



***Report on the Activities of  
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization  
in 2021***

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Note. This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 2021, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee, available on the [NASCO website](#).

**1. Introduction**

1.1 Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions of NASCO were held by video conference. Business was also conducted through inter-sessional correspondence and a virtual Special Session of the Council in advance of the Annual Meetings. Some business was cancelled or postponed.

**2. Council**

2.1 The Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Council was held by video conference during 27 May – 4 June 2021 under the Presidency of Serge Doucet (Canada). Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), five Inter-Governmental Organizations, 19 accredited Non-Governmental Organizations and the International Salmon Farmers Association participated in the meeting.

**Evaluation of Implementation Plans under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)**

2.2 A Special Session of the Council was held, by webinar, in advance of the Annual Meeting, to discuss the evaluation of the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans (IPs). A [report](#) of this webinar was presented for consideration at the Annual Meeting.

2.3 Following consideration of the report of the IP Special Session, Council agreed that:

- there should be no major change to the IP process;
- Parties / jurisdictions may, on a voluntary basis, submit a revised IP for review;
- with respect to the inclusion of the terms ‘fish farms’ and ‘aquaculture’ in the IP template, the *status quo* should be maintained until the fourth reporting cycle, at which point the IP template should be revised to clarify what information is being requested;

- national legislation should not be considered a mitigating circumstance to allow otherwise unsatisfactory IP actions to be satisfactory;
- the record in the [report](#) of the Council meeting provides adequate direction to the Review Group and that no further revision to guidance documents is required;
- that Parties / jurisdictions should be able to make revisions to accepted questions / actions. If a change is made to an IP, whether to a satisfactory or unsatisfactory question / action, the Party / jurisdiction should identify clearly what has been changed and why;
- all actions should be reviewed by the Review Group during future APR reviews. If a virtual meeting was needed, the Council agreed that it would be up to the discretion of the Chair and Secretary to determine the best approach. Any decisions reached must be clearly communicated to the Parties;
- the review process would be revised to enable a dialogue between the Review Group and Parties / jurisdictions on the unsatisfactory elements of their IPs. The Council agreed that the Secretary and Review Group Chair should determine the timeline that would be necessary to enable this dialogue, whilst ensuring that the timeline for the APR process is adhered to;
- to write again to France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to invite them to consider joining NASCO. In the letter the President would highlight how NASCO's IP process would enable France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to highlight their positive actions for salmon management; and
- the Review Group should provide positive feedback to the Parties / jurisdictions on those aspects of the IPs that the Review Group considers are moving the Parties / jurisdictions clearly towards the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. In addition, significant improvements by the Parties should be communicated on the NASCO website and social media.

### **Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans**

- 2.4 The primary purpose of the Annual Progress Reports (APRs) is to provide details of: any changes to the management regimes for salmon and consequent changes to the IPs; actions that have been taken under the IPs in the previous year; significant changes to the status of stocks and a report on catches; and actions taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.
- 2.5 The [APRs](#) submitted in 2021 were the second APRs to be submitted under the third round of Implementation Plans. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the APRs submitted in 2020 were not critically evaluated. Therefore, 2021 saw the first critical evaluation of APRs by the Review Group under the third reporting cycle. This was done to ensure that Parties / jurisdictions had provided a clear account of progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their IPs, together with the information required under the Convention. Given the virtual format for the Review Group's meeting and resulting time restrictions, progress was only reviewed on those Implementation Plan actions considered to be 'satisfactory'.
- 2.6 The Review Group had provided details of its evaluation of progress on each satisfactory action in tables for each Party / jurisdiction at the end of its review, highlighting any shortcomings. The Parties / jurisdictions were asked to address these

shortcomings in their APRs for the 2021 calendar year. The [report](#) of the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Review Group was presented and discussed at a Special Session of the [Council](#).

