard (Chair)
Patrick Keliher
Dan Kircheis
Tim Sheehan

Dan Tierney
Rebecca Wintering

IGOs

Fred Kingston

NGOs

Dave Meerburg (NGO Representative)
Heinz Ackmann
Mark Boyden
Noel Carr
Thomas Chrosniak
Paul Knight
John Murphy
Elvar Örn Fridriksson
Steve Sutton
Andy Walker
Ken Whelan

Secretariat

Emma Hatfield
Wendy Kenyon

WGCIS(21)25

Inter-Sessional Meeting of the West Greenland Commission

By Video Conference

14 & 15 December 2021

Agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Preliminary Report on the West Greenland Atlantic Salmon Fishery in 2021
4. Progress in Implementing the Interim Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland in 2021, WGC(21)18
5. Other Business
6. Date and Place of the Next Meeting
7. Report of the Meeting
8. Close of the Meeting



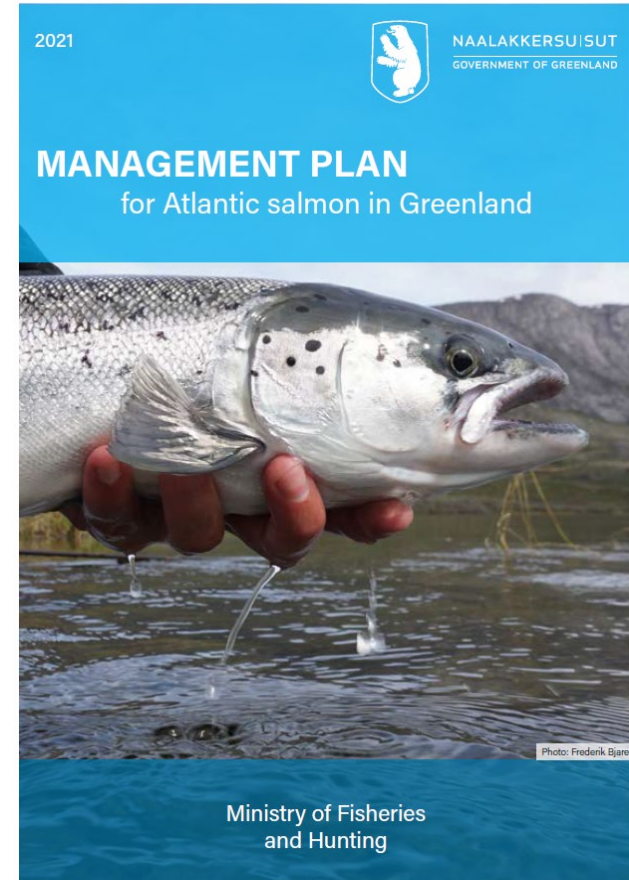
2021 Report on the Salmon Fishery in Greenland

West Greenland Commission Inter-sessional



Implementation of the Regulatory Measure 2021

- Implementation of Management Plan
 - Three management areas with fixed fishing seasons
 - The quota is given in accordance with distribution key
 - The quota is divided between professional- and recreational fishermen
 - Professional fishermen is allowed to fish with up to 20 nets
 - Only professional fishermen are allowed to sell their catch
 - Legal requirements regarding reporting and license in Executive Order
 - Reporting of 0-catch no later than 14 days after closure of the fishery
 - Online reporting option
 - Radio campaign about reporting requirement





