

	<p><b>Council</b></p> <p><i>Secretary's Report</i></p>	<p><b>CNL(22)06</b></p> <p><b>Agenda item: 4a</b></p>
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## *Secretary's Report*

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to provide information on procedural, administrative and financial matters and issues relating to public relations and relations with other international bodies.
- 1.2 In particular, the Council is asked to consider the approach proposed in Section 9: Scientific review paper on the impact of salmon farming (sea lice and escapes) on wild Atlantic salmon. More details are available in paper, CNL(22)07.
  - Council may wish to approve the approach proposed.

### **2. Covid-19 Pandemic**

- 2.1 The Covid-19 Pandemic which began in March 2020 has continued through 2021 and remains ongoing at the time of writing in 2022. Restrictions have continued to be in place at various times, in many countries around the world. Due to these restrictions, the NASCO Secretariat began working from home in March 2020, in accordance with Scottish Government guidance. Since February 2022 the Secretariat has started to return to work in the Headquarters office. However, almost all business in 2021 and the beginning of 2022 has been conducted by correspondence or 'virtually'. The 2021 NASCO Annual Meeting was conducted by correspondence and video conference. Ten meetings have since been conducted by video conference, including the meeting to review the Implementation Plans, a West Greenland Commission inter-sessional meeting, a Rivers Database Working Group meeting, an inter-sessional meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee and the meeting to review Annual Progress Reports. In April 2022, NASCO held its first hybrid meeting, an inter-sessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission. Most participants attended in-person and some attended by Webex. The 2022 Annual Meeting is planned as a hybrid meeting, using the PSA platform, again with most participants attending in-person and some attending virtually.

### **3. Status of Ratifications of, and Accessions to, the Convention and Membership of the Regional Commissions**

- 3.1 There have been no changes to the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention since the last notification in the 2021 Secretary's Report, [CNL\(21\)09](#). No new applications for membership of any of the Commissions have been received.

### **4. Receipt of Contributions for 2022**

- 4.1 In accordance with Financial Rule 5.5, the Secretary is required to report on the receipt of contributions and on any arrears. All contributions for 2022 have been received and there are no arrears.

### **5. Observers at NASCO's Meetings**

- 5.1 In May 2021, the Secretariat received an application for Non-Government Observer (NGO) status to NASCO from 'Protect Maine's Fishing Heritage Foundation'. Following consultation with the President after the 2021 Annual Meeting, it was

decided that the objectives of this NGO were not compatible with those of NASCO and, accordingly, it has not been granted observer status.

5.2 NASCO has 45 accredited NGOs, as listed on the [website](#).

## **6. Fishing for Salmon in International Waters**

6.1 Under the ‘Resolution on Fishing for Salmon on the High Seas’, [CNL\(92\)54](#), the Secretary is requested to obtain and compile information on sightings of fishing activities on the high seas of the North Atlantic which may undermine the conservation measures adopted by NASCO.

6.2 The Norwegian and Icelandic coastguards were contacted to obtain details of any surveillance operations in the area of international waters north of the Faroe Islands where fishing for salmon by non-NASCO Parties had been observed in the past.

- the Norwegian Coastguard stated that its presence in international waters in 2021 was very low. It only had one flight and there was no observation of vessels fishing for salmon; and
- the Icelandic Coast Guard stated that it had no logged surveillance flights in international waters East of Iceland and North of the Faroe Islands (commonly referred to as the ‘Banana Hole’), from 1 February 2021 up to and including 8 February 2022.

6.3 In 2021, it was brought to the Secretariat’s attention that surveillance flights were also carried out by the European Union (EU). As requested, the EU Head of Delegation was contacted to obtain details of any surveillance operations. It informed NASCO that a number of deployments took place in the NEAFC Regulatory Area of the ‘Banana Hole’ in the context of the NEAFC Joint Deployment Plan in 2021. During these deployments there were no sightings of vessels targeting salmon.

6.4 No new information has been obtained from ports or about landings and transshipments since last year’s report to suggest that there has been any fishing for salmon by vessels from non-NASCO Parties.