**Theme-based Special Session: Minimising Impacts of Salmon Farming on Wild Atlantic Salmon: Supporting Meaningful and More Rapid Progress Towards Achievement of the International Goals for Sea Lice and Containment**

2.7 The Council held a Theme-based Special Session (TBSS) entitled ‘Minimising Impacts of Salmon Farming on Wild Atlantic Salmon: Supporting Meaningful and More Rapid Progress Towards Achievement of the International Goals for Sea Lice and Containment’. The overarching objective for the TBSS was to stimulate urgent action to implement further measures to protect wild salmon from the impacts of salmon farming, and to ensure demonstrable progress by Parties / jurisdictions towards achievement of the international goals for sea lice and escaped farmed salmon. The session involved:

- reviewing critically the extent to which NASCO Parties / jurisdictions are meeting the international goals for sea lice and escaped farmed salmon;
- updating the current state of scientific knowledge of the adverse impacts of escaped farmed salmon and sea lice on wild Atlantic salmon;
- highlighting advances in best management practices and new technologies (infrastructure / biological etc.), their efficacy in mitigating adverse impacts on wild Atlantic salmon and challenges to their urgent implementation, and how to incentivise industry to move towards implementing these new technologies; and
- exploring in depth how Parties / jurisdictions can move more rapidly towards the achievement of the international goals.

2.8 Following the TBSS, Council considered the Draft Recommendations presented by the TBSS Steering Committee at the end of the TBSS. Council agreed:

- 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;
- that the Secretariat would prepare a draft statement on aquaculture, taking the discussions held at the TBSS into account, for inter-sessional agreement by Council; and
- that a renewed request would be made by Council that all Parties and jurisdictions with salmon farming produce SMART actions in their revised Implementation Plans for the management of lice and escapes. These actions should reflect strong and sustained progress towards meeting the goals of 100 % containment of farmed fish, and for 100 % of farms to have effective sea lice management. Monitoring of sea lice and escapes should only be a secondary activity to research or assess the effectiveness of the main action.

2.9 Council further agreed that the next TBSS would be held in 2023. The overarching theme would be climate change. It was noted that that this would be a new format for a NASCO TBSS, as climate change affected all aspects of NASCO’s work, not one key area.

- 2.10 Following the Annual Meeting, the Steering Committee prepared a report of the [TBSS](#), which included its final recommendations.

#### **The NASCO Rivers Database**

- 2.11 In 2020 Council had agreed that the Secretary should work with the Parties / jurisdictions to explore why they had not used the Rivers Database as had been agreed in 2016.
- 2.12 Council considered the various difficulties encountered and concerns related to the current incarnation of the database. Council agreed that NASCO should retain a website-accessible Rivers Database, which should be made available in a map-based form on the website as soon as possible. Council also agreed to establish a Rivers Database Working Group to consider the purpose, scope, data and coverage, display and provision of data, the frequency of updates and any other issues in relation to the Rivers Database. This Working Group will report to Council at its 2022 Annual Meeting.

#### **The International Year of the Salmon**

- 2.13 The focal year of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) was 2019, with some efforts continuing into 2022. The aim of the IYS was to raise awareness of the factors driving salmon abundance, the environmental and anthropogenic challenges they face, and the measures being taken to address these.
- 2.14 In 2020, Council agreed that a joint NASCO / NPAFC IYS Concluding Symposium should be held in Vancouver, Canada, in September or October 2022 and accepted the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee of the joint NASCO / NPAFC IYS Concluding Symposium. Council was advised that the Steering Committee had considered the format, date and location for the Symposium. It was noted that a hybrid symposium would be difficult because of time-zone differences, but that presentations would be made available online to make it accessible to those who cannot physically attend.
- 2.15 Council approved the dates for the Closing Symposium (4 – 6 October 2022) and the Steering Committee's choice of venue. Council also agreed to consider the timing and structure of the next State of North Atlantic Salmon Report once the Rivers Database Working Group has reported (see paragraph 2.12) and to hold a Special Session on the Tromsø Symposium Steering Committee Recommendations during the 2022 Annual Meeting.

#### **Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry**

- 2.16 In 2013, the Council had agreed that an item should be retained on its Agenda entitled 'Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry', during which a representative of ISFA would be invited to participate in an exchange of information on issues concerning impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon. ISFA was represented at the 2021 Annual Meeting and presented a statement to the Council.

#### **Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

- 2.17 A [report](#) on the Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery was presented by France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) and considered by both Council and the North American Commission.
- 2.18 Council was advised that substantial work had been undertaken to increase awareness among fishers to improve the quality of the available data for sampling and inspections.

The main concern of the sampling programme is to improve understanding of the biological characteristics and the origin of salmon harvested in the fishery. In 2020, the sampling programme of salmon harvested at sea was continued by IFREMER. 116 salmon were measured and weighed, compared with 64 in 2019. This increase was due to the important involvement of recreational fishers who collaborate closely with IFREMER. The collaboration set up in 2013 between IFREMER-St Pierre et Miquelon and DFO-Newfoundland and Labrador continued in 2020. Scales and tissue samples were transmitted by IFREMER to the DFO laboratory in St John's, Newfoundland for age determination and genetic analyses. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) shared its concerns about the abundance of North American stocks and noted that it is involved fully in the management of the salmon fishery and works to improve its monitoring and control. Canada noted appreciation for co-operation on the sampling programme and encouraged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO.

