



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. In 2019, the FAC agreed that the Secretary should continue to liaise with OSPAR on issues of mutual interest and bring relevant information 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 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 was to 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. Consequently:

- the [President of NASCO wrote](#) to the Chair of the OSPAR Commission on 21 June 2021; and
- the [Chair of the OSPAR Commission replied](#) to the President of NASCO on 7 July 2021.

Two workshops to develop the OSPAR status assessment of salmon took place on 23 June 2021 and 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). 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 latest update is that the [OSPAR Status Assessment 2022 - Atlantic salmon](#) has been completed as a contribution to the Quality Status Report 2023. This Report also includes a thematic assessment on fish (both sensitive and commercial fish species) and will be published in autumn 2023. ICG-POSH (OSPAR's Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Protection of Species and Habitats) will continue to explore next steps and implementation needs based on findings in the status assessments.

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.

There is an intention by the OSPAR Commission to enhance the NACES MPA by including additional OSPAR listed features and the seabed, ocean floor and subsoil thereof, in its scope. The most recent update is that the 'Roadmap for further development of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area', [OSPAR Agreement 2021-08](#), is progressing in accordance with the agreed timeline. This 2021-2023 roadmap sets out an evidence review process to consider the further development of protection for the deep-sea ecosystem at the NACES MPA. The Biodiversity Committee, which met from 17-21 April 2023, agreed the nomination proforma taking onboard all information received in the consultation process and review. The document was forwarded to OSPAR 2023 (26 - 30 June 2023) for publication, together with documents that will be presented as a Decision to amend Decision 2021/1 and Recommendation 2021/1 for consideration by the meeting.

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

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 that 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.

The most recent update is that work on this action is ongoing and will be discussed at the ICG-POSH Meeting in 2023.

4. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 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 the 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. At the time of writing, the implementation report for the 2019 reporting had not yet been made available on the website and it is unclear when it will be available.

5. Possible 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 meeting in 2020 on four diadromous species including salmon but was then not taken forward as a request to ICES.

In May 2023, OSPAR informed the Secretariat that there is no foreseen need for an ICES advice request at the moment.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
4 May 2023