



MoU with the OSPAR Commission

Purpose

This paper provides information on work being carried out by OSPAR that may be of interest to NASCO Parties.

Decision

No decisions are required.

Background

The operation of the [MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission](#) (5 August 2013) continues to work well, with good exchanges of information in the last few years. In 2019, the FAC agreed that the Secretary should continue to liaise with OSPAR on issues of mutual interest and bring relevant information and developments to its attention.

The following issues may be of interest, with more information on each provided below:

1. OSPAR status assessment of salmon;
2. designation of a new Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic;
3. action to model and identify areas that could constitute possible critical habitats for listed species;
4. the OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on salmon; and
5. the possible OSPAR request to ICES for advice on salmon.

1. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon

During the 2021 meeting, [FAC\(21\)12](#), the FAC discussed the OSPAR status assessment of salmon. The FAC was informed that the purpose of the OSPAR status assessment was to provide a 'light-touch' overview of whether there was any change in the status of salmon or the main threats to it. The assessment would be used as a basis for discussions in OSPAR on what further management action might be needed.

The FAC expressed concern relating to the actions OSPAR appeared to be taking in relation to Atlantic salmon. In particular, it 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 FAC asked the Secretary to draft a letter to OSPAR, to be signed by the NASCO President, which would:

- welcome continuing co-operation between the two Organizations;
- refer to the correspondence in 2016 in relation to OSPAR's draft recommendation on salmon to reflect that NASCO's concerns expressed at that time remain (the 2016 correspondence can be found on this [NASCO webpage](#));
- 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; and

- 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.

The [Letter from the President of NASCO to the Chair of the OSPAR Commission](#) was approved inter-sessionally by the FAC and sent on 21 June 2021. This was prior to the first OSPAR workshop to prepare a draft of the status assessment, which took place on 23 June. The Secretary and a number of scientists from NASCO delegations attended the workshop.

The [Chair of the OSPAR Commission replied to the President of NASCO](#) on 7 July 2021, stating:

‘The status assessments of features included on the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining features, which includes the Atlantic salmon, contributes to the regular work of OSPAR in bringing together relevant knowledge on the status of the North-East Atlantic. The aim of carrying out regular status assessments of the listed features is to identify any signals in changing status over time, and any change in the intensity of the threats and impacts. The use of third-party assessments is an important part of this process and is highlighted in OSPAR Agreement 2019-05 Guidance on the Development of Status Assessments for the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats with a view to ensuring coherence and the efficient use of resources. For the salmon status assessment, previously completed assessments by NASCO and ICES will be taken into account.

The completion of a status assessment does not pre-empt any future decisions to take measures or other actions. Work to take possible new measures would as relevant be taken through a process of updating OSPAR Recommendation 2016-03 which clearly recalls the complementary competencies of OSPAR and NASCO. As you suggest in your letter, in line with our MoU, we would consult with NASCO on any such proposed measures to avoid duplication and impinging on NASCO’s competence. Similarly, we invite NASCO to continue to bring to the attention of OSPAR any work being carried out within NASCO’s competence that would be of relevance to OSPAR, for example by participating in future meetings of the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee.’

A second workshop to develop the OSPAR status assessment of salmon took place on 23 September 2021. As requested in the NASCO President’s letter, the assessment used data from the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS). Specifically, pre-fishery abundances as estimated by the ICES WGNAS were used as proxies of abundance in OSPAR Regions. The following experts were involved in one or both workshops:

L. Beaulaton (France); P. Fiske (Norway); P.R. Almeida, C. Mateus, S. Silva and C. M. Alexandre (Portugal); I. A. Bergendahl (Sweden); D. Ensing (ICES WGNAS Chairman), C. Bean, I. Davidson, J. Gillson, N. Hanson, L. Talks, A. Walker and S. Walton (United Kingdom); and E. Hatfield (NASCO Secretariat).

The Draft OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon is now complete and at the time of writing was progressing through the OSPAR official publication process. Publication on the [OSPAR Status Assessments webpage](#) is expected in summer 2022.

2. Designation of a new Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic

A discussion began in OSPAR in 2018 on the possibility of establishing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean. [OSPAR Decision 2021/01](#) relates to the establishment of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area. The

Decision entered into force on 19 April 2022. Further information is available on the OSPAR's [NACES MPA webpage](#).

The site is located in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of the OSPAR Maritime Area. It represents a marine area of near pristine open ocean habitat that provides an important feeding ground for many species of seabirds. Its conservation vision is 'Maintenance and, where appropriate, restoration of seabird populations and the integrity of the various ecosystems and their processes that support those populations of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount MPA (NACES MPA).' NASCO contributed to the analysis relating to the establishment of the MPA.

3. Action to Model and Identify Areas That Could Constitute Possible Critical Habitats for Listed Species

OSPAR has informed NASCO of another workstream that involves salmon. OSPAR has agreed an action to model and identify areas that could constitute possible critical habitats for OSPAR listed species, and that could be proposed as new MPAs. The work is to be undertaken by Germany (the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)).

OSPAR has asked the Secretariat about data which could be shared with OSPAR to feed into this work and support identification of possible new MPA sites. The Secretary has informed OSPAR that NASCO does not hold data on the occurrence and distribution of salmon, since all such data are held by the Parties or in institutions within the jurisdictions of NASCO. However, she provided information about the SeaSalar Project and the Likely Suspects Framework, which may be of interest to OSPAR in this regard.

4. OSPAR Recommendation on Salmon

In 2021, the FAC was informed about the OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on furthering the protection and conservation of the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR maritime area which became effective on 24 June 2016. The recommendation reflected comments and edits provided by NASCO, although NASCO did not endorse or take a policy position on the recommendation. Under the recommendation, the Contracting Parties of the OSPAR Commission are to report on the implementation of the Recommendation by 31 December 2019 and every six years thereafter. Once the Contracting Parties to OSPAR make their reports to the OSPAR Secretariat, NASCO will receive, per the terms of our MoU, any relevant information from OSPAR.

A review of the implementation of this recommendation was undertaken in 2019 and OSPAR has been working on analysing the information that Contracting Parties had reported. OSPAR has informed the Secretariat that the overview assessment is nearly complete. It is due to be published after OSPAR 2022 in June and will be available on the [OSPAR website](#).

5. Request to ICES for Advice on Salmon

In 2021, the FAC was informed that in early 2020 OSPAR was thinking about generating a request for ICES Advice on salmon, among other species. A proposal was discussed at OSPAR's Biodiversity Committee (BDC) meeting in 2020 on four diadromous species including salmon but was then not taken forward as a request to ICES. OSPAR has informed the Secretariat that it is not currently preparing for an ICES advice request on salmon.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
6 May 2022