### **Scientific Advice**

- 2.19 The [scientific advice from ICES](#) was presented and considered during a [webinar](#). The Council adopted a [request for scientific advice](#) to be presented in 2022.

### **New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management**

- 2.20 ICES reported on a number of threats and opportunities for Atlantic Salmon Management including:

- Red Skin Disease (RSD), a recently defined disease with widespread outbreaks in salmon populations;
- a high incidence of river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) parasitisation on Atlantic salmon smolts documented through a monitoring programme in the Lough Neagh catchment in UK – Northern Ireland. An estimated 24% (out of 470) of smolts were considered heavily damaged and unlikely to survive the marine phase. The causes of the high parasitism were thought to be associated with low flows restricting smolt migration towards the sea;
- based on previous observations, substantial returns of odd-year pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) in 2021 and 2023 are expected on two major Atlantic salmon rivers in northernmost Finland and Norway, the Teno /Tana and the Nääämöjoki / Neidenelva;
- an assessment of the performance of fishery sampling programmes to estimate catches of non-local origin salmon in mixed-stock fisheries was conducted and presented, using the Labrador subsistence food fishery as a case study;
- a German project “GeMoLaR0F\*”, running from 2020 to 2024, is part of international co-ordinated genetic monitoring of reintroduced Atlantic salmon in the whole Rhine area;
- the process for collecting salmon catch data necessary for fulfilling the ToR from NASCO to ICES was streamlined through the communication of an ICES Data Call for Atlantic salmon in January 2021. The Data Call resulted in more prompt and comprehensive reporting for the 2020 season;
- in January 2021, a workshop of jurisdictional experts and modelers was held to advance the application of the Bayesian Life Cycle Model (LCM) to Atlantic

salmon stock assessment. The workshop reviewed the LCM, compared the current ICES PFA model with the LCM approach, and discussed the data inputs and process for running the LCM. New online tools were presented which simplify and strengthen the robustness of the stock assessment workflow from data input to production of catch advice. The decision was taken at the workshop to run the LCM in parallel with ICES PFA model during the 2021 WGNAS meeting. The LCM was run during WGNAS 2021 and the results presented to the group. A stock assessment using the new LCM approach was planned to be examined in a benchmark in 2022;

- ICES also considered the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, noting that it was not consistent among jurisdictions with respect to Atlantic salmon fisheries and ICES ability to report 2020 Atlantic salmon catches and status of stocks. While some jurisdictions reported little or no impact, stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions affected fishing effort and Atlantic salmon monitoring activities and delayed the collection of fisheries statistics in others.

2.21 Relevant information had also been included in the '[Summary of Annual Progress Reports under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans](#)'.

#### **Election of Officers**

2.22 The Council elected Arnaud Peyronnet (European Union) as its President and Kim Damon-Randall (USA) as its Vice-President.

#### **Reports on NASCO's Activities**

2.23 The Council adopted a [Report on the Activities of the Organization in 2020](#).

2.24 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).

2.25 The Council adopted the [report of the Finance and Administration Committee](#) (FAC) (see section 6 below). On the recommendations of the Finance and Administration Committee, the Council agreed that the Secretary would continue to liaise with ICES on the proposed revisions to the ICES / NASCO MoU with a view to the resulting document being considered by the FAC and a finalised MoU being adopted by Council inter-sessionally. The Council also agreed that the President would write to the Chair of the OSPAR Commission concerning the OSPAR Commission's upcoming status assessment of Atlantic salmon.

2.26 The Council received the [report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board](#). The Board had agreed [Terms of Reference](#) for a Review of the Metadatabase of Salmon Survey Data and Sample Collections. The Board had also asked its Scientific Advisory Group to provide a technical evaluation of a potential successor to the SALSEA-Track project.

2.27 The Secretary made a [report](#) on a number of administrative and procedural matters, including: the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions; the receipt of contributions for 2021; and NASCO's Public Relations work.

2.28 The Council received an [update](#) on progress in implementing the 2013 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO'.

