

***Question and Answer Session held during the Special Session of the Council:
Report from the Tromsø Symposium on the Recommendations to Address
Future Management Challenges***

Paul Knight (Salmon & Trout Conservation UK¹): thank you very much, Mr President. And thanks, Eva. That was a superb résumé of recommendations. The NGOs support everything you said wholeheartedly. The NGOs would like to, first of all, remind NASCO that they are a conservation organization first and foremost. And that doesn't always come through. You've been given, by Eva, some brilliant recommendations. I suppose, really, looking to you, Arnaud, as the President, can you confirm that NASCO Council will genuinely look at these recommendations? Because, along with our report to the external performance review, this is all coming together really, I suppose, dare one say thanks to Covid, at the right time. Our real worry is that there's a lack of political commitment from the Parties. The Parties make very good recommendations here, go home, and the political masters say 'no thanks' or ignore them. It doesn't come out in policies that appear in the IPs or APRs.

So, can we have your confirmation, as President, that you'll genuinely look at these recommendations, and find some way, perhaps through the external performance review, that Parties are held to account to action them? Because if they don't, then NASCO becomes an irrelevance and Atlantic salmon will be the worse for it. They will continue to degrade. Really, Mr President, looking to you. Do we have your assurance that these recommendations will be properly debated and actioned upon by Heads of Delegation in Council? Thank you.

Arnaud Peyronnet (President): thank you, Paul, for that question. And yes, if you remember, we came to those conclusions. There was already a strong involvement from the Parties that really reflects consensus on those issues, and what needs to be done. You mentioned the external performance review. Of course, this is going to be an important moment for the Organization. One that we hope will also identify all those issues. They should come true. And there is already a reference in the Terms of Reference for the Panel to work on, to include those recommendations.

So, yes, from that point of view, this is already being considered. But what I can say already, is that this week we're already discussing what we can do, without waiting for the external performance review. And we are looking at some of the actions we have taken in recent times, and some actions that we are likely to take, just after this meeting, particularly looking at those eleven recommendations, because we feel that they are crucial and they are important for NASCO. And this is the role of NASCO, and we completely agree with you with on that.

Paul Knight (Salmon & Trout Conservation UK): thank you.

Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation): yes, I just wanted to echo Paul's comments and make a comment in general on how NASCO is working, in terms of its timeframe to actually get some things into action. Eva's presentation highlighted the issue of stocking. And she said there should be immediate consideration by NASCO to update their guidelines on stocking. And immediate doesn't usually mean waiting three years to even think about developing some way you're going to do that. So, that's a general criticism I have of the way NASCO works: it is slow to action a lot of the time. And in this case, the Symposium took place in 2019, before the actual 2019 meeting. I would have hoped that at the 2019 meeting

¹ Salmon & Trout Conservation UK is now known as Wildfish

that would have been a simple recommendation to take into consideration, of updating the guidelines on stocking, for example. But now, it's three years later. I think we're going to do something for the next year. That's on the agenda for the Council, I believe, to consider. But it's not immediate, by any means. That's my comment. Thank you.

Arnaud Peyronnet (President): thank you, Dave for your comment. I acknowledge myself that there has not been the progress that we probably were all to expect on those issues. I'm going to give you an answer on this. And it's only one side, of course, of the problem, but we also have to take into consideration that we had two very difficult years. I would recall that we barely went through the agenda items of the virtual meetings. We were really focusing on essential business. And it's not an excuse, but it's a fact. We were trying to make sure that NASCO could function. And that we could look at the critical elements for NASCO to function in those difficult times. So yes, we haven't delivered, it's true, but there were particular circumstances.

Paul Knight (Salmon & Trout Conservation UK): I think there are a number of questions coming out of what Eva's said, that I think are probably better said at the IP and the APR stages. Eva was very clear about how we should be protecting the coastal zone, for instance. I think there are various countries that don't do that. I remember, going back to the sea trout conference we had in Cardiff in 2004, which is a lifetime ago now, but there was an example of the Finnish sea trout populations that have been brought to their knees by, basically, bycatch and the coastal gill-net fishery. And we're increasingly finding out that's happening around, for instance, the UK coast, because of the research that's being done. And it's turning that research into positive action, and going back to what Dave has just said. We're getting more and more research results each year. And it's having the flexibility to turn that into action, which is missing.

I think, as one would expect from Eva, some brilliant recommendations, but I think you'll find more questions and more statements being made at the relevant time during the IP and the APR Special Sessions. But I'd like to thank Eva and her Steering Group again. Certainly from the NGO point of view, it's all we've been asking for, for 20, 30, 40 years. And I think this is the time. I think this is a crossroads for NASCO. You've got Eva's recommendations. You've got the external performance review coming up. If we don't make the changes we need now, and that doesn't result in political commitment from home governments to change their policies and have updated IPs and APRs every year, then I think we've missed a huge trick. And I'm really worried that NASCO will become more and more irrelevant, as time goes on. So, this is the time, folks. Take it. It's 40 years nearly, since you've been in existence. Now's the time to catch the wave, as they say. Thank you.

Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation): I'm asking, Mr President, if it'd be an opportune time to ask the Parties what they are doing, in terms of some of these recommendations that have come out of the Symposium? It's just a suggestion, but if you have some time, it might be interesting to hear from the Parties, saying that we've started addressing number one or number three, or whatever. Just to hear what's going on.

Arnaud Peyronnet (President): thank you, Dave. Yes, we could do that. I'm aware that we are in the process of preparing a document that could show what is being done. And I'd rather wait for that document to be ready and made available, so that people can understand and have a better overview.