



**REPORT OF THE  
FORTIETH  
ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE COUNCIL**

**Delta Beausejour Hotel, Moncton,  
New Brunswick, Canada**

**5 – 8 June 2023**

President: Arnaud Peyronnet (European Union)

Vice-President: Kim Damon-Randall (United States)

Secretary: Emma Hatfield

**CNL(23)87**

## CNL(23)87

### *Report of the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization*

*Delta Beausejour Hotel, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada*

*5 – 8 June 2023*

#### **1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 The President, Arnaud Peyronnet (EU), opened the meeting. He introduced the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the Honourable Joyce Murray, who welcomed delegates to Moncton. The President made an Opening Statement (Annex 1).
- 1.2 Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union (EU), Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States submitted written Opening Statements (Annex 2).
- 1.3 An Opening Statement was submitted by the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) (Annex 3).
- 1.4 An Opening Statement was submitted on behalf of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Annex 4).
- 1.5 A list of participants at the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Council of NASCO is given in Annex 5.

#### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Council adopted its Agenda, [CNL\(23\)66](#) (Annex 6).

#### **3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1 The Council elected Kim Damon-Randall (USA) as its President (proposed by Canada, seconded by the EU) for a period of two years, to commence from the close of the 2023 Annual Meeting.
- 3.2 The Council elected Ruth Allin (UK) as its Vice-President (proposed by Norway, seconded by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)), for a period of two years, to commence from the close of the 2023 Annual Meeting.

#### **4. Financial and Administrative Issues**

##### **a) Report of the Finance and Administration Committee**

- 4.1 The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC), Seamus Connor (UK), introduced the Report of the FAC Meeting, [CNL\(23\)05](#).
- 4.2 On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council agreed to:
  - adopt the Audited Accounts for 2022; and
  - adopt the ‘Budget for 2024 and the Forecast Budget for 2025’, [CNL\(23\)67](#) (Annex 7).

4.3 The Council considered issues related to NASCO's Staff Fund Rule 3.2 and Staff Rule 8.2(b), as detailed in the Report of the FAC Meeting.

4.4 The Council agreed:

- to adopt the 'Revised Interim Policy on the Interpretation and Application of NASCO Staff Fund Rule 3.2 and Staff Rule 8.2(b) Concerning the Lump Sum Entitlement', [CNL\(23\)71](#) (Annex 8);
- to instruct the Secretary to seek professional legal advice, immediately, with respect to ensuring no detriment to part-time staff in relation to their employment with NASCO;
- that the Staff Rules and Staff Fund Rules should be reviewed, to ensure they are fit for purpose and commensurate with a modern working environment and good management practices; and
- that the FAC would undertake a review of the condition for attendance by observers at NASCO meetings ([CNL\(06\)49](#)) as recommended by External Performance Review recommendation 32 and to consider the results of that inter-sessional review during the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting.

4.5 The Council agreed to adopt the Report of the FAC, [CNL\(23\)05](#).

## **5. Scientific, Technical, Legal and Other Information**

### **a) NASCO News 2023**

5.1 The President noted that, in 2022, the Council had agreed that the 'Report on the Activities of the Organization' and the 'Secretary's Report' would be merged to be a showcase for NASCO's work. He referred the Council to the 'NASCO News 2023', [CNL\(23\)07](#).

5.2 The Council thanked the Secretariat for the work on 'NASCO News 2023', which it agreed was an excellent and informative document. Parties noted that this would be vital for outreach and for raising the profile of NASCO.

### **b) Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize**

5.3 The President noted that NASCO operates a Tag Return Incentive Scheme. Each year, a Grand Prize of £1,500 is awarded together with three prizes of £1,000, one in each of NASCO's three Commission areas. Eligible tags that are returned to the appropriate authorities in the country of capture may be included in the draws.

5.4 The President announced that the Grand Prize winner for 2023 was Tor Hynne from Norway. The 82 cm adult female salmon was Carlin-tagged from a bag net at Agdenes at the inlet of the Trondheimsfjord on the 4 July 2022. It was found dead on the riverbank in Verdalselva (a river draining to Trondheimsfjord) on 17 August 2022.

### **c) Scientific Advice from ICES**

#### ***(i) Scientific Advice from ICES***

5.5 The President reminded delegates that the ICES advice for North Atlantic salmon stocks was published on 4 May 2023, [CNL\(23\)08](#). He noted that, in 2022, the Council agreed that all ICES Advice should be presented only in Council.

5.6 The Co-Chairs of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS), Martha Robertson (Canada) and Alan Walker (UK), presented the report of the Advisory Committee (ACOM). The ICES presentation is available as document [CNL\(23\)73](#).

- 5.7 Norway asked why the issue of pink salmon had not been included in the new and emerging issues section of the report. Dr Walker replied that although this was an important issue, it was not ‘new’ for 2022 and had previously been included.
- 5.8 The NGO representative asked whether ICES took mortality related to catch and release into account in its statistics in the Report. Dr Walker replied that ICES does not include this mortality in the retained catch (harvest) statistics; however, some countries include post-release mortality in national assessments. The NGO representative also asked about the Scottish data and whether Scottish rivers could really be at full reproductive capacity. Dr Walker responded that the data reported were for Scotland as a whole and therefore should not be viewed as representing individual rivers. These data were provided by Marine Scotland Science, which had recently revised its conservation limits (CLs), and this had affected the status of Atlantic salmon at a national level. He noted he was not aware of any concern about the official statistics provided by Scotland.
- (ii) A new approach / presentation of the ICES Advice**
- 5.9 At its 2022 Annual Meeting, the Council of NASCO had asked the Secretary to approach ICES to investigate a more streamlined approach / presentation of the ICES Advice. The ICES ACOM Vice-Chair, Joanne Morgan, provided an update on the work to seek agreement on a new approach, detailed in document [CNL\(23\)09](#).
- 5.10 The United States had understood that experts from the NASCO Parties would be included in the process of developing a more streamlined approach. This would be an efficient way to develop the new product. Dr Morgan stated that ICES would usually design a new product in consultation with the advice requester, but that the requester would not be directly involved. This was because ACOM was responsible for the quality and consistency of the advice. However, she noted that people experienced with NASCO sat on the sub-group involved in the development of the new advice. She also agreed to discuss the possibility of NASCO’s involvement with ACOM leadership.
- 5.11 Canada stated that it was in favour of streamlining the advice and asked what impact a new approach might have on the timing of the requests for advice. Dr Morgan said that the timing of the request for advice need not change.
- 5.12 The Council agreed to the timetable and process proposed by ICES in ‘Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice’, [CNL\(23\)09](#).
- d) Report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board**
- 5.13 The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board) met on 4 June. The Report of the Meeting of the Board, [CNL\(23\)10](#), was introduced by its Chair, Martha Robertson. Dr Robertson stated that during an inter-sessional meeting, the Board had agreed that its Terms of Reference should be revised, to provide clarity about its vision, scope and purpose.
- 5.14 On the recommendation of the Board, the Council agreed to:
- adopt the ‘Revised Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group’, [ICR\(23\)18](#) (Annex 9); and
  - adopt the Report of the Meeting of the Board, [CNL\(23\)10](#).
- e) Report of the Standing Scientific Committee**
- 5.15 The President informed the Council that Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention require NASCO to take into account the best scientific evidence and establish working

arrangements with ICES. During the Annual Meeting, the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC), which assists the Council and Commissions in formulating their questions to ICES, met to develop a Draft Request for Scientific Advice from ICES for consideration by the Commissions and the Council. The Co-ordinator of the SSC, Livia Goodbrand (Canada), presented the draft request to ICES for scientific advice.

- 5.16 The Council agreed to adopt the ‘Request for Scientific Advice from ICES’, [CNL\(23\)11rev](#) (Annex 10).

**f) Invitation to Iceland and France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO**

- 5.17 The President informed the Council that, in December 2022, he wrote to Iceland and to France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to invite them to join NASCO.

- 5.18 The President announced that Iceland had replied to his letter indicating that it will seek full membership of NASCO from 1 January 2024, [CNL\(23\)12](#) (Annex 11).

- 5.19 The President informed the Council that there had been no written response from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon). However, France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) made a statement during the meeting, as follows:

*‘Even if the French Government wishes to maintain its observer status, we wish to pursue co-operation and transparent dialogue with NASCO and continue to provide NASCO with any information with transparency on the Saint-Pierre et Miquelon salmon fishery.’*

- 5.20 The Council agreed that NASCO should continue to encourage France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join and that the President should write again to that end.

**g) Update on the Review of the Effect of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations**

- 5.21 The President reminded the Council that, in 2022, the Council had considered a ‘Proposal for the Production of a Systematic Review of the Effect of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations’, [CNL\(22\)07](#), and asked the Secretary to liaise with the Co-ordinator of the Expert Group to progress this work inter-sessionally.

- 5.22 The President referred to paper ‘Update on the Review of the Effect of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations’, [CNL\(23\)13](#), which provided an update on this work. The Co-ordinator of the Expert Group, Paddy Gargan, made a presentation to the Council, [CNL\(23\)75](#) (Annex 12), for information only.

**h) Update on the Stocking Guidelines Working Group**

- 5.23 The President noted that, in 2022, it was agreed that work could begin inter-sessionally on updating the Stocking Guidelines. He stated that the Council had agreed the ‘Terms of Reference for the Stocking Guidelines Working Group’, [CNL\(23\)15](#)<sup>1</sup>, inter-sessionally and members of the Working Group had been nominated. The Working Group would meet over the coming year and recommend to Council, for agreement at the 2024 Annual Meeting, an updated document ‘Guidelines for Stocking Atlantic Salmon’.