## **Other Business**

- 2.29 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of £1,500 was Steinar Egeland from Norway.
- 2.30 The Council agreed that its Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting would be held in Edinburgh during 7 – 10 June 2022. The Council confirmed the dates for its Fortieth Annual Meeting as 6 – 9 June 2023.

## **3. North American Commission**

- 3.1 The Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held by video conference during 27 May – 4 June 2021. The Meeting was chaired by Kim Blankenbeker (USA).

### **Review of the 2020 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES**

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2020 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES during a [webinar](#) at which the [ICES advice](#) for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions.

### **The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

- 3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had tabled a [report](#) on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) had been unable to respond to questions raised during the inter-sessional correspondence period at that time and was, therefore, given the opportunity to do so at the Annual Meeting. In response to those questions, France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) advised the Commission that the increased harvest in 2020 did not mean that the pressure on salmon had increased; the 2020 catch was the fourth lowest, all fisheries combined. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that the increase in the level of recreational catch in 2020 was due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This had led to a resurgence in interest in outdoor activities among the population after release from lockdown, which led to a postponement of the opening of the season. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted its concern about the abundance of North American stocks and committed to work towards improving the monitoring and management of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery, in close collaboration with the fishermen. Further, efforts had been made to reorientate professional fishing effort to other species and on the scientific partnership, to conduct sampling, with the increasing number of recreational fishers. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that it is in favour of the implementation of new management measures and catch limitation measures and would continue to work with recreational fishers on this sensitive subject. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) stated that a new regulation would be adopted for the 2021 fishery which would limit the number of recreational licenses to 80, to prevent the harvest from increasing again. The Commission was advised that in 2021 the inspection team would have its own patrol boat and inspections would be easier. France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) noted that concerns had been raised with the use of gill nets in the recreational fishery and advised that IFREMER, the scientific institute, was working on an experiment with angling in the recreational fishery as a more selective fishing alternative.

### **Salmonid Introductions and Transfers**

- 3.4 The [United States](#) and [Canada](#) tabled reports on issues of mutual concern, including the number of disease incidences, the number of breaches of containment, any

introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area and transgenics. In response to questions raised by the United States and the NGOs, Canada noted that the proposed Grieg project in Placentia Bay was moving forward with rearing sterile, European-origin, triploid Atlantic salmon at 11 marine-based sites in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. Each marine site will consist of multiple cages, with nets extending down to 43 metres. Grieg had submitted the project proposal in February 2016, and it had undergone a series of provincial and federal reviews and assessments. Grieg had introduced their first batches of triploid European salmon eggs at their land-based hatchery in Marystown in 2020 and planned to stock a marine-based site in 2021 in Placentia Bay. Prior to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) approval to transfer smolts to marine cages, the company would sample fish (via blood) to verify the fish are sterile before introduction to the marine cages. The development of a triploid verification methodology for sterility was a condition of release from their provincial environmental assessment and was approved by both the provincial and federal governments.

- 3.5 The United States noted the importance of providing information on the Placentia Bay aquaculture project and other planned or ongoing introduction and transfer activities in Canada's Annual Report to the Commission and asked whether every fish was tested for triploidy or just a subsample. Canada replied that the eggs were initially tested twice for triploidy by the supplier in Iceland. As an additional third precautionary measure, DFO and the Province require another round of triploid testing of Grieg's smolts before they are transferred to marine net-pens. A sufficient portion of the total fish will be tested by a third-party laboratory to provide 99 % probability that a triploid failure, if present, is detected. Both the Province and DFO have reviewed the sampling approach and supporting documentation that the company provided and have approved it.
- 3.6 The NGOs referred to a recent decision in Norway to abandon triploid experiments as triploid fish are more susceptible to disease and because of animal welfare issues. The NGOs asked whether, should the same situation arise in Newfoundland, consideration would be given to using diploids instead. Canada indicated that it was aware of the decision in Norway and that the Department had already set a precedent for not allowing diploid, viable, European-origin salmon in Canadian waters.
- 3.7 The NGOs noted that, originally, the project had planned to use super smolts, grown to 1.5 kg on land before transfer to the ocean, reducing the time the fish were kept in net pens and, therefore, escapes and diseases. However, it was announced in 2020 that, for financial reasons, this part of the project was on hold. The NGOs noted that if this aspect of the project is abandoned, it would change the risk profile as evaluated in the environmental impact assessment. Canada was asked about the company's plans in this regard, and what would happen if this element of the project is abandoned. Canada replied that Grieg postponed the construction of the super or post-smolt facility in 2020 due to Covid-19 challenges but is expected to pursue production of larger smolts in the future. Normal-sized smolts would be transferred to marine cages in 2021, resulting in extended time that smolts are in marine cages, as is the *status quo* in other companies. As this is in line with the *status quo*, and does not change the scope of operations, it does not require re-evaluation by the Province and DFO.
- 3.8 The NGOs asked if the members of the Commission could provide information on confirmed escapees that turn up in monitoring facilities in their Annual Reports to the Commission, which would be consistent with NASCO's 'Guidance on Best Management Practices to address impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon on