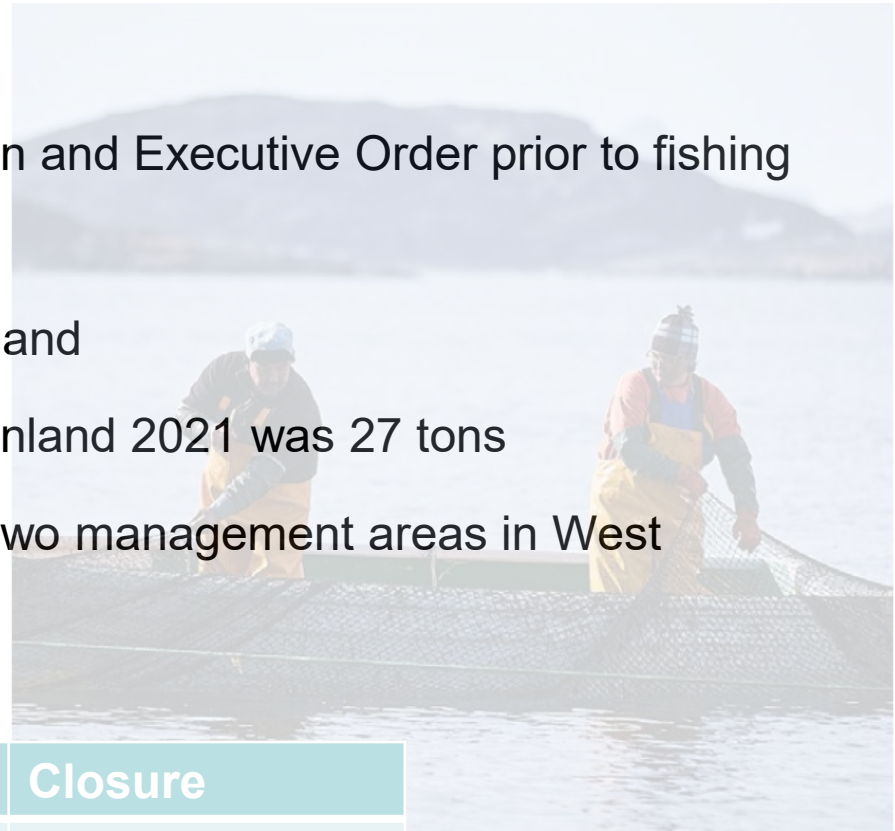
Implementation of the Regulatory Measure 2021

- Condition of the license to sample allowance
- Salmon export ban. Prohibition on landing salmon at factories
- TAC for West Greenland 27 tonnes in 2021
- Data collection on daily basis by Greenland's Fisheries License Control Authority (GFLK). Weekly quota uptake publishing on GFLK website
- Reporting of salmon fishery to the West Greenland Commission (WGC)
- Information is given continuously to the WGC about progression of the management plan, executive order and other work



2021 Subsistence Fishery

- Implementation of Management Plan and Executive Order prior to fishing season
- Three management areas in Greenland
- Total Allowable Catch in West Greenland 2021 was 27 tons
- The TAC was divided between the two management areas in West Greenland



Management area	Opening	Closure
Southwest	August 1st	September 30th
Northwest	September 1st	October 31th
East	August 15th	October 15th



Opening, closure, quota and quota uptake 2021

Table 1. Opening, closure, quota and quota uptake per management area and segment 2021.

Management Area	Opening	Closure pr. segment		Quota per segment (tonnes)		Catch per segment (tonnes)		Total quota uptake (tonnes)
Northwest	1/9	Professional	22/9	Professional	7.56	Professional	15.86	19.11
		Recreational	1/10	Recreational	3.24	Recreational	3.26	
Southwest	1/8	Professional	15/9	Professional	11.34	Professional	14.95	20.85
		Recreational	22/9	Recreational	4.86	Recreational	5.90	
East	15/8	Professional	15/10	Professional	1.50	Professional	0.45	1.01
		Recreational	15/10	Recreational	1.50	Recreational	0.56	