**i) Progress Report on the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas**

- 5.24 The President noted that, in 2022, the Council accepted the recommendations of the

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<sup>1</sup> Please note this was originally agreed as CNL(23)14rev2

Rivers Database Working Group and asked the Secretary to work with the Steering Committee to develop the online 'Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas'. He said that work on the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas was ongoing, and he looked forward to seeing it in due course.

## **6. Report of the External Performance Review Panel**

### **a) Special Session: Report from the Performance Review Panel**

6.1 The President informed delegates that the 'Report of the Third NASCO Performance Review', [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), was published on 14 March 2023.

6.2 The Chair of the Performance Review Panel, Erik Molenaar, presented the Report. His presentation is available as document [CNL\(23\)76](#).

6.3 The discussions held during the Special Session are contained in [CNL\(23\)82](#) (Annex 13).

### **b) Decisions Taken Regarding the Performance Review Recommendations**

6.4 The President informed the Council that this Agenda item allowed for decisions to be taken in light of the Special Session on the Report from the Performance Review Panel, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#).

6.5 The President noted that the performance review had occurred at a crucial time for wild Atlantic salmon conservation. It offered an opportunity to take stock of the achievements of NASCO and also of its constraints. It gave a chance to refocus NASCO's work to respond more effectively to the pressures salmon face. However, before responding to the extensive recommendations, the Parties felt it was important to first consider NASCO's priorities in the light of its unique role. The President presented paper, CNL(23)68, 'Proposed Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the Future of NASCO'. The paper proposed that a Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON) be established which would develop a draft NASCO Strategy and Action Plan.

6.6 The Parties agreed that relaunching NASCO's focus on restoring and conserving wild Atlantic salmon was urgently needed. There was strong support for a Working Group to be established and support for the use of a facilitator during the meetings, if required, with the costs coming out of the NASCO budget for 'consultancy costs'. Parties discussed the need for the Working Group to deliver against its Terms of Reference quickly. 2024 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Inaugural Meetings of the Council and Commissions of NASCO. This provides an opportunity for a reinvigoration of NASCO, with a focus on restoration and conservation, and a Special Session at the 2024 Annual Meeting where the Chair of the Working Group could report on the draft NASCO Strategy and Action Plan. The vital importance of outreach was highlighted, with the Council noting that this must be embedded in the way NASCO worked in future.

6.7 The Council also discussed the link between the 'Proposed Terms of Reference of the Working Group on the Future of NASCO' and the reporting cycle process. The fourth reporting cycle was likely to be one of the mechanisms for implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, once agreed.

6.8 The NGO Co-Chairs supported the proposed approach to addressing the performance review and other recommendations and in focusing on the restoration and conservation of salmon. They noted that NASCO must be positive and proactive in addressing the factors impacting salmon, and the NGOs would support NASCO in this work.

6.9 The Council considered the 'Proposed Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the

Future of NASCO', CNL(23)68. A number of edits were made.

6.10 The Council agreed to:

- establish a Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON) with the Terms of Reference as set out in document [CNL\(23\)70](#);
- hold a Special Session during the 2024 Annual Meeting to enable WGFON to present its draft Strategy and Action Plan to Council; and
- request that the Secretary work with the Working Group Chair to establish a schedule of meetings of the WGFON, in consultation with the Parties and NGO Co-Chairs and to identify suitable venues.

6.11 The Council also agreed to request that:

- the Secretary explore hiring a facilitator to support the work of the WGFON, subject to the availability of funds;
- the IP / APR Review Group start exploring options regarding a fourth cycle of reporting which would focus on outcomes, identifying main challenges and possible solutions; and
- the Secretary contact relevant organizations for the possibility of collaboration on the outreach work to raise the profile of wild Atlantic salmon restoration and conservation.

## **7. Conservation, Restoration, Enhancement and Rational Management of Atlantic Salmon under the Precautionary Approach**

### **a) Informing a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon**

#### ***(i) Theme-based Special Session: Informing a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon***

7.1 In 2021 the Council had agreed that a Theme-based Special Session (TBSS) would be held in 2023 on the overarching theme of climate change. A Steering Committee, comprising Isabelle Morisset (Canada), Seamus Howard (EU), Line Sundt-Hansen (Norway), Gemma Cripps (UK) (Chair), Katie St John Glew (UK), Tim Sheehan (USA) and Nigel Milner (NGO), was established to work with the Secretariat in developing a programme and objectives for the session. The Programme is included in the document 'Informing a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon', [CNL\(23\)19](#).

7.2 The overarching objective for the TBSS was to exchange information on the current and future impacts of climate change on salmon productivity in the North Atlantic and on management measures being implemented by NASCO Parties / jurisdictions to identify best practices and inform the development of a strategic approach by NASCO.

7.3 Tim Sheehan (USA) presented the recommendations of the Theme-based Special Session Steering Committee, [CNL\(23\)77](#) (Annex 14).

7.4 A report of the Theme-based Special Session will be prepared by the Steering Committee for publication.

#### ***(ii) Decisions Taken in Light of the Theme-based Special Session***

7.5 The President informed delegates that this Agenda item allowed for decisions to be taken in light of the TBSS.

- 7.6 The Council agreed that the recommendations of the Steering Committee would be considered together with the recommendations of the ‘Report of the Third NASCO Performance Review’, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), as set out in the Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the Future of NASCO.
- 7.7 The President asked if the Council would like a TBSS to be included in the 2024 Annual Meeting. Norway and UK supported the EU’s proposal that a TBSS on pink salmon be on the agenda in 2024. This was discussed further under Agenda item 9.
- b) Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon: Indigenous Perspectives and Roles in Atlantic Salmon Conservation**
- (i) Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon: Indigenous Perspectives and Roles in Atlantic Salmon Conservation*
- 7.8 A Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon: Indigenous Perspectives and Roles in Atlantic Salmon Conservation was held.
- 7.9 The overarching objective of the Special Session was to deepen the dialogue between NASCO and Indigenous peoples about their perspectives on wild Atlantic salmon, in view of informing future decisions regarding the participation of Indigenous peoples in NASCO. The session aimed to increase understanding of Indigenous peoples’ connections to, and experience with, wild Atlantic salmon, including the challenges that they face. Additionally, the importance of Indigenous peoples’ participation in the conservation and sustainable management of Atlantic salmon was explored, which would set the stage for a meaningful discussion to inform a potential approach toward better engagement of Indigenous peoples at NASCO.
- 7.10 A report of the Special Session will be prepared by the Steering Committee for publication.
- (ii) Decisions Taken in Light of the Special Session*
- 7.11 In 2022, the Council had agreed that there would be a Special Session on Indigenous perspectives on Atlantic salmon during the 2023 Annual Meeting. The President thanked Canada and the Steering Committee for organizing this important Special Session. The President informed delegates that this Agenda item allowed for decisions to be taken in light of the Special Session.
- 7.12 Canada provided a verbal report of the Special Session:
- ‘Canada was very pleased to host with NASCO a Special Session which considered an important human dimension of salmon conservation and restoration. During this Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives and Roles in the Conservation of Atlantic Salmon, NASCO delegates heard presentations from Indigenous peoples from northern Europe and North America, who spoke about the inherent and unbreakable history and bond between Indigenous peoples and Atlantic salmon. Speakers described two case studies on modern collaboration and governance between Indigenous peoples and existing jurisdictions in Canada. Most importantly, an all-Indigenous panel offered their views on why and how Indigenous participation in NASCO and perhaps even in its governance could support the Organization in making real progress on salmon conservation, and indeed how a strong role for Indigenous peoples should be self-evident to Parties, and offered models that could be explored including as a first step to participate in the upcoming ‘Future of NASCO’ process and on an ongoing basis in the future business of NASCO.’*



- 7.13 The President referred the Council to a paper tabled by Canada, ‘Improving the Participation of Indigenous Peoples in NASCO’, [CNL\(23\)72](#).
- 7.14 The Parties discussed the powerful and important Special Session that had taken place. Parties would need to consult with Indigenous peoples in their jurisdictions, where appropriate; however, they were supportive of a process to enable Indigenous peoples to participate more fully in the work of NASCO. The NGO representative also considered Indigenous peoples’ participation valuable and noted that Indigenous peoples should be included in the consideration of the process and decisions on this.
- 7.15 Council agreed:
- that, inter-sessionally, the Parties, within their jurisdictions, would consider the proposal to deepen engagement of Indigenous peoples, including Canada’s specific proposal to create a new observer category, contained in [CNL\(23\)72](#), in order to inform a Council decision on this matter at the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting; and
  - to direct the Finance and Administration Committee in its review of [CNL\(06\)49](#), ‘Conditions for Attendance by Observers at NASCO Meetings’, to consider whether and how these rules could be updated to accommodate Indigenous participants in a manner that appropriately recognises their interest in the work of NASCO and the value their strengthened engagement would bring.
- c) **Evaluation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)**
- (i) ***Special Session: Evaluation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)***
- 7.16 The President reminded delegates that NASCO has adopted Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines that address the Organization’s principal areas of concern for the management of salmon stocks. In 2005 it was agreed that ‘NASCO will be committed to the measures and agreements it develops and actively review progress with implementation plans’, [CNL\(05\)49](#). Parties’ / jurisdictions’ revised Implementation Plans (IPs) under the third reporting cycle (2019 – 2024) were reviewed by the IP / APR Review Group in November 2022 and Annual Progress Reports (APRs) were evaluated in April 2023.
- 7.17 The Chair of the Review Group, Cathal Gallagher (EU), presented the ‘Fifth Interim Report of the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Review Group for the Review of Implementation Plans under the Third Cycle of Reporting’, [CNL\(23\)21](#), and the ‘Report of the Meeting of the Implementation Plan / Annual Progress Report Review Group for the Review of Annual Progress Reports under the Third Reporting Cycle’, [CNL\(23\)22rev](#). His presentation is available as [CNL\(23\)78](#).
- 7.18 The discussions held during the Special Session are contained in [CNL\(23\)89](#) (Annex 15).
- (ii) ***Decisions Taken Regarding the Evaluation of Implementation Plans Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)***
- 7.19 The President informed delegates that this Agenda item allowed for decisions to be taken in light of the Special Session, in relation to Implementation Plans.
- 7.20 The Council agreed to request that the Chair of the IP / APR Review Group and Secretary arrange a meeting of the Review Group in November 2023 to review any revised IPs.