wild salmon stocks’, [SLG\(09\)5](#). The representatives of the United States and Canada agreed to consider this and, if possible, provide any information that might be available.

### **Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission**

- 3.9 Under the Council’s ‘Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the ‘Next Steps’ for NASCO’, it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs).
- 3.10 Canada tabled a [paper](#) which provided a description of the Labrador subsistence fisheries, including information on the management, reported annual harvests, sampling of the fishery catches and the origin and composition of the catches.

### **Sampling in the Labrador Fishery**

- 3.11 The Commission was advised that information on the sampling programme had been provided both in the ICES advice and in the paper on the Labrador subsistence food fishery (see paragraph 3.10 above).
- 3.12 During the inter-sessional correspondence period, Canada indicated that large salmon are more likely to be of non-Labrador origin. Canada planned to focus the genetic analyses during the 2021 fishing season on large salmon harvested along the coast and instruct samplers to sample 1 of every 10 (10%) small salmon landed and 3 of every 10 (30%) large salmon landed. The United States welcomed this and indicated that it looked forward to the resulting data.

### **Other Business**

- 3.13 The winner of the Commission’s £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Colin Gilks, from Canada.

## **4. North-East Atlantic Commission**

- 4.1 The Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held by video conference, during 27 May – 4 June 2021, chaired by Viktor Rozhnov (Russian Federation).

### **Review of the 2020 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES**

- 4.2 The Commission reviewed the 2020 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES during a [webinar](#) at which the [ICES advice](#) for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions.

### **Regulatory Measures**

- 4.3 The Commission adopted a new [Decision Regarding the Salmon Fishery in Faroese Waters in 2021 / 2022, 2022 / 2023 and 2023 / 2024](#). The Commission agreed that the same procedure for applying the Framework of Indicators (FWI) as used during the previous multi-annual Decision would apply during the new measure.
- 4.4 The Commission was reminded that ICES is still using an interim approach as a basis for its advice. In the past, the Commission had considered the development of a risk assessment framework for the Faroese fishery that is needed by ICES to provide improved advice for the fishery. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had previously indicated that it would need more time to consider the issue.
- 4.5 In response to a request from Norway for an update on this matter, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that the fact that there had not been a salmon

fishery in Faroe Islands for 20 years is recognition of its commitment to salmon conservation. Given that the ICES advice for many years has been that there were no catch options, little work had been carried out on further examination of stocks in Faroese waters due to resource constraints. There was, therefore, no update, but the Government remains committed to sustainable fisheries and taking the advice of ICES in managing the salmon fishery. Norway encouraged Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) to provide the required feedback, which would enable agreement on the revised approach for ICES and allow the provision of improved advice.

#### **Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission**

- 4.6 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs). The [European Union](#) (EU), [Norway](#), the [Russian Federation](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) (UK) had submitted papers providing an update on the information on MSFs, including a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.
- 4.7 A [joint statement](#) was provided on behalf of the EU and Norway regarding the status of work in implementing the bilateral agreement between Norway and Finland on the fisheries in the Tana / Teno river, which include MSFs.
- 4.8 A [joint statement](#) was provided on behalf of Norway and the Russian Federation relating to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fisheries (Russian Federation) on co-operation on management of, and monitoring and research on, wild Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk region (Russian Federation).

#### **Report of the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris***

- 4.9 The Commission had agreed in 2018 that the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* should meet again in 2021 and agreed its Terms of Reference.
- 4.10 The [Report](#) of the Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* was presented to the Commission. The Commission agreed that a two-day meeting of the Working Group on *G. salaris* should take place in 2022, at a time when a face-to-face meeting would be possible. The Working Group would have the same Terms of Reference as in 2021. The Commission agreed that the Secretariat and the Chair of the Working Group should explore a virtual / hybrid element to the meeting to maximise participation and benefit.

