



Improving the Participation of Indigenous Peoples¹ in NASCO

Purpose

To propose a path forward to improve the participation of Indigenous peoples and organizations² in NASCO.

Background

In 2019 there was an IYS Symposium in Tromsø, entitled ‘Managing the Atlantic Salmon in a Rapidly Changing Environment – Management Challenges and Possible Responses’.

In its report to Council in 2019, the Symposium Steering Committee stated:

‘Most of the issues facing wild salmon are the result of human activities, either directly (e.g., overfishing; aquaculture; habitat destruction, etc.) or indirectly (e.g., climate change). In many cases, existing scientific knowledge of these issues is sufficient to develop potential solutions. However, as many speakers pointed out, our inability to implement timely and effective solutions is often hampered by socio-economic factors. These include conflict of interest, lack of consensus, mistrust, diversity of environmental values and ethics, ineffective governance, failure to consider alternative perspectives (e.g., Indigenous perspectives), and difficulties in motivating governments, communities, and individuals to take appropriate action. Thus, restoration and conservation of Atlantic salmon require attention to the human dimensions from both scientific (i.e., understanding human values, attitudes, and behaviours) and management perspectives (i.e., applying human dimensions knowledge to developing and implementing solutions).’

It also noted that addressing human dimensions

‘would help to strengthen the relationship between wild salmon and people and enhance our capacity to develop solutions, address constraints, take action, and increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of social-ecological systems in support of salmon conservation.’

Additionally, the Symposium Steering Committee noted that representatives for Indigenous people in Canada and Norway spoke at the Symposium and that:

‘indigenous peoples’ knowledge systems capture generational data that can include detailed observations about changes in environmental conditions, species abundance, and species behaviour. Given limits to government resources for data collection and monitoring, these additional knowledge systems make significant contributions to salmon restoration, conservation, and management’.

It also noted that:

¹ Indigenous Peoples as defined by the United Nations - those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

² For this discussion Indigenous organizations may include groups with various legal standings such as governments, first nations, parliaments, collectives, communities, organizations, councils, congresses and organizations but are Indigenous led and managed.

‘addressing human dimensions requires incorporation of traditional and local knowledge and indigenous perspectives in activities related to salmon science, conservation and management (page 18).’

On the basis of these comments, the Steering Committee made two recommendations, as follows:

Recommendation 4

‘Given the advances in the understanding of human dimensions and the importance of incorporating indigenous and local knowledge into salmon conservation, NASCO should update and modernize its 2004 [‘Guidelines for Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Decisions under the Precautionary Approach’](#). This update should include recent advances in human dimensions and the incorporation of traditional and local knowledge and indigenous perspectives’.

Recommendation 5

‘Recognizing the importance of salmon to indigenous peoples and the role that indigenous peoples play in salmon conservation, NASCO should improve the participation of indigenous people in NASCO.’

In 2022, the Council of NASCO discussed the recommendations arising from the 2019 IYS Symposium in Tromsø, to decide how they would be addressed.

During the meeting, the President informed delegates that the Parties had identified enhancing the participation of indigenous people in NASCO as a potential priority area and indicated that there was a willingness to act on this urgently. Canada noted support for this and requested that there be a Special Session at the Annual Meeting in 2023 on indigenous perspectives on Atlantic salmon.

Council agreed that:

‘there would be a Special Session on indigenous perspectives on Atlantic salmon during the 2023 Annual Meeting. Canada would liaise with the Secretariat and other interested Parties on this.’

In 2023 the third performance review report noted these recommendations and decisions while discussing improvements NASCO should consider to improve its transparency and specifically the ‘Conditions for Attendance by Observers at NASCO Meetings’, CNL(06)49.

Considerations

Whereas Indigenous organizations have been attending NASCO Council and its Commissions as part of a Parties’ or Non-Governmental Organization’s delegations.

Recognising that, while the goals of Atlantic salmon conservation for Indigenous peoples may in some cases, and to some extent, align with those of the delegations, this alignment is not comprehensive;

Whereas a few recent recommendations to, and decisions by, NASCO Council suggest that Indigenous representation solely through an existing NASCO delegation is not sufficient for Indigenous peoples;

Considering that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has been adopted by all but one Party to NASCO which *inter alia* in Articles 18, 19, and 20 refer to the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights; the importance of free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them; and, enjoyment in

the means of subsistence;

Whereas it has been noted in the third performance review the need to update CNL(06)49, ‘Conditions for Attendance of Observers to NASCO Meetings’;

And Whereas NASCO’s Finance and Administration Committee at its meeting on June 4, 2023 decided to review document CNL(06)49 concerning observers and consider the results of its review at the 2024 Annual Meeting;

Considering that Indigenous governments are not recognised by the Convention, another mechanism is needed to improve the participation of Indigenous peoples at NASCO;

Recognising the observations stemming from the 2024 Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives and Roles in Atlantic Salmon Conservation.

Canada requests that:

- in 2024 the Council considers creating a new category of NASCO observers called “*Indigenous Observers*” which would be granted the same status that NGOs currently enjoy on Council, Commissions, and the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and other NASCO Groups and Committees; and
- inter-sessionally, the Parties, within their jurisdictions, consider the proposal to create a new observer category in order to inform a Council decision on this matter at the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting.

Council may wish to agree to:

- direct the Finance and Administration Committee in its review of CNL(06)49, ‘Conditions for Attendance by Observers at NASCO Meetings’, to consider a new category of observers called Indigenous Observers.