**(iii) Decisions Taken Regarding the Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports Under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans**

7.21 The President informed delegates that this Agenda item allowed for decisions to be taken in light of the Special Session, in relation to Annual Progress Reports.

7.22 The Council agreed to request that the Chair of the IP / APR Review Group and Secretary arrange a meeting of the Review Group in April 2024 to review the 2023 APRs. At that meeting unsatisfactory actions would not be reviewed.

**d) Fourth Reporting Cycle: Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports**

7.23 The President reminded delegates that the third reporting cycle began in 2019 and was due to end in 2024. He referred the Council to the paper ‘Planning for the Fourth Reporting Cycle’, [CNL\(23\)24](#), which contained recommendations from the IP / APR Review Group for the fourth reporting cycle, based on its experience of the third reporting cycle.

7.24 However, the President noted the discussion regarding consideration of the recommendations of the ‘Report of the Third NASCO Performance Review’, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#). The ToRs of WGFON (agreed under Agenda item 6.b)) include the requirement to ‘Consider the Strategy and Action Plan in the context of developing the fourth reporting cycle and develop Terms of Reference for a Working Group on Future Reporting’. He asked the Council to consider whether it might be appropriate to defer the planning for, and implementation of, the fourth reporting cycle until the Working Group on the Future of NASCO had developed a proposed Strategy and Action Plan.

7.25 While Parties were content to defer the fourth reporting cycle, the NGO Co-Chairs agreed reluctantly. They asked that the third reporting cycle only be extended by one year, since the process was in urgent need of revision and they were keen to ensure that action required was not delayed any longer than necessary.

7.26 The Council agreed to extend the third reporting cycle for one year and defer the fourth reporting cycle.

**e) International Year of the Salmon Legacy Activities**

7.27 The President reminded the Council that, in 2020, it had agreed that a joint NASCO / NPAFC International Year of the Salmon (IYS) Concluding Symposium should be held in Vancouver, Canada. The IYS Synthesis Symposium took place from 4 – 6 October 2022, to synthesise the knowledge gained over the course of the IYS. This Symposium welcomed over 200 participants from at least 10 countries across the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Ocean regions. One of the outcomes of the Symposium was a set of key reflections of relevance to salmon management both in the Atlantic and Pacific. The President referred to the paper ‘Reflections on the Key Messages from the International Year of the Salmon Synthesis Symposium and IYS Legacy Considerations’, [CNL\(23\)25](#).

7.28 The Secretary informed the Council that the balance of the IYS Fund was around £17,000. She proposed that the IYS Fund account be closed once the final amount had been established after the audit of the 2023 accounts, and that any surplus be transferred to the ‘Periodic Projects Special Fund’.

7.29 The Council agreed:

- that the key messages from the IYS Synthesis Symposium would be considered together with the recommendations of the ‘Report of the External Performance

Review’, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), as set out in the ‘Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the Future of NASCO’, [CNL\(23\)70](#).

- to ask the Secretary to transfer the final IYS Fund balance to the Periodic Projects Special Fund and close the IYS Fund account once the final amount has been established after the audit of the 2023 accounts.

**f) New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management**

**(i) *New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management***

7.30 The Co-Chairs of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS), Martha Robertson (Canada) and Alan Walker (UK), presented the advice relevant to this Agenda item. The presentation is available as document [CNL\(23\)73](#).

**(ii) *The NASCO Working Group on Pink Salmon***

7.31 The President noted that, in 2022 the Council had expressed concern regarding the magnitude of pink salmon entering many Atlantic salmon rivers. The Council adopted a ‘Statement of the Council Regarding Pink Salmon, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*, in the NASCO Convention Area’, [CNL\(22\)47](#). He thanked the UK and Norway for providing written updates on pink salmon.

7.32 Eirik Frøiland (Norwegian Environment Agency) made a presentation, available as document [CNL\(23\)79](#) (Annex 16).

7.33 The NGO representative asked if there was a commercial market for the pink salmon. Mr Frøiland responded that the focus was to remove the fish but acknowledged that removal was associated with finding ways to utilise the fish. He noted that whilst he might like to see these fish used as food, no income was expected to come from the pink salmon removal operation he had described.

7.34 The EU provided two updates. First, that it had started work on a co-ordinated programme across Europe, using eDNA to detect pink salmon. Protocols were being developed and the work was being supported by Norway. The EU expected to have a monitoring programme set up for pink salmon this year. The EU noted that there would be a proposal submitted for funding for research on pink salmon in the coming months to broaden its work in this area. Second, an update was provided on the status of pink salmon in Finland. EU – Finland had carried out experiments to determine suitable methods, times and places to catch and eradicate pink salmon, whilst not harming Atlantic salmon. Norway had supported this work and EU – Finland now had better facilities and was better prepared to implement measures to address pink salmon this year.

7.35 The Statement adopted by the Council in 2022 included agreement to establish a Working Group on pink salmon. Norway and the Russian Federation proposed minor edits to the ‘Draft Terms of Reference for Pink Salmon Working Group’, [CNL\(23\)26](#), which were accepted.

7.36 The Council agreed to:

- adopt the ‘Terms of Reference for the Pink Salmon Working Group’, [CNL\(23\)69](#);
- invite a representative of the NGOs to sit on the Pink Salmon Working Group; and
- request that the Secretary seek nominations from Parties to sit on the Working Group and facilitate inter-sessional meetings.

**g) Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

7.37 The President noted that both the Council and the North American Commission were concerned about catches of salmon at St Pierre and Miquelon which, although low, occurred at a time when there were serious concerns about the abundance of North American stocks and when harvest restrictions have been introduced throughout the North American Commission area.

7.38 The President thanked France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) for submitting the ‘Report on the 2022 Salmon Fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon’, [CNL\(23\)27rev](#). This had been considered in the North American Commission meeting and there were no further questions in the Council meeting.

**h) Reports on the Conservation Work of the Three Regional Commissions**

7.39 The activities of the three Commissions were reported to the Council by their Chairs.

**8. Other Business**

8.1 The United States questioned whether the Tag Return Incentive Scheme should be retained. The Secretary noted that this was to be considered in the FAC Annual Meeting in 2024.

**9. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

9.1 The Council accepted the EU’s generous offer to host the Forty-First Annual Meeting in Westport, County Mayo, Ireland. The Council agreed that a Theme-based Special Session on pink salmon would be included. Therefore, the meeting would be extended and take place during 3 – 7 June 2024.

9.2 It was noted that the UN Ocean Conference will likely take place 5 – 14 June 2025. Since this could conflict with the tentative dates for NASCO’s Forty-Second Annual Meeting, the Council deferred any decision on the dates for the Forty-Second Annual Meeting.

**10. Press Release**

10.1 The Council agreed a Press Release, [CNL\(23\)85](#) (Annex 17).

**11. Report of the Meeting**

11.1 The Council agreed its Report of the Meeting.

**12. Close of the Meeting**

12.1 The United States submitted a written closing statement (Annex 18).

12.2 The President closed the Meeting.

## CNL(23)87

### *Compte rendu de la quarantième session annuelle du Conseil de l'Organisation pour la Conservation du Saumon de l'Atlantique Nord*

*Delta Beausejour Hotel, Moncton, Nouveau-Brunswick, Canada*

*5 – 8 juin 2023*

#### **1. Ouverture de la session**

- 1.1 Le Président, Arnaud Peyronnet (UE), a ouvert la session. Il a présenté la Ministre des Pêches, des Océans et de la Garde côtière canadienne, l'Honorable Joyce Murray, qui a souhaité la bienvenue aux délégués à Moncton. Le Président a fait une déclaration d'ouverture (Annexe 1).
- 1.2 Le Canada, le Danemark (pour les Iles Féroé et le Groenland), l'Union européenne (UE), la Norvège, la Fédération de Russie, le Royaume-Uni (RU) et les États-Unis (USA) ont transmis des déclarations d'ouverture écrites (Annexe 2).
- 1.3 Une déclaration d'ouverture écrite a été transmise par la Commission européenne consultative pour les pêches et l'aquaculture dans les eaux intérieures (CECPAEI) (Annexe 3).
- 1.4 Une déclaration d'ouverture écrite a été transmise au nom des Organisations non gouvernementales (ONGs) (Annexe 4).
- 1.5 Une liste des participants à la quarantième session annuelle du Conseil de l'OCSAN est fournie en Annexe 5.

#### **2. Adoption de l'ordre du jour**

- 2.1 Le Conseil a adopté son ordre du jour, [CNL\(23\)66](#) (Annexe 6).

#### **3. Election des Membres du Bureau**

- 3.1 Le Conseil a élu Kim Damon-Randall (USA) comme Présidente (proposée par le Canada, avec l'appui de l'UE) pour une période de deux ans, commençant à la clôture de la session annuelle 2023.
- 3.2 Le Conseil a élu Ruth Allin (RU) comme vice-Présidente (proposée par la Norvège, appuyée par le Danemark (pour les Iles Féroé et le Groenland)), pour une période de deux ans commençant à la clôture de la session annuelle 2023.