6.5 The last known incidences of fishing for salmon in international waters by non-NASCO Parties were in the early 1990s. Liaison with NAFO, NEAFC and ICCAT on IUU fishing has continued.

- NAFO stated that there is no evidence in 2021 of IUU fishing activity in the NAFO Regulatory Area. Additionally, from NAFO’s Daily Catch Reports and Observer reports, in 2021 there is no evidence of NAFO authorized vessels having salmon bycatch;
- NEAFC stated that some of their Contracting Parties had provided information. There is only evidence of bycatch of salmon by Norway, which had some bycatch of salmon in its EEZ (but not in the NEAFC regulatory area). NEAFC stated that there is no evidence in 2021 of IUU fishing in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.
- ICCAT has stated that it does not have any information on IUU activities specifically involving salmon. Additionally, it checked the information received from those RFMOs with whom it [cross lists](#) and found no mention of salmon.

6.6 The report on the salmon fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon in 2021 states that ‘There is believed to be no undeclared catch’.

## **7. Scientific Research Fishing**

- 7.1 In accordance with the Resolution on Scientific Research Fishing, [CNL\(96\)60](#), the Secretary should advise the Council of any requests to conduct scientific research fishing since the last Annual Meeting. There have been no such requests.

## **8. Rivers Database**

- 8.1 In 2021, the Council agreed that NASCO should retain a website-accessible Rivers Database and that the Secretariat should make it available in a map-based form on the website as soon as possible, [CNL\(21\)62](#). Therefore, the Rivers Database has been made available on the website: [NASCO Rivers Database - NASCO](#).
- 8.2 In addition, the Council agree to establish a Working Group to address high-level issues with respect to the Rivers Database and to report back to the Annual Meeting in 2022. The Rivers Database Working Group met in November and December 2021. The Council will consider the Report of the Meeting of the Rivers Database Working Group, [CNL\(22\)12](#), at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2022.

## **9. Scientific Review Paper on the Impact of Salmon Farming (Sea Lice and Escapes) on Wild Atlantic salmon**

- 9.1 Following the 2021 Theme-based Special Session (TBSS), the Council agreed to one of the draft recommendations from the Steering Committee, [CNL\(21\)62](#) (paragraph 5.10):

*‘... to establish a Working Group to draft a NASCO report which provides the latest scientific knowledge on the impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon.’*

- 9.2 The Parties noted that they wanted such a report to ‘be scientifically robust and peer reviewed’; ‘that ICES should be involved, noting that the report needs scientific credibility’; ‘the report needs to be perceived as independent and scientific’; and ‘representatives on the Working Group should be chosen due to their expertise’. The Secretariat was asked to work with the TBSS Steering Committee to identify experts to be invited to serve on the Working Group and to liaise with ICES.
- 9.3 The Secretary explored with ICES whether an ICES Working Group or Workshop could be convened to draft such a report for NASCO. However, it emerged that ICES Workshops are fully open to the public for registration and Working Groups rely on nominations from ICES member countries. As such, collecting the ideal group of experts to conduct this work via an ICES process could prove challenging to NASCO. Additionally, it was acknowledged that, to have the degree of impact that the Council wants, the output of any convened group of experts would really need to be submitted as a manuscript for consideration in a high-impact peer-reviewed scientific journal, rather than as an ICES or NASCO report in the grey literature.
- 9.4 Therefore, in discussion with the President of NASCO and the Chair of the 2021 TBSS Steering Committee, an alternative proposed approach was developed, whereby a suitably qualified scientist could co-ordinate a small group of experts, initially to discuss their interest in the production of a manuscript for submission in a high-impact scientific journal. In February 2022, the members of the 2021 TBSS Steering Committee nominated relevant experts that could be invited to join this group. The Expert Group, co-ordinated by Paddy Gargan (Chair of the 2021 TBSS Steering Committee), consisting of Ian Bradbury, Damian Brady, Simon Jones, Sten Karlsson,

Eva Thorstad and Knut Vollset, met on 28 March and 20 April 2022 to consider the approach to producing a paper and its proposal.