Quota uptake 2021

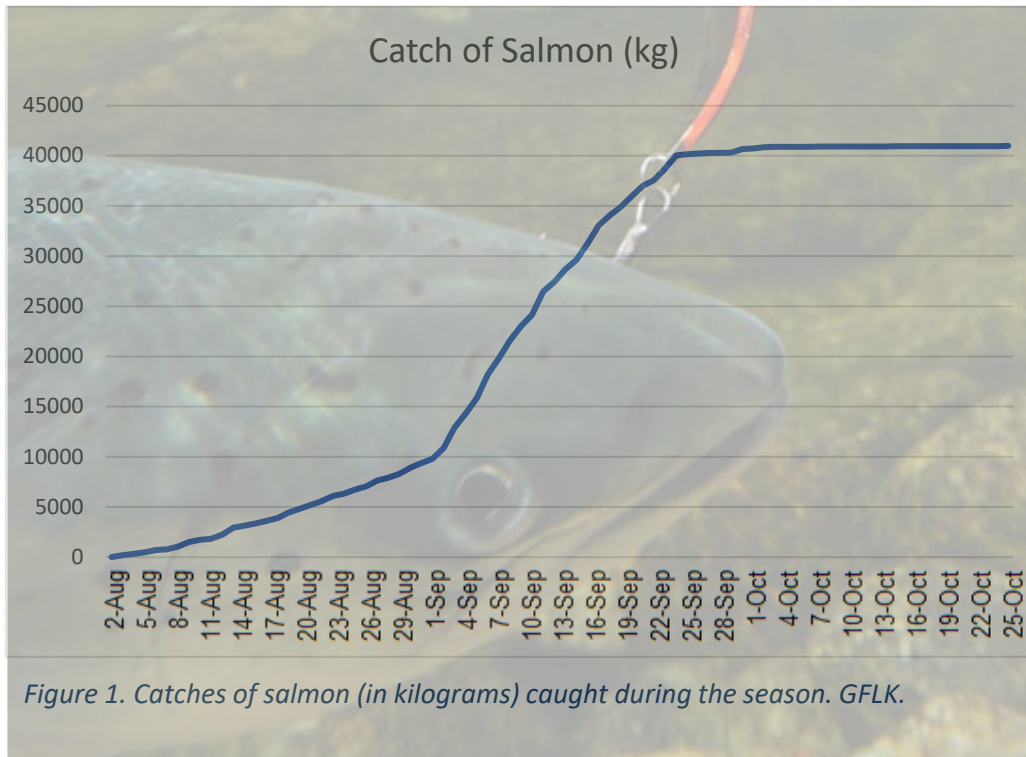


Table 2. Total quota uptake West Greenland 2021.

Management Area	Quota Uptake (tonnes)
Northwest	19.11
Southwest	20.85
East	1
Total quota uptake	40.97

- A delay in catch reporting of approximately 12 days has been a key factor to the overharvest of 12,19 tonnes.



Summary 2019-2021

- Reporting percentage: 70 %
- 40 % reported within the season, compared to 40 % in 2020
- 6 % of reports were recieved late, compared to 2 % in 2020

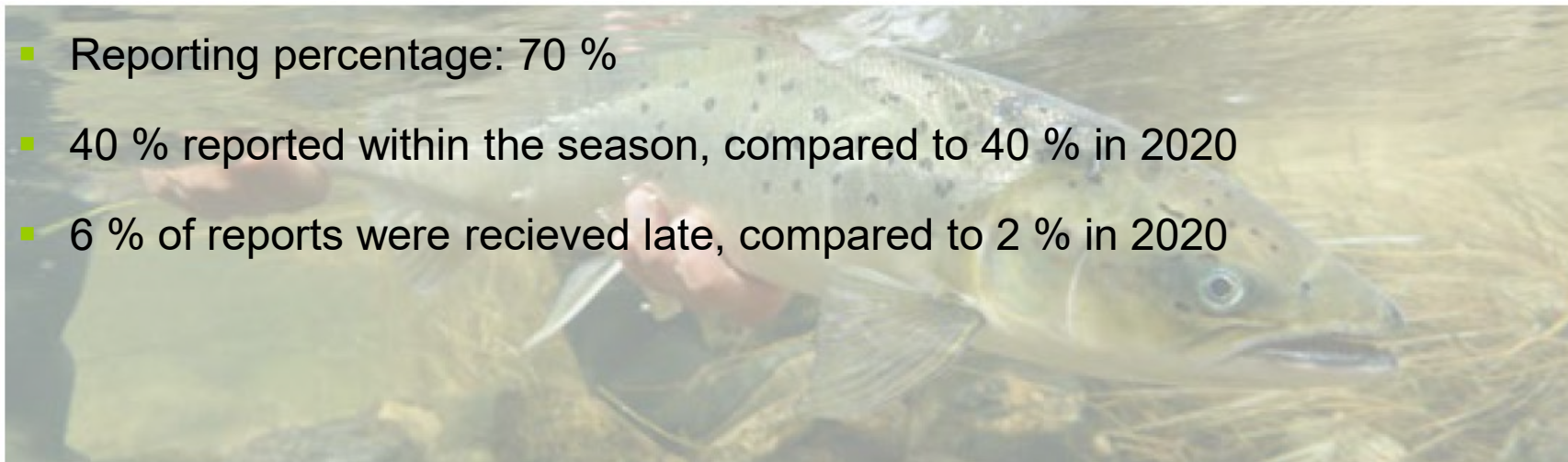


Table 5. Summary of the fishery in 2019-2021

Year	2019	2020	2021
Reporting percentage	81.6 %	81.4 %	69.5 %
Quota uptake (tonnes)	28.8	30.7	39.97