#### **4. Questions financières et administratives**

##### **a) Rapport du Comité financier et administratif**

- 4.1 Le Président du Comité financier et administratif (CFA), Seamus Connor (RU), a présenté le rapport de la session du CFA, [CNL\(23\)05](#).
- 4.2 Sur la recommandation du Comité, le Conseil a décidé:
  - d'adopter les comptes vérifiés pour 2022; et
  - d'adopter le Budget pour 2024 et le Budget prévisionnel pour 2025, [CNL\(23\)67](#) (Annexe 7).

4.3 Le Conseil a examiné des questions relatives à la règle 3.2 du document ‘règles sur le Fonds du personnel’ et la règle 8.2(b) issue du document ‘règles sur le Personnel’, telles que détaillées dans le rapport de la session du CFA.

4.4 Le Conseil a décidé:

- d’adopter la ‘Politique provisoire révisée sur l’interprétation et l’application de la règle 3.2 (issue du document règles sur le Fonds du personnel) et de la règle 8.2(b) (issue du document règles sur le Personnel) concernant le droit à la somme forfaitaire’, [CNL\(23\)71](#) (Annexe 8);
- de donner instruction à la Secrétaire de solliciter des conseils juridiques professionnels, immédiatement, pour ce qui est d’assurer qu’il n’y ait aucun préjudice à l’égard du personnel à temps partiel par rapport à leur emploi par l’OCSAN;
- que les règles sur le personnel et les règles sur le fonds du personnel devraient être révisées, afin de garantir qu’elles soient adaptées aux besoins d’un contexte moderne de travail et à de bonnes pratiques de management; et
- que le CFA procéderait à l’examen des conditions de participation des observateurs aux sessions de l’OCSAN ([CNL\(06\)49](#)) comme conseillé par la recommandation 32 de l’évaluation externe des performances, et que les résultats de cet examen inter-sessionnel seraient étudiés lors de la session annuelle 2024 de l’OCSAN.

4.5 Le Conseil a décidé d’adopter le Rapport du CFA, [CNL\(23\)05](#).

## **5. Informations scientifiques, techniques, juridiques et autres**

### **a) Actualités 2023 de l’OCSAN**

5.1 Le Président a indiqué qu’en 2022, le Conseil avait décidé que le ‘Rapport sur les activités de l’Organisation’ et le ‘Rapport de la Secrétaire’ seraient fusionnés pour devenir une vitrine du travail de l’OCSAN. Il a renvoyé le Conseil aux ‘Actualités 2023 de l’OCSAN’, [CNL\(23\)07](#).

5.2 Le Conseil a remercié le Secrétariat pour le travail sur les ‘Actualités 2023 de l’OCSAN’, convenant qu’il s’agissait d’un document excellent et instructif. Les Parties ont souligné qu’il serait essentiel en termes de communication et pour rehausser le profil de l’OCSAN.

### **b) Annonce du gagnant du Grand Prix du Programme incitatif au renvoi des marques**

5.3 Le Président a indiqué que l’OCSAN a instauré un Programme incitatif au renvoi des marques. Chaque année, un Grand Prix de £1,500 est décerné ainsi que trois prix de £1,000, un dans chacune des zones des trois Commissions de l’OCSAN. Les marques éligibles qui sont renvoyées aux autorités compétentes du pays de capture peuvent être incluses dans les tirages au sort.

5.4 Le Président a annoncé que le gagnant du Grand Prix pour 2023 était Tor Hynne de Norvège. Le saumon adulte femelle de 82 cm avait été marqué avec une étiquette Carlin dans un “bag net” (un type de filet trappe) à Agdenes, à l’entrée du fjord de Trondheim le 4 juillet 2022. Il a été trouvé mort sur la rive de la Verdalselva (une rivière se déversant dans le fjord de Trondheim) le 17 août 2022.

### **c) Conseils scientifiques du CIEM**

#### **(i) Conseils scientifiques du CIEM**

- 5.5 Le Président a rappelé aux délégués que l’Avis scientifique du CIEM pour les stocks de saumon de l’Atlantique nord avait été publié le 4 mai 2023, [CNL\(23\)08](#). Il a indiqué qu’en 2022, le Conseil avait décidé que l’Avis complet du CIEM ne serait plus présenté qu’au Conseil.
- 5.6 Les co-présidents du Groupe de travail sur le saumon de l’Atlantique nord (WGNAS), Martha Robertson (Canada) et Alan Walker (RU), ont présenté le rapport du Comité d’Avis (ACOM). La présentation du CIEM est disponible en tant que document [CNL\(23\)73](#).
- 5.7 La Norvège a demandé pourquoi la question du saumon rose n’avait pas été incluse dans la section des questions nouvelles et émergentes du rapport. Le Dr Walker a répondu que bien qu’il s’agisse d’une question importante, elle n’était pas ‘nouvelle’ pour 2022 et avait déjà été incluse.
- 5.8 Le représentant des ONGs a demandé si le CIEM prenait en compte la mortalité liée à la pêche avec obligation de relâcher dans les statistiques figurant dans le rapport. Le Dr Walker a répondu que le CIEM n’inclut pas cette mortalité dans les statistiques de captures retenues (prises); cependant certains pays incluent la mortalité post relâchage dans leurs évaluations nationales. Le représentant des ONGs a également posé une question sur les données écossaises, demandant si les rivières écossaises pouvaient vraiment être à pleine capacité reproductive. Le Dr Walker a répondu que les données rapportées l’étaient pour l’Ecosse entière et ne pouvaient donc pas être considérées comme représentatives des rivières prises individuellement. Ces données ont été fournies par Marine Scotland Science, qui a révisé récemment ses limites de conservation (CLs), et ceci a eu un effet sur le statut du saumon de l’Atlantique à l’échelon national. Il a indiqué ne pas avoir connaissance d’une quelconque préoccupation quant aux statistiques officielles fournies par l’Ecosse.
- (ii) Une nouvelle approche / présentation des Conseils scientifiques du CIEM**
- 5.9 Lors de sa session annuelle 2022, le Conseil de l’OCSAN a demandé à la Secrétaire de se rapprocher du CIEM pour rechercher une approche / présentation plus simple de l’Avis du CIEM. La vice-présidente de l’ACOM du CIEM, Joanne Morgan, a présenté une mise à jour du travail de recherche d’un accord sur une nouvelle approche, qui est détaillée dans le document [CNL\(23\)09](#).
- 5.10 Les États-Unis avaient compris que des experts des Parties à l’OCSAN seraient associés à la procédure de développement d’une approche plus simple. Ceci serait une manière efficace de développer le nouveau livrable. Le Dr Morgan a déclaré qu’il était dans les habitudes du CIEM de concevoir un nouveau produit en consultation avec le demandeur d’avis, mais que le demandeur ne serait pas directement impliqué. Ceci s’expliquait par le fait que l’ACOM était responsable de la qualité et de la conformité de l’avis. Cependant, elle a indiqué que les personnes ayant l’expérience de l’OCSAN siégeaient au sous-groupe impliqué dans le développement du nouvel avis. Elle était aussi d’accord pour discuter de la possibilité d’une implication de l’OCSAN avec la direction de l’ACOM.
- 5.11 Le Canada s’est déclaré favorable à la simplification de l’avis et il a demandé quel impact une nouvelle approche pourrait avoir sur le calendrier des demandes de conseils scientifiques. Le Dr Morgan a indiqué qu’il n’était pas nécessaire de modifier le calendrier des demandes d’avis.
- 5.12 Le Conseil a adopté le calendrier et la procédure proposés par le CIEM dans la ‘Mise à jour sur la simplification de l’avis du CIEM’, [CNL\(23\)09](#).

- d) Rapport de la Commission internationale de recherche sur le saumon atlantique**
- 5.13 La Commission internationale de recherche sur le saumon atlantique (la Commission) s'est réunie le 4 juin. Le rapport de la session de la Commission, [CNL\(23\)10](#), a été présenté par sa présidente, Martha Robertson. Le Dr Robertson a déclaré que lors d'une réunion inter-sessionnelle, la Commission avait décidé que son mandat devrait être révisé afin de clarifier sa vision, son périmètre et son objectif.
- 5.14 Sur recommandation de la Commission, le Conseil a décidé:
- d'adopter les mandats révisés pour la Commission internationale de recherche sur le saumon atlantique et son groupe consultatif scientifique, [ICR\(23\)18](#) (Annexe 9); et
  - d'adopter le rapport de la session de la Commission, [CNL\(23\)10](#).
- e) Compte rendu du Comité scientifique permanent**
- 5.15 Le Président a indiqué au Conseil que les articles 3 et 4 de la Convention imposent à l'OCSAN de tenir compte des meilleures informations scientifiques et d'établir des modalités de collaboration avec le CIEM. Lors de la session annuelle, le Comité scientifique permanent (CSP), qui assiste le Conseil et les Commissions pour formuler leurs questions au CIEM, s'est réuni pour préparer une Demande projet de conseils scientifiques au CIEM pour examen par les Commissions et le Conseil. La coordinatrice du CSP, Livia Goodbrand (Canada), a présenté la demande projet au CIEM pour des conseils scientifiques.
- 5.16 Le Conseil a adopté la 'Demande de conseils scientifiques au CIEM', [CNL\(23\)11rev](#) (Annexe 10).
- f) Invitation à l'Islande et à la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon) à rejoindre l'OCSAN**
- 5.17 Le Président a porté à la connaissance du Conseil qu'en décembre 2022 il avait écrit à l'Islande et à la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon) pour les inviter à rejoindre l'OCSAN.
- 5.18 Le Président a annoncé que l'Islande avait répondu à cette lettre en indiquant qu'elle s'efforcerait de devenir membre à part entière de l'OCSAN au 1er janvier 2024, [CNL\(23\)12](#) (Annexe 11).
- 5.19 Le Président a informé le Conseil de l'absence de réponse écrite de la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon). Toutefois, la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon) a fait la déclaration suivante au cours de la session:
- 'Même si le Gouvernement français préfère conserver son statut d'observateur, nous souhaitons poursuivre la coopération et un dialogue transparent avec l'OCSAN et continuer de fournir à l'OCSAN, avec transparence, toute information sur la pêche de saumon de St Pierre et Miquelon.'*
- 5.20 Le Conseil a décidé que l'OCSAN devrait continuer d'encourager la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon) à la rejoindre, et que le Président écrirait de nouveau à cette fin.
- g) Mise à jour sur l'étude des impacts de l'aquaculture du saumon sur les populations de saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique**
- 5.21 Le Président a rappelé au Conseil qu'en 2022 le Conseil avait examiné une 'Proposition pour la production d'un recensement des effets de l'aquaculture de saumon sur les populations de saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique', [CNL\(22\)07](#), et avait demandé à la



Secrétaire d'assurer la liaison avec le coordinateur du groupe d'experts pour faire avancer ce travail en inter-session.

