



CNL23.081

19 December 2022

Svandís Svavarsdóttir
Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Borgartún 26
105 Reykjavík
Iceland

Dear Ms Svavarsdóttir,

I write on behalf of the Council of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) to invite Iceland to rejoin NASCO.

NASCO's objectives are the conservation, restoration and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon stocks. It is the only inter-governmental organization with this mandate which it implements through international consultation, negotiation, and co-operation.

As you may be aware, Iceland played a central role in establishing NASCO in 1984, with the first President of NASCO, Gudmundur Eiriksson, being from Iceland. In 2009, Iceland took the 'painful decision to withdraw from the NASCO Convention' but stressed that this was purely for economic reasons. At that time, Iceland stated: '*we sincerely hope to re-accede to the NASCO Convention when the economic situation improves*' (I refer you to Annex 1).

The letter from Iceland in 2009 also noted that:

'many salmon stocks are still vulnerable and we all know that these are challenging times for wild Atlantic salmon with some remaining coastal fisheries, increased degradation of the salmon's freshwater habitat and increasing threats from the cage culture of salmon.'

As you know, many salmon stocks remain vulnerable and challenging times continue. There is, therefore, a greater need than ever for NASCO's work. Positive outcomes from NASCO's most recent Annual Meeting in 2022 demonstrate some of the challenges that NASCO is addressing. Many of these are relevant to Iceland and will benefit Iceland's wild Atlantic salmon stocks (I refer you to Annex 2).

International co-operation is at the heart of these initiatives and vital to their success. I am very grateful that Iceland remains involved in international co-operation at a scientific level through the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS). However, given the importance of Atlantic salmon in Iceland, in order to enable Iceland to participate fully in the important inter-governmental work to conserve and restore wild Atlantic salmon, NASCO would like to invite you to extend this co-operation by becoming a member of NASCO once again.

Your re-accession to the Convention would be timely, as NASCO is about to begin a new phase. The third performance review of NASCO is now taking place and will report in Spring 2023. The international experts on the Review Panel are assessing NASCO's performance and

effectiveness in addressing current threats and challenges facing salmon and identifying areas where improvements are needed. NASCO's response to the Review Panel's report and recommendations will re-energise our efforts to conserve Atlantic salmon.

The Parties to NASCO very much hope that Iceland will rejoin.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the matter further with you, in a virtual or face-to-face meeting. Would it be possible for your officials to contact the NASCO Secretary, Dr Emma Hatfield, to arrange a convenient time for a meeting?

I look forward to speaking with you. If you would like additional information on NASCO's work, in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Emma Hatfield, who will be very pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'A. Peyronnet', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Arnaud Peyronnet
President of NASCO

CC: Ms Thórdís Kolbrún Reykjörd Gylfadóttir – Minister for Foreign Affairs

Annex



STÁVARÚTVEGS- OG
LANDBÚNAÐARRÁÐUNEYTIÐ

Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture

Skúlagötu 4 IS-150 Reykjavík Iceland
tel.: + (354) 545 8300 fax: + (354) 552 1160
postur@slr.sjr.is www.sjr.is/slr

Dr. Malcolm Windsor, General Secretary
NASCO, 11 Ruthland Square
Edinburgh EH1
2AS Scotland UK

Reykjavík July 17, 2009
Reference: SLR09050068/13.11

Subject: Withdrawal of Iceland from the NASCO Convention

As has already been conveyed to the NASCO Secretariat through diplomatic channels the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has taken the painful decision to withdraw from the NASCO Convention. We want to stress that this decision is taken purely for economic reasons which relates to the collapse of the Icelandic Banking System in October 2008. This has forced the Icelandic Government to cut Government Budgets in a drastic manner in all internal as well as international spheres and activities. Our economic crisis is unprecedented and requires extremely severe and painful measures. However, we sincerely hope to re-accede to the NASCO Convention when the economic situation improves.

We want to emphasize that the work of NASCO, which was established in Iceland over 25 years ago, has been very rewarding and important for the conservation of Icelandic salmon stocks. Although fisheries for salmon in international waters have been greatly reduced through NASCO Agreements many salmon stocks are still vulnerable and we all know that these are challenging times for wild Atlantic salmon with some remaining coastal fisheries, increased degradation of the salmon's freshwater habitat and increasing threats from the cage culture of salmon. We want to commend NASCO for its efforts to deal with these threats and certainly feel that it is important to have an international platform to address these problems and share experience and knowledge.

Sincerely,

Sigurgeir Þorgeirsson
Permanent Secretary

NASCO challenges of relevance and benefit to Iceland's wild Atlantic salmon stocks

ICES reports that 'Long-distance migrations to ocean feeding grounds take place, with adult salmon from the Northeast Atlantic stocks being exploited in waters near both Greenland and the Faroes' [CNL\(22\)09](#), p 59. [Research](#) by Icelandic scientists has demonstrated that these stocks may include salmon from Icelandic rivers. In 2022, a new 'Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Atlantic Salmon at West Greenland', [WGC\(22\)10](#), was agreed. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) agreed to restrict the total allowable catch for all components of the Atlantic salmon fishery at West Greenland to 27 metric tonnes and agreed to close the fishery when the registered catch reached no more than 49% of the overall TAC. In 2021, a 'Decision Regarding the Salmon Fishery in Faroese Waters in 2021 / 2022, 2022 / 2023 and 2023 / 2024', [NEA\(21\)16](#), was agreed in 2021. Consequently, there continues to be no fishery for salmon at the Faroes.

In addition, the number of pink salmon reported in Iceland has increased from 79 in 2017 to 339 in 2021, [CNL\(22\)64](#). In 2022, NASCO agreed a 'Statement of the Council Regarding Pink Salmon, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*, in the NASCO Convention Area', [CNL\(22\)47](#). This includes agreement to establish a Standing NASCO Working Group on the threat of pink salmon which will enable NASCO Parties to co-operate to minimise adverse effects of pink salmon on wild Atlantic salmon.

Furthermore, the Council of NASCO has long been concerned about the impact of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon. As the letter from Iceland in 2009 indicates, this is also an important issue in Iceland. This year, the Council agreed to fund an initiative to enable the production of a high-impact scientific review paper on the impact of salmon farming (sea lice, escapes and disease pathogens) on wild Atlantic salmon. Additionally, NASCO adopted a statement on this issue, pressing Parties to develop and implement effective innovative salmon farming technologies, both at sea and on land. This would advance the implementation and attainment of the international goals for the management of sea lice and containment of farmed salmon agreed by NASCO and the International Salmon Farming Association in 2009.

Finally, NASCO's Working Group on *Gyrodactylus salaris* met recently and noted that mortality of salmon parr in some Norwegian rivers, due to *Gyrodactylus salaris*, has been as high as 98%. Norwegian Authorities have so far spent more than NOK 1 billion on research, monitoring and combating *G. salaris*. In light of the very strict measures in place in Iceland to guard against such parasites, NASCO's Parties may benefit from learning more about Iceland's approach.