#### **Other Business**

- 4.11 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Hans Spinner from Switzerland.

### **5. West Greenland Commission**

- 5.1 The Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held by video conference during 27 May – 4 June 2021, chaired by Stephen Gephard (USA).

#### **Inter-Sessional Meetings of the Commission**

- 5.2 There had been two inter-sessional meetings of the Commission between the 2020 and 2021 Annual Meetings. At the first of these meetings, in March 2021, the Commission

had reviewed the 2020 salmon fishery at West Greenland. A quota had been set for the fishery of 20.7 t, reduced from 30 t due to an overharvest in 2019. The total catch for 2020 was 30.7 t. The Commission was advised of new initiatives to improve the management, monitoring and control of the fishery. The Commission also reviewed the progress made in implementing the previous regulatory measure and began discussions on a new regulatory measure to apply from 2021. The Commission produced draft text for possible inclusion in a new regulatory measure.

- 5.3 At its May Inter-Sessional Meeting, the Commission further considered that draft text, including amendments to it that were proposed during the inter-sessional correspondence period. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) also presented its Draft Management Plan for the fishery and new Executive Order, both translated into English. The Commission produced a draft regulatory measure for consideration at its Annual Meeting.

### **ACOM Report from ICES**

- 5.4 The Commission reviewed the scientific advice from ICES during a [webinar](#) at which the [ICES advice](#) for all areas was presented to the Council and Commissions.
- 5.5 In response to a question from the NGOs on discrepancies in the catch figures for the fishery, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised the Commission that the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, who provides the catch information to ICES, is an independent institution. The official figures are those supplied by Greenland's Fishery License Control Authority (GFLK), as contained in the APR and Draft Management Plan. With regards to the unreported catch figures, ICES has used the figure of 10 t for a number of years. However, as all salmon fishers in Greenland are now licensed, there is a known pool of participants and GFLK has been able to estimate the unreported catch as 6.1 t.

### **Regulatory Measures**

- 5.6 At its Annual Meeting, the Commission held extensive discussions on the draft regulatory measure arising from the May Inter-Sessional Meeting. The major points of difficulty were:
- the proposed level of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the fishery. Canada, the EU, UK and the United States were concerned at the previous overharvests and were not willing to agree to a TAC of more than 20 t. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that it could not agree to a quota of less than 30 t for the entire salmon fishery at Greenland;
  - the inclusion of a payback provision in a new regulatory measure. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that it could not accept a new regulatory measure with a payback provision. However, Canada, the EU, UK and United States wished to see a new payback provision in any new multi-annual regulatory measure from 2021, given the overharvests in each of the three years of the previous regulatory measure. They also wished to see the commitment made by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) under the previous measure honoured and deducted from any TAC in 2021.
- 5.7 The Commission was not able to come to an agreement on a multi-annual regulatory measure. The Commission considered an interim one-year regulatory measure for the fishery. However, Canada and the United States expressed concern over the level of TAC and lack of an overharvest payback provision, noting that they could not agree to

such a measure.

- 5.8 An [interim one-year regulatory measure](#) for the 2021 salmon fishery at West Greenland was agreed, with a TAC of 27 t. Under this measure, the Commission would 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.

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

- 5.9 The West Greenland Fishery Sampling Programme is an internationally co-ordinated sampling programme that provides valuable biological data to the ICES stock assessments that inform science-based management decisions for the West Greenland fishery.
- 5.10 The Commission was advised that, as the international samplers had not been able to travel to Greenland in 2020, a contingency plan had been implemented. Citizen science was an element of this plan, involving the fishers collecting samples from their fish and returning them for analysis. This would be implemented again in 2021.
- 5.11 The Commission adopted a [Statement of Co-operation](#) on the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Programme for 2021.

#### **Progress in the Management of Salmon Fisheries, Habitat Protection and Restoration and Aquaculture and Related Activities in States of Origin**

- 5.12 In order to inform the discussions on a new regulatory measure, the Commission considered the responses submitted by members of the West Greenland Commission to the following questions in the Annual Progress Reports for the Calendar Years 2018, 2019 and 2020:
- describe any major new initiatives or achievements for salmon conservation and management that you wish to highlight; and
  - details of any laws, regulations and programmes that have been adopted or repealed since the last notification.

#### **Other Business**

- 5.13 The Commission considered a proposal from Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) to streamline the reporting requirement for the fishery. However, the other members of the Commission felt such a change was premature and should be re-considered under a future multi-annual regulatory measure.
- 5.14 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Maren Levisen, Maniitsoq, Greenland.