- 5.22 Le Président s'est référé au document 'Mise à jour sur le recensement des effets de l'aquaculture du saumon sur les populations de saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique', [CNL\(23\)13](#), fournissant une mise à jour sur ce travail. Le coordinateur du groupe d'experts, Paddy Gargan, a fait une présentation au Conseil, [CNL\(23\)75](#) (Annexe 12) pour sa seule information.

#### **h) Mise à jour sur le Groupe de travail sur les Directives sur le peuplement**

- 5.23 Le Président a indiqué qu'en 2022, il avait été décidé que le travail sur la mise à jour des Directives sur le peuplement commencerait en inter-session. Il a déclaré que le Conseil avait adopté le 'Mandat du Groupe de travail sur les Directives sur le peuplement', [CNL\(23\)15](#)<sup>2</sup>, en inter-session, et que les membres du Groupe de travail avaient été désignés. Le Groupe de travail se réunirait au cours de l'année prochaine et proposerait au Conseil, pour décision lors de la session annuelle 2024, des 'Directives sur le peuplement du saumon atlantique' révisées.

#### **i) Rapport d'avancement de l'Atlas du saumon atlantique sauvage**

- 5.24 Le Président a noté qu'en 2022, le Conseil avait accepté les recommandations du Groupe de travail sur la base de données rivières et demandé à la Secrétaire de travailler avec le Comité de direction à l'élaboration de l'Atlas du saumon atlantique sauvage en ligne; il a dit que le travail sur l'Atlas du saumon atlantique sauvage se poursuivait, et qu'il avait hâte de le voir en temps voulu.

## **6. Rapport du Panel d'évaluation externe des performances**

### **a) Séance spéciale: Rapport du Panel d'évaluation des performances**

- 6.1 Le Président a fait savoir aux délégués que le Rapport du troisième évaluation des performances, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), avait été publié le 14 mars 2023.
- 6.2 Le Président du Panel d'évaluation des performances, Erik Molenaar, a présenté le Rapport. Sa présentation est disponible en tant que document [CNL\(23\)76](#).
- 6.3 Les échanges qui ont eu lieu lors de la Séance spéciale figurent dans le document [CNL\(23\)82](#) (Annexe 13).

### **b) Décisions prises eu égard aux recommandations de l'évaluation des performances**

- 6.4 Le Président a fait savoir au Conseil que ce point de l'ordre du jour permettait de prendre des décisions à la lumière de la Séance spéciale sur le Rapport du Panel d'évaluation des performances, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#).
- 6.5 Le Président a souligné que l'évaluation des performances avait eu lieu à un moment crucial pour la conservation du saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique. Elle donnait l'occasion de prendre acte de tous les succès de l'OCSAN et aussi de ses limites. Elle donnait une chance de recentrer le travail de l'OCSAN pour réagir plus efficacement aux pressions qui s'exercent sur le saumon. Toutefois, avant de réagir aux nombreuses recommandations, les Parties pensaient qu'il était important d'examiner d'abord les priorités de l'OCSAN à la lumière de son rôle unique. Le Président a présenté le document CNL(23)68, 'Proposition de mandat pour un Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN'. Le document proposait la création d'un Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN (WGFON) qui élaborerait un projet de stratégie et de plan d'action de

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<sup>2</sup> Veuillez noter que ceci a été adopté à l'origine en tant que CNL(23)14rev2

l'OCSAN.

- 6.6 Les Parties ont décidé qu'il était urgemment nécessaire de relancer la priorité de l'OCSAN pour la restauration et la conservation du saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique. Il s'est dégagé un fort soutien à la mise en place d'un Groupe de travail ainsi qu'un soutien au recours à un facilitateur pendant les sessions, si nécessaire, les coûts étant couverts par le budget de l'OCSAN dédié aux 'frais de consultance'. Les Parties ont débattu de la nécessité pour le Groupe de travail de remplir rapidement son mandat. 2024 marquera le 40<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire des sessions inaugurales du Conseil et des Commissions de l'OCSAN. Ceci offre l'occasion de revigorer l'OCSAN, en se recentrant sur la restauration et la conservation, avec une Séance spéciale lors de la session annuelle 2024 où le Président du Groupe de travail pourrait rendre compte du projet de stratégie et de plan d'action de l'OCSAN. L'importance vitale de la communication a été soulignée, le Conseil indiquant que cela devrait être ancré dans le futur mode de travail de l'OCSAN.
- 6.7 Le Conseil a aussi débattu du lien entre la 'Proposition de mandat du Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN' et la procédure de cycle de reporting. Le quatrième cycle de reporting serait probablement l'un des mécanismes de mise en œuvre de la stratégie et du plan d'action, une fois ceux-ci adoptés.
- 6.8 Les co-présidents des ONGs ont soutenu l'approche proposée pour répondre à l'évaluation des performances et aux autres recommandations et pour recentrer sur la restauration et la conservation du saumon. Ils ont souligné que l'OCSAN devait se montrer positive et proactive dans le traitement des facteurs impactant le saumon, et que les ONGs soutiendraient l'OCSAN dans ce travail.
- 6.9 Le Conseil a examiné la 'Proposition de mandat pour un Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN', CNL(23)68. Un certain nombre de modifications y ont été apportées.
- 6.10 Le Conseil a décidé de:
- créer un Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN (WGFON) dont le mandat est défini dans le document [CNL\(23\)70](#);
  - tenir une Séance spéciale pendant la session annuelle 2024 pour permettre au WGFON de présenter son projet de stratégie et de plan d'action au Conseil; et
  - demander que la Secrétaire travaille avec le Président du Groupe de travail à établir un calendrier de réunions du WGFON, en concertation avec les Parties et les co-présidents des ONGs, et à identifier des lieux de réunion qui conviennent.
- 6.11 Le Conseil a aussi décidé de demander que:
- la Secrétaire mène une réflexion sur le recrutement d'un facilitateur pour soutenir le travail du WGFON, sous réserve de la disponibilité des fonds;
  - le Groupe d'examen des IP / APR commence à étudier des options pour un quatrième cycle de reporting qui serait centré sur les résultats, en identifiant les défis principaux et les solutions possibles; et
  - la Secrétaire prenne contact avec les organisations pertinentes pour une possible collaboration sur le travail de communication pour rehausser le profil de la restauration et de la conservation du saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique.

## **7. Conservation, restauration, accroissement et gestion rationnelle du Saumon atlantique dans le cadre de l'approche préventive**

### **a) Réflexion sur une approche stratégique pour répondre aux impacts du changement climatique sur le saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique**

#### **(i) *Séance spéciale thématique: réflexion sur une approche stratégique pour répondre aux impacts du changement climatique sur le saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique***

7.1 En 2021 le Conseil avait décidé qu'une Séance spéciale thématique (SST) aurait lieu en 2023 sur le thème global du changement climatique. Un comité de direction, composé d'Isabelle Morisset (Canada), Seamus Howard (UE), Line Sundt-Hansen (Norvège), Gemma Cripps (RU) (Présidente), Katie St John Glew (RU), Tim Sheehan (USA) et Nigel Milner (ONG), a été créé pour travailler avec le Secrétariat à élaborer un programme et des objectifs pour la séance. Le Programme se trouve dans le document 'Réflexion sur une approche stratégique pour répondre aux impacts du changement climatique sur le saumon sauvage de l'Atlantique', [CNL\(23\)19](#).

7.2 L'objectif global de la SST était un échange d'informations sur les impacts actuels et futurs du changement climatique sur la productivité du saumon dans l'Atlantique nord et sur les mesures de gestion mises en œuvre par les Parties / juridictions de l'OCSAN pour identifier les meilleures pratiques et alimenter la réflexion sur une approche stratégique par l'OCSAN.

7.3 Tim Sheehan (USA) a présenté les recommandations du comité de direction de la SST, [CNL\(23\)77](#), (Annexe 14).

7.4 Un compte rendu de la Séance spéciale thématique sera préparé par le comité de direction pour publication.

#### **(ii) *Décisions prises eu égard à la Séance spéciale thématique***

7.5 Le Président a fait savoir aux délégués que ce point de l'ordre du jour permettait la prise de décisions eu égard à la SST.

7.6 Le Conseil a décidé que les recommandations du comité de direction seraient examinées en même temps que les recommandations du 'Rapport de la troisième évaluation des performances de l'OCSAN', [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), comme énoncé dans le mandat pour un Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de l'OCSAN.

7.7 Le Président a demandé si le Conseil souhaitait l'inclusion d'une SST dans la session annuelle 2024. La Norvège et le RU ont soutenu la proposition de l'UE d'inscription d'une SST sur le saumon rose à l'ordre du jour en 2024. Ceci a été discuté plus avant sous le point 9 de l'ordre du jour.