### ***Decision***

- 9.5 The Council may wish to consider paper CNL(22)07, which will contain a proposal for the production of a high-impact scientific paper on the impact of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon.
- Council may wish to approve the approach proposed.

## **10. Socio-economic Studies**

- 10.1 In 2014, the Council agreed that Parties / jurisdictions should be requested to advise the Secretariat of any new studies relating to the socio-economic values of wild Atlantic salmon, [CNL\(14\)58](#). Parties / jurisdictions have been asked to provide details of any such new studies. At the time of writing, the Secretariat has not been advised of any such studies. More information on socio-economic studies related to wild Atlantic salmon can be found [here](#).

## **11. Public Relations**

### **Websites and Twitter Account**

- 11.1 The NASCO and Board websites continue to function well. We welcome feedback and suggestions for changes to improve them. In the period 25 April 2021 – 24 April 2022, there were over 11,000 users and 18,000 sessions on the NASCO website, with over 47,000 page views. The average session duration was 2 minutes 39 seconds, with 2.57 pages viewed per session.
- 11.2 For the Board website, for the period 25 April 2021 – 24 April 2022, there were 2,300 users, over 3,000 sessions with over 6,000 page views. The average session duration was 1 minutes 11 seconds, with 1.95 pages viewed per session.
- 11.3 NASCO's twitter account ([@NASCO\\_Sec](#)) has over 1,170 followers. Please let the Secretariat know your twitter address so that we can make sure we are following you. Also, we request that you include us or tag us in any relevant tweets, so that we can increase NASCO's reach.

### **Liaison with other RFMOs**

- 11.4 The Secretary has remained in close contact with other RFMOs, including NAFO, NEAFC, NPAFC, ICCAT, CCAMLR, PSC, SPRFMO and IWC. The Secretariats of these organizations share information about conducting business in the context of a global pandemic and other world events. This has allowed NASCO to learn from other RFMOs to improve practices and allowed other RFMOs to learn from NASCO.

## **13. Activities Relating to the United Nations (UN) Including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

- 13.1 The Secretariat updated the Fisheries and Resources Monitoring System (FIRMS) factsheet in 2021. Additionally, the Secretariat provided a contribution to the report of the Secretary-General of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS). Information provided related to (amongst other things) the Decision adopted by the North-East Atlantic Commission, NEA(21)16, and the Interim Regulatory Measure adopted by the West Greenland Commission, WGC(21)18.

- 13.2 The Secretariat also contributed to the FAO document for the 35th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI-35) ‘Developments in global and regional processes related to fisheries and aquaculture’, COFI/2022/9.
- 13.3 Additionally, the Secretary has maintained good relations with ICES and has been involved in several bilateral meetings. Since March, the Secretariat has met with ICES both virtually and in-person to address the impact of ICES response to the crisis in Europe, on the provision of advice to NASCO.

#### **14. Conferences and Meetings**

- 14.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many meetings and conferences were cancelled, postponed or held virtually. However, members of the Secretariat attended the events below.
- 14.2 The Secretary attended the first of two OSPAR virtual meetings on the status assessment of salmon, on 23 June 2021, together with many scientists involved in NASCO, including the Chair of the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon. The two meetings were convened to carry out an OSPAR assessment for Atlantic salmon, to determine its status in OSPAR Regions I, II, III and IV.
- 14.3 The Secretary and Assistant Secretary attended ‘Salmon in the Shared Seas: Recent research on marine migration pathways’ hosted by the Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Natural Environment, on 9 February 2022. This event highlighted research on salmon migration in coastal waters of western Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, western England and Wales.
- 14.3 Both the Secretary and Assistant Secretary attended the Fisheries Management Scotland Annual Conference on 31 March 2022. At this conference the ‘Our Wild Salmon’ video series was launched, which was funded by the EU ‘Grants for an action’ programme, with NASCO as the beneficiary and administrators of the grant. These videos can be found at: [Our Wild Salmon: film series – Fisheries Management Scotland \(fms.scot\)](https://www.fms.scot/our-wild-salmon).

Secretariat  
Edinburgh  
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