### **6. Finance and Administration Matters**

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met by video conference prior to the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Council, chaired by Clemens Fieseler (European Union).

#### **Accounts**

- 6.2 The Committee recommended to the Council that it adopt the [2020 audited financial statements](#).

- 6.3 At the close of 2020, the Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000. The Contractual Obligation Fund also remained at its ceiling of £250,000. The Recruitment Fund, which previously had been reduced from its standing level of £60,000, had been further rebuilt to almost £58,000 in 2020. No further contributions towards the International Year of the Salmon Fund were budgeted for. The Committee noted that a contribution of £15,000 would be made to the Periodic Projects Special Fund in 2021. This Fund was established in 2020 and is intended to help avoid large swings in NASCO's budget from year-to-year to support necessary and higher cost intermittent activities, such as future performance reviews, IYS legacy activities and other costly special projects that may occasionally arise.
- 6.4 Norway asked whether the use of a four-year time frame, accounting for the depreciation of equipment, was consistent with the Secretariat's policy of replacing laptops every three years. The Secretary agreed to consult the auditor on this issue and align these time frames in future, as appropriate.
- 6.5 The Committee considered changing the auditing cycle from a three-year cycle to a five-year cycle as had been discussed in 2019. The Committee agreed that the auditors should be appointed for a three-year cycle.
- 6.6 The Committee was advised that several accountancy firms were approached to tender for the audit of NASCO's 2021, 2022 and 2023 accounts. However, only two firms had responded: the current auditors and the company that had previously acted as auditors for NASCO. The Committee agreed that that principles of good governance and transparency suggest that changing accountancy firms may be considered good practice. However, NASCO found itself in a unique situation due to the limited number of firms interested in tendering for the work and because of the movement of personnel between the two firms that did submit a tender. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that the Secretary continue efforts to establish whether another suitable accountancy firm in Edinburgh was interested in tendering a bid for NASCO's audit work for 2021, 2022 and 2023, consulting with the President and FAC Chair on relevant developments. If no appropriate firm was available, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the appointment of Saffery Champness for the audits for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

### **Relationship with ICES**

- 6.7 The MoU with ICES specifies recurrent requests for advice and procedures for *ad hoc* requests for advice, as well as key administrative procedures and financial aspects. The MoU has been extended five times since it was signed in 2007, with the most recent extension ending in 2021.
- 6.8 In 2019, ICES had requested that the revision of the NASCO-ICES MoU be initiated in 2020 to enable it to be aligned with the new and revised agreements and MoUs that ICES had concluded with other advice requesters.
- 6.9 At its 2021 Annual Meeting, the Committee considered a proposed revised MoU. During its consideration of the matter, the Committee was advised that the questions developed for the Annual Request to ICES from NASCO would be the subject of the advice NASCO receives, and that not all of the items listed in the MoU would need to be addressed by ICES if they are not relevant or appropriate in a given year. The process would remain the same under the new MoU as under the current MoU.
- 6.10 With regards to the cost structure in the MoU, the Committee was advised that ICES had been reviewing all MoUs to ensure transparent costing in all agreements. A 100%

cost recovery of advice services is applied, but with a minimum fee which ensures that ICES basic costs are met. Since NASCO's cost is based on the minimum fee, there is no flexibility to reconsider the fee in any given year should ICES be unable to provide updated information as required. The Committee was also informed that although the MoU refers to a temporary costing, it was not expected to change significantly.

- 6.11 The Committee was advised that the previous wording 'When assessing the contributions to be paid by NASCO, due account shall be taken of contributions made by ICES Member Countries or international client Commissions of ICES with interests in the same issues and in the same geographical area' had been removed because it is a fundamental principle of ICES that all members make expertise available for ICES work. As this is a requirement across all agreements, ICES felt it was unnecessary to include it explicitly in the MoU.
- 6.12 In response to a comment from Norway, the Secretary noted that she understood that the breadth of advice that has always been sought will continue to be available under the annual recurring advice through NASCO's request to ICES.
- 6.13 The Committee discussed further potential revisions to the MoU and agreed to recommend to the Council that:
- the Secretary liaise with ICES to request revision of the proposed revised MoU;
  - the resulting document be considered by the FAC by correspondence, inter-sessionally; and
  - the Council adopt the finalised MoU, inter-sessionally, by correspondence.