### **b) Les perspectives autochtones sur le saumon atlantique: Perspectives autochtones et rôles dans la conservation du saumon atlantique**

#### **(i) *Séance spéciale sur les perspectives autochtones sur le saumon atlantique: Perspectives autochtones et rôles dans la conservation du saumon atlantique***

7.8 Il a été tenu une Séance spéciale sur les perspectives autochtones sur le saumon atlantique: Perspectives autochtones et rôles dans la conservation du saumon atlantique.

7.9 L'objectif global de la Séance spéciale était d'approfondir le dialogue entre l'OCSAN et les peuples autochtones concernant leurs perspectives sur le saumon atlantique sauvage, en vue d'une réflexion sur de futures décisions concernant la participation de peuples autochtones à l'OCSAN. La session visait à mieux comprendre les connexions

et l'expérience des peuples autochtones avec le saumon atlantique sauvage, y compris les difficultés qu'ils rencontrent. En outre, il s'agissait d'explorer l'importance de la participation des peuples autochtones à la conservation et à la gestion durable du saumon atlantique, première étape vers une discussion constructive éclairant une approche potentielle en vue d'une meilleure implication des peuples autochtones à l'OCSAN.

7.10 Un compte rendu de la Séance spéciale sera préparé par le comité de direction pour publication.

(ii) ***Décisions prises eu égard à la Séance spéciale***

7.11 En 2022, le Conseil avait décidé qu'il y aurait une Séance spéciale sur les perspectives autochtones lors de la session annuelle 2023. Le Président a remercié le Canada et le comité de direction pour l'organisation de cette importante Séance spéciale. Le Président a fait savoir aux délégués que ce point de l'ordre du jour permettait la prise de décisions eu égard à la Séance spéciale.

7.12 Le Canada a rendu compte oralement de la Séance spéciale:

*'Le Canada a été très heureux d'accueillir avec l'OCSAN une Séance spéciale qui s'est penchée sur une dimension humaine importante de la conservation et de la restauration du saumon. Lors de cette Séance spéciale sur les peuples autochtones et leurs rôles dans la conservation du saumon atlantique, les délégués à l'OCSAN ont assisté à des présentations faites par des peuples autochtones d'Europe du nord et d'Amérique du nord, qui ont évoqué l'histoire et le lien inhérents et indestructibles entre les peuples autochtones et le saumon atlantique. Des intervenants ont décrit deux études de cas sur la collaboration et la gouvernance modernes entre des peuples autochtones et des juridictions existantes au Canada. Surtout, un panel composé uniquement de représentants autochtones a donné son point de vue sur pourquoi et comment une participation autochtone à l'OCSAN, voire peut-être même à sa gouvernance, pourrait aider l'Organisation à faire de réels progrès sur la conservation du saumon, et même comment un rôle important pour les peuples autochtones devrait aller de soi pour les Parties, et a proposé des modèles pouvant être explorés y compris en tant qu'une première étape de participation dans le prochain processus 'Avenir de l'OCSAN' et à titre permanent dans les travaux futurs de l'OCSAN.'*

7.13 Le Président a renvoyé le Conseil à un document soumis par le Canada, 'Amélioration de la participation des peuples autochtones à l'OCSAN', [CNL\(23\)72](#).

7.14 Les Parties ont débattu de la Séance spéciale convaincante et importante qui avait eu lieu. Il serait nécessaire pour les Parties de consulter les peuples autochtones de leurs juridictions, le cas échéant; cependant elles étaient favorables à un processus permettant aux peuples autochtones de participer plus amplement au travail de l'OCSAN. Le représentant des ONGs jugeait aussi très utile la participation des peuples autochtones et il a indiqué que les peuples autochtones devraient être associés à la procédure et aux décisions sur ce point.

7.15 Le Conseil a décidé:

- qu'en inter-session, les Parties, à l'intérieur de leurs juridictions, examineraient la proposition d'approfondir l'implication des peuples autochtones, y compris la proposition spécifique du Canada de créer une nouvelle catégorie d'observateur, qui se trouve dans le document [CNL\(23\)72](#), afin de contribuer à une décision du

Conseil sur ce sujet lors de la session annuelle 2024 de l'OCSAN; et

- d'ordonner au Comité financier et administratif, dans son examen du document [CNL\(06\)49](#), 'Conditions pour la participation des observateurs aux sessions de l'OCSAN', de prendre en considération si et comment ces règles pouvaient être mises à jour pour accueillir des participants autochtones, de façon à reconnaître de façon appropriée leur intérêt pour le travail de l'OCSAN et la valeur qu'apporterait leur implication renforcée.
- c) **Évaluation des Plans de mise en œuvre et des Rapports de progrès annuels réalisés dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting (2019 – 2024)**
- (i) ***Séance spéciale: Évaluation des Plans de mise en œuvre et des Rapports de progrès annuels réalisés dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting (2019 – 2024)***
- 7.16 Le Président a rappelé aux délégués que l'OCSAN avait adopté des Résolutions, Accords et Directives traitant des principaux domaines de préoccupation de l'Organisation pour la gestion des stocks de saumon. En 2005 il a été décidé que 'l'OCSAN sera engagé vis à vis des mesures et accords qu'elle développe et examinera les progrès des plans de mise en œuvre', [CNL\(05\)49](#). Les Plans de mise en œuvre révisés des Parties / juridictions dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting (2019 – 2024) ont été examinés par le Groupe d'examen des IP / APR en novembre 2022 et les Rapports annuels de progrès (APRs) ont été évalués en avril 2023.
- 7.17 Le Président du Groupe d'examen, Cathal Gallagher (UE), a présenté le 'Cinquième rapport intermédiaire du Groupe d'examen des Plans de mise en œuvre / Rapports de progrès annuels pour l'examen des Plans de mise en œuvre dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting', [CNL\(23\)21](#), et le 'Compte rendu de la session du Groupe d'examen des Plans de mise en œuvre / Rapports de progrès annuels pour l'examen des Rapports de progrès annuels réalisés dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting', [CNL\(23\)22rev](#). Sa présentation est disponible en tant que document [CNL\(23\)78](#).
- 7.18 Les discussions tenues pendant la Séance spéciale se trouvent dans le document [CNL\(23\)89](#) (Annexe 15).
- (ii) ***Décisions prises concernant l'évaluation des Plans de mise en œuvre dans le cadre du troisième cycle de reporting (2019 – 2024)***
- 7.19 Le Président a informé les délégués que ce point de l'ordre du jour permettait de prendre des décisions eu égard à la Séance spéciale, en ce qui concerne les Plans de mise en œuvre.
- 7.20 Le Conseil a décidé de demander au Président du Groupe d'examen des IP / APR et à la Secrétaire d'organiser une réunion en novembre 2023 afin d'examiner d'éventuels IPs révisés.
- (iii) ***Décisions prises concernant l'évaluation des Rapports de progrès annuels réalisés dans le cadre des Plans de mise en œuvre de 2019 – 2024***
- 7.21 Le Président a informé les délégués que ce point de l'ordre du jour permettait de prendre des décisions à la lumière de la Séance spéciale, en ce qui concerne les Rapports de progrès annuels.
- 7.22 Le Conseil a décidé de demander au Président du Groupe d'examen des IP / APR et à la Secrétaire d'organiser une réunion du Groupe d'examen en avril 2024 pour examiner les APRs 2023. Lors de cette session, les actions non satisfaisantes ne seraient pas examinées.

**d) Quatrième cycle de rapports: futur reporting en vertu des Plans de mise en œuvre et des Rapports de progrès annuels**

7.23 Le Président a rappelé aux délégués que le troisième cycle de reporting avait débuté en 2019 et devait se terminer en 2024. Il a renvoyé le Conseil au document ‘Planification du quatrième cycle de reporting’, [CNL\(23\)24](#), dans lequel se trouvent des recommandations du Groupe d’examen des IP / APR pour le quatrième cycle de reporting, basées sur son expérience du troisième cycle de reporting.

7.24 Toutefois, le Président a pris note de la discussion concernant la prise en compte des recommandations du ‘Rapport de la troisième évaluation des performances de l’OCSAN’, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#). Le mandat du WGFON (adopté sous le point 6.b de l’ordre du jour) inclut l’obligation de ‘Prendre en compte la Stratégie et le Plan d’action dans le cadre du développement du quatrième cycle de reporting et d’élaborer un mandat pour un Groupe de travail sur le futur reporting’. Il a demandé au Conseil d’examiner s’il pourrait être approprié de reporter la planification et la mise en œuvre du quatrième cycle de reporting jusqu’à ce que le Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de l’OCSAN ait élaboré une proposition de Stratégie et de Plan d’action.

7.25 Alors que les Parties s’accommodaient d’un report du quatrième cycle de reporting, les co-présidents des ONGs n’ont accepté qu’avec réticence. Ils ont demandé que la prolongation du troisième cycle de reporting ne soit que d’une année, étant donné le besoin urgent de révision de la procédure, et ils tenaient à s’assurer que les actions imposées ne soient pas reportées d’un quelconque délai dépassant ce qui était nécessaire.

7.26 Le Conseil a décidé de prolonger d’un an le troisième cycle de reporting et de décaler le quatrième cycle de reporting.

**e) L’Année internationale du saumon: Activités léguées**

7.27 Le Président a rappelé au Conseil qu’en 2020, il avait décidé qu’un Symposium conjoint OCSAN / CPAPN de Synthèse de l’Année internationale de saumon (AIS) aurait lieu à Vancouver, Canada. Le Symposium de Synthèse de l’AIS s’est tenu du 4 au 6 octobre 2022, pour faire la synthèse des connaissances acquises au cours de l’AIS. Ce Symposium a accueilli plus de 200 participants d’au moins 10 pays de part et d’autre des régions océaniques de l’Atlantique, du Pacifique et de l’Arctique. L’un des résultats du Symposium a été un ensemble de réflexions clés pertinentes pour la gestion du saumon à la fois dans l’Atlantique et dans le Pacifique. Le Président a renvoyé au document ‘Réflexions sur les messages clés issus du Symposium de Synthèse de l’Année internationale du saumon et Considérations sur le legs de l’AIS’, [CNL\(23\)25](#).