#### **Consideration of the 2022 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan**

- 6.14 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2022 Budget and 2023 Forecast Budget. The Committee was informed that 2025 is the last year that the incumbent Secretary may be Secretary. Therefore, an amount had been budgeted for in 2026 to rebuild the Contractual Obligation Fund should this be drawn on to fund any discretionary lump sum payment to the Secretary.

#### **MoU with the OSPAR Commission**

- 6.15 The MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission came into effect on 5 August 2013.
- 6.16 The Committee was informed that OSPAR had been discussing the possible establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean since 2018. The proposed MPA is called the 'North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount Marine Protected Area' (NACES MPA). The analysis on the proposed MPA, to which NASCO contributed, was complete and a 'background' nomination proforma document for the NACES MPA was on OSPAR's website. OSPAR aimed to secure agreement to designate the MPA at the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in autumn 2021. The Committee also noted that OSPAR had been considering generating a request to ICES for scientific advice on salmon, along with three other diadromous species. The OSPAR Executive Secretary had advised that NASCO would be advised of any further developments in this respect.
- 6.17 The Committee was advised that France was leading on an OSPAR status assessment of salmon, together with Norway, together with a number of other diadromous species. OSPAR aimed to hold a workshop to prepare a draft of the status assessment which

NASCO Parties could attend if interested. OSPAR had also developed ‘Guidance on the Development of Status Assessments for the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats’ (OSPAR Agreement 2019-05) which stated:

*‘The assessment of the status of species or habitats is intended to inform OSPAR’s consideration of the effectiveness of the measures and actions that have been adopted and implemented by Contracting Parties. Thus, the focus of the assessment should be to explore if existing measures are effective and sufficient. This can be done by assessing the status of a feature, or through a proxy approach, by assessing changes in human activities and pressures that are threats to the feature.’*

- 6.18 The Committee expressed concern relating to the actions OSPAR appears to be taking in relation to Atlantic salmon. In particular, the Committee was concerned that responsibilities and related tasks that fall under NASCO’s authority and competence might be inappropriately duplicated by OSPAR, which could create contradictory information, and possibly bring the two organization’s roles and responsibilities into conflict. The Committee felt it was important to bring these concerns to OSPAR’s attention and affirm NASCO’s competence as the only inter-governmental organization with competence over the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon.
- 6.19 The Committee asked the Secretary to write a letter to OSPAR welcoming continuing co-operation between the two organizations. The letter should refer to correspondence in 2016 in relation to OSPAR’s draft recommendation on salmon to reflect that NASCO’s concerns expressed at that time remain. The letter should stress that OSPAR’s status assessment should reflect the work and advice provided by ICES for Atlantic salmon populations in the OSPAR area and encourage that any additional scientific work be carried out in consultation with ICES. The letter should also caution that the outcome of the status assessment should not lead OSPAR to propose measures for the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon that fall under the competence of NASCO.
- 6.20 The Committee agreed that it would review the draft letter inter-sessionally with a view to seeking timely approval from the Council and sending it to OSPAR before the OSPAR workshop to prepare a draft of the status assessment would take place. The Committee agreed that the President should sign the letter on behalf of NASCO.

#### **Other Business**

- 6.21 The Chair noted that during the inter-sessional correspondence, the United States had requested discussion of the ‘Need for Clarification of, or Amendment to, NASCO’s Rules Relating to Finance and Administration Matters.’ The Chair explained that due to the pandemic, he had decided to delay further substantive discussion of this matter to 2022. However, he agreed that some discussion of how to progress this issue inter-sessionally would be useful to prepare for a substantive discussion by the FAC in 2022.
- 6.22 The United States understood the reason for the delay in consideration of this matter and stated its preference to put arrangements in place to move this issue forward substantively at the 2022 FAC Meeting. The United States noted there could be three options regarding lump sum payments and the associated Staff Rules and Staff Fund Rules:
- 1) leave the rules as they are;
  - 2) update and clarify the current rules; or

- 3) consider an entirely new system with, for example, retirement benefits for NASCO Secretariat staff.

6.23 The Committee agreed that:

- the Secretary would finalise the background paper on these issues and circulate it to the FAC by mid-December 2021;
- all FAC members would be invited to a virtual inter-sessional meeting in late January or early February 2022 to discuss and progress the issue; and
- discussions from the 2022 inter-sessional meeting would be taken forward for further consideration and decision at the FAC Meeting in 2022.

Secretariat  
Edinburgh  
5 April 2022