7.28 La Secrétaire a porté à la connaissance du Conseil que la balance du Fonds de l’AIS était voisine de £17,000. Elle a proposé que le compte du Fonds de l’AIS soit fermé une fois la somme finale établie après la vérification des comptes 2023, et que tout excédent soit transféré au ‘Fonds spécial pour les projets périodiques’.

7.29 Le Conseil a décidé:

- que les messages clés issus du Symposium de synthèse de l’AIS seraient examinés en même temps que les recommandations du Rapport de l’évaluation externe des performances, [CNL\(23\)17rev](#), comme énoncé dans le ‘Mandat pour un Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de l’OCSAN’, [CNL\(23\)70](#).
- de demander à la Secrétaire de transférer la balance finale du Fonds pour l’AIS vers le Fonds spécial pour les projets périodiques et de fermer le compte du Fonds AIS

une fois la somme finale arrêtée après la vérification des comptes 2023.

**f) Nouvelles opportunités ou opportunités naissantes pour, ou menaces contre, la conservation et la gestion du saumon**

**(i) *Nouvelles opportunités ou opportunités naissantes pour, ou menaces contre, la conservation et la gestion du saumon***

7.30 Les co-présidents du Groupe de travail sur le saumon de l'Atlantique nord (WGNAS), Martha Robertson (Canada) et Alan Walker (RU), ont présenté l'avis pertinent pour ce point de l'ordre du jour. La présentation est disponible en tant que document [CNL\(23\)73](#).

**(ii) *Le Groupe de travail de l'OCSAN sur le saumon rose***

7.31 Le Président a indiqué qu'en 2022 le Conseil avait exprimé sa préoccupation concernant le niveau important des entrées de saumon rose dans de nombreuses rivières de l'Atlantique. Le Conseil a adopté une 'Déclaration du Conseil concernant le Saumon rose, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*, dans la zone de la Convention de l'OCSAN', [CNL\(22\)47](#). Il a remercié le RU et la Norvège d'avoir fourni des mises à jour écrites sur le saumon rose.

7.32 Eirik Frøiland (Agence norvégienne de l'Environnement) a fait une présentation, disponible en tant que document [CNL\(23\)79](#) (Annexe 16).

7.33 Le représentant des ONGs a demandé s'il existait des débouchés commerciaux pour le saumon rose. M. Frøiland a répondu que l'objectif était de retirer le poisson mais il a reconnu que le retrait était associé à la recherche de méthodes d'utilisation du poisson. Il a indiqué que bien qu'il puisse souhaiter voir ces poissons utilisés pour la consommation, aucun revenu n'était censé être tiré de l'opération de retrait du saumon rose qu'il avait décrite.

7.34 L'UE a fourni deux mises à jour. Premièrement, qu'elle avait commencé à travailler à un programme coordonné à travers l'Europe utilisant l'ADNe pour détecter le saumon rose. Des protocoles étaient en cours de développement et ce travail recevait le soutien de la Norvège. L'UE s'attendait à avoir un programme de suivi du saumon rose en place cette année. L'UE a indiqué qu'il y aurait une proposition pour le financement de la recherche sur le saumon rose dans les prochains mois afin d'élargir ses travaux dans ce domaine. Deuxièmement, une mise à jour sur le statut du saumon rose en Finlande a été fournie. L'UE – Finlande avait mené des expérimentations visant à déterminer des méthodes, des périodes et des lieux adaptés à la capture et à l'éradication du saumon rose, ceci sans faire de tort au saumon atlantique. La Norvège avait appuyé ce travail et l'UE – Finlande avait désormais de meilleures capacités et était mieux préparée à mettre en œuvre des mesures pour aborder le problème du saumon rose cette année.

7.35 La Déclaration adoptée par le Conseil en 2022 incluait un accord pour créer un Groupe de travail sur le saumon rose. La Norvège et la Fédération de Russie ont proposé des modifications mineures au projet de mandat pour le Groupe de travail saumon rose, [CNL\(23\)26](#), qui ont été acceptées.

7.36 Le Conseil a décidé de:

- adopter le mandat du Groupe de travail sur le saumon rose, [CNL\(23\)69](#);
- inviter un représentant des ONGs à siéger au Groupe de travail sur le saumon rose; et
- demander que la Secrétaire sollicite les Parties pour des nominations pour siéger au

Groupe de travail et qu'elle facilite les réunions en inter-session.

**g) Pêcherie de saumons à St Pierre et Miquelon – Gestion et Échantillonnage**

7.37 Le Président a indiqué que le Conseil et la Commission Nord-Américaine étaient tous deux préoccupés par les captures de saumon à St Pierre et Miquelon qui, bien que faibles, se produisaient au moment où de graves inquiétudes portent sur l'abondance des stocks nord-américains et où des restrictions des prélèvements ont été mises en place dans la zone entière de la Commission Nord-Américaine.

7.38 Le Président a remercié la France (pour St Pierre et Miquelon) d'avoir fourni le 'Rapport sur la Pêcherie de saumon à St Pierre et Miquelon en 2022', [CNL\(23\)27rev](#). Celui-ci avait été examiné lors de la session de la Commission Nord-Américaine et il n'y a pas eu d'autres questions lors de la session du Conseil.

**h) Rapports des trois Commissions régionales concernant leurs activités de conservation**

7.39 Les activités des trois Commissions ont été rapportées au Conseil par leurs Présidents.

**8. Divers**

8.1 Les États-Unis ont demandé si le Programme incitatif au renvoi des marques devrait être maintenu. La Secrétaire a indiqué que ceci devait être examiné lors de la session annuelle du CFA en 2024.

**9. Date et lieu de la prochaine session**

9.1 Le Conseil a accepté l'offre généreuse de l'UE d'accueillir la quarante-et-unième session annuelle à Westport, Comté Mayo, Irlande. Le Conseil a décidé qu'une Séance spéciale thématique sur le saumon rose serait incluse. Par conséquent, la session devrait être allongée et se dérouler sur la période 3 – 7 juin 2024.

9.2 Il a été noté que la Conférence des NU sur les océans aurait probablement lieu du 5 au 14 juin 2025. Ceci pouvant générer un conflit d'agenda avec les dates provisoires de la quarante-deuxième session annuelle de l'OCSAN, le Conseil a reporté toute décision concernant les dates de la quarante-deuxième session.

**10. Communiqué de presse**

10.1 Le Conseil a adopté un communiqué de presse, [CNL\(23\)85](#) (Annexe 17).

**11. Compte rendu de la session**

11.1 Le Conseil a adopté son compte rendu de la session.

**12. Clôture de la session**

12.1 Les États-Unis ont transmis une déclaration écrite de clôture (Annexe 18).

12.2 Le Président a clos la session.



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***Opening Statement from the President of NASCO***

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Arnaud Peyronnet, I am the President of NASCO and it is my great pleasure to open the Fortieth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

We would like to acknowledge, honour, and pay respect to the traditional owners and custodians (from all four directions), of the land on which we gather. It is upon the unceded ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaw people that this city is built. While this area is known as Moncton, New Brunswick, the territory is part of the greater territory of Mi'kma'ki.

I would like to introduce the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the Honourable Joyce Murray. Minister Murray has a track record in, and a deep commitment to, environmental sustainability and democratic engagement.

As I open the meeting, I would like to thank Minister Murray for allowing the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to host the Annual Meeting for NASCO here in the beautiful City of Moncton. This is a very appropriate place to hold a meeting about salmon. You will find out during the course of this week that the Petitcodiac River which flows beside this hotel and is at the top of the Bay of Fundy, with some of the highest tides in the world, has a tidal bore, and because of its high turbidity is nicknamed the Chocolate River.

This river once held a robust salmon population before it was extirpated when a causeway was built in the 1960s, and a nascent recovery is now happening after the causeway was partially opened some 20 years ago and fully opened just last year. It is also a story of local people and First Nations and many other working together to remove barriers and help salmon to recover.

I am delighted to be able to open the meeting with some excellent news. As you know, Iceland was one of the founder members of NASCO and had a huge impact on our development in the early years. Unfortunately, in 2009 Iceland had to leave NASCO, due to 'economic reasons', but promised to re-join at some point. I am therefore very happy to confirm that Iceland has confirmed its intention to re-join NASCO in the coming year. I am sure you would like to join me in welcoming Guðni Magnús Eiríksson and Guðni Guðbergsson, representatives of Iceland, as observers to our meeting this week. And I very much look forward to Iceland participating as a full member next year.

Once again, we have a very full schedule for our meeting this year, and I would like to highlight some of the most significant items of business that we can look forward to.

We will hear from Erik Molenaar, very soon, when he presents the Report of the Performance Review Panel. This Report, and how NASCO responds to it, will have a vital impact on how fit for purpose the organisation will be to meet the challenges impacting wild North Atlantic salmon. This report comes at a crucial time, with the impact of climate change being strongly felt on many salmon populations, particularly in the southern part of the species distribution. We are unfortunately contemplating the extinction of dozens of populations on our watch and this calls for drastic action. The Council has already spent time considering the recommendations from the review panel and will work more on this during the Meeting. Amongst the various aspects being discussed, I want to highlight the importance of being able to bring wild Atlantic salmon at the very top of the conservation agenda. Salmon must be a priority, not only in NASCO but also for the decision makers and the civil society.

We will be very keen to hear from you, so, please, prepare your questions and comments and get ready to participate fully in the Performance Review Special Session.

Talking of Special Sessions, we have our first ever, and long overdue, Theme-based Special Session on climate change tomorrow. And I am very much looking forward to the Special Session on Indigenous perspectives on Thursday. There will also be a combined Special Session on the Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports. During these Special Sessions, I encourage all delegates to get involved, ask questions, and contribute to shaping the future of NASCO.

The Commissions also have a packed schedule. After the negotiation of the innovative regulatory measure for the fishery at West Greenland last year, the West Greenland Commission will have its first opportunity to look at how it worked in practice. In the North-East Atlantic Commission, there will be a focus on *Gyrodactylus salaris*. And it is worth celebrating some good news on that...after years of work to eradicate *G. salaris*, Norway has reported that only eight of the originally 51 infected watercourses still have *G. salaris* present. And I understand that work is ongoing to eradicate it from these remaining rivers. That really is a significant achievement and very important for the future of Atlantic salmon in that Commission area. It also highlights, if ever necessary, the value of NASCO as a forum to cooperate and share information on salmon management. The North American Commission will consider the Annual Reports from the US and Canada and will look at the report on the fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon.

The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and the Finance and Administration Committee met yesterday, and I look forward to hearing about their deliberations later in the week.

But it's not all work...This year I can see that our Canadian friends have gone out of their way to provide interesting activities when we are not in the meeting room. Tonight there will be a reception hosted by the Province of New Brunswick and you will get to experience New Brunswick food and wine and hear from the Premier of the Province. Tomorrow, we have a reception here at the hotel with local musicians and a special show by Le Pays de Sagouine. On Wednesday there will be a walking tour where you will hear about the Petitcodiac River and the struggle and hope for salmon in this river. On Thursday there will be a full reception hosted by the City of Moncton just two blocks down Main Street from the hotel. Finally, there will be an all-day tour to Fundy National Park where many of you will hear from Parks Canada and the Fort Folly First Nation about their story of recovering endangered salmon in rivers where salmon had disappeared for a very long time.

So, these are just a few of the business and social highlights of the coming days. I am looking forward to lots of lively discussion and debate.

As President of NASCO I know how much work goes on for the many months leading up to a meeting. This work is not only done by the Secretary and the Secretariat staff but also by the host country.

Doug, the Canadian Head of Delegation to NASCO, tells me that in the last few months no fewer than a dozen Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff, here in Moncton and in Ottawa, have been working to make our meetings a success. Add in Parks Canada, Fort Folly First Nation, the Province of New Brunswick, the City of Moncton and of course the dedicated time of all the NASCO Secretariat and others and I can say it truly does take a village to deliver a successful meeting that is interesting for the delegates. On behalf of NASCO I give my thanks to all of you.

As usual, I would like to conclude my opening remarks with a reminder of why we are all here. NASCO's objective is *'to conserve, restore, enhance and rationally manage Atlantic salmon through international co-operation, taking account of best available scientific information.'* And I would ask you to keep our objective at the forefront of your mind, throughout the week. I am optimistic that we can speed our progress towards achieving that objective, with the decisions taken and actions agreed during this meeting.

Thank you.

***Opening Statements Submitted by the Parties***

***Opening Statement to Council submitted by Canada***

Mr. President, Heads of Delegations, Distinguished Delegates, and Observers:

As Head of the Canadian Delegation and host of NASCO's 40th Annual Meeting, I am pleased to welcome all NASCO delegates to the City of Moncton, New Brunswick. The city is situated on the Petitcodiac River at the top of the Bay of Fundy and is home to some of the highest tides on the planet. Organizing a meeting of this size, taking place over seven days and with around one hundred delegates attending, is no small feat. I want to acknowledge all the people involved in making this meeting happen: special thanks go to the NASCO Secretary and Secretariat for their tireless and ongoing support these past number of months. I also recognize and thank the many people from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), as well as Parks Canada, Fort Folly First Nation, the Province of New Brunswick, the City of Moncton, and several non-governmental organizations who have helped in large ways and small.

As NASCO marks its 40th Annual Meeting, Canada remains committed to continue collaborating with NASCO Parties and jurisdictions, accredited observers, and the broader salmon community, domestically and abroad, in meeting the objectives of NASCO in a meaningful and efficient manner this week and in the coming year.

Progress towards establishing Canada's first-ever Conservation Strategy for wild Atlantic salmon continues, which to date has involved discussions with over 80 Indigenous communities, Indigenous organizations, provincial partners and stakeholders. Canada has taken a collaborative approach to developing the Strategy because we know that Atlantic salmon are of the highest cultural significance to the Indigenous peoples of Canada, and of great importance to Canadians wherever they are found. Many of the themes we heard through engagement on the Strategy are in line with recommendations raised through NASCO's Third Performance Review, in particular: an emphasis on climate change, the need for enhanced participation by Indigenous peoples, and the need to act urgently and strategically to ensure that Atlantic salmon survive – and thrive – into the future. Once the Strategy is finalized, Canada will consider how to integrate it into our planning and reporting in NASCO's fourth reporting cycle.

Canada is fully supportive of the time we will spend to address the recommendations from the Third Performance Review Panel and recognize the importance of those discussions this week. Foremost, Canada is grateful for the opportunity to lead the organization of a Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives and Roles on Atlantic Salmon Conservation at this year's annual meeting. The session aims to increase our collective understanding of Indigenous peoples' connections and experience with wild Atlantic salmon, including the challenges that they face. We see this as an opportunity for NASCO to demonstrate a respectful commitment to transparency in how it conducts its business. As NASCO progresses in the implementation of targeted actions to conserve wild Atlantic salmon, Canada will continue to strongly advocate for Indigenous peoples to have a greater role at NASCO, as based on our experience here in Canada we believe that NASCO could greatly benefit from Indigenous peoples' vast knowledge and experience about this iconic species.

Secondly, in hosting a Theme-based Special Session to Inform a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon, NASCO could not be embracing a more important topic for the future of wild Atlantic salmon and, indeed, of NASCO itself. We

are excited to have the opportunity to present our current and planned management measures to understand and adapt to the cascading impacts of climate change. In considering the Review Panel recommendations, and any additional ones stemming from this Theme-based Special Session, Canada encourages NASCO to develop an overarching strategy that will establish the basis to inform future decisions on adaptive measures to conserve wild Atlantic salmon for many decades to come.

Thirdly, we would be remiss if we did not congratulate Denmark (in respect of Greenland and the Faroe Islands) on what appears to be a mostly successful season of regulating the mixed stock fishery in West Greenland under the new regulatory measure agreed to in 2022. We remain hopeful that Denmark (in respect of the Faroes Islands and Greenland) will continue to improve on managing the harvest of salmon in this fishery and in increasing the harvest reporting rate in the upcoming fishing season. We look forward to discussing these issues at the West Greenland Commission.

As always, we look forward to continuing discussions with the United States and France (in respect of St. Pierre and Miquelon) on the effective management, monitoring, and control of the mixed-stock fisheries in Labrador and St. Pierre and Miquelon.

In ensuring that NASCO remains modern in its management and recognized as an employer of choice, we urge the successful conclusion of the long-standing discussions on benefits for staff. This should reinforce NASCO as a competitive employer in the United Kingdom job market where its headquarters is located.

We are hopeful that the recent news of Iceland's commitment to re-joining NASCO in 2024 will be considered as a positive incentive for France (in respect of St. Pierre and Miquelon) to re-consider its long-standing position on acceding to the NASCO Convention.

We feel compelled to once again condemn the Russian Federation's unjustifiable and unprovoked war on Ukraine and its people. In continuing a second year of the largest military invasion of any European country since World War II, Russia seeks to undermine the principle of territorial integrity, to destroy the freedom of the Ukrainian people, to overthrow the democratically elected government of a sovereign nation and to undermine the rules-based international order. We call on the Russian Federation to cease its military operations and withdraw its forces from the Ukraine.

Finally, we would like to reiterate how grateful we are for the opportunity to collaborate with the Parties here in Canada and trust that we will have a successful Annual Meeting.

Thank you.

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***Opening Statement to Council submitted by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)***

Mr. President, Ms. Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen, Denmark in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland (DFG) would like to thank Canada for hosting this annual meeting. We look forward to spending time here in Moncton. We also want to thank the Secretariat for making this meeting possible in a hybrid format, and to provide the best conditions for cooperation between parties.

We have many important issues to discuss and make decisions on at this year's annual meeting, one of the most important issues are the recommendations from the External Performance

Review. We look forward to discussing the recommendations and how NASCO can improve our work moving forward. If NASCO is to stay relevant we need to have the courage to make the necessary decisions and changes to ensure that NASCO stay relevant and can make the biggest impact to the conservation of salmon. In thread with the recommendations is the latest advice from ICES, which emphasizes that non-fisheries related anthropogenic mortalities should be minimized, while quality and quantity of salmon habitats should undergo comprehensive restoration.

This year, Council will also need to decide if they wish to continue the Implementation Plan process with a fourth reporting cycle. Greenland has had great success with our implementation plan, and we believe that this is a great tool to ensure transparency on how Parties manage wild salmon in their rivers and waters, as well as being able to share effective management tools. However, we must ensure synchronized efforts and therefore needs to consider another reporting cycle in relation to NASCO's future priorities. Several jurisdictions such as Denmark have successfully restored habitats or are doing other innovative projects which improve the conditions for Atlantic salmon. The Secretariat is already doing a good job highlighting these success stories, however, in our opinion we must consider how we could become even more of an outreach and knowledge sharing organisation.

Finally, we are also looking forward to the special sessions on climate change and indigenous people's perspectives. The Arctic region is greatly affected by climate change and thus it is a subject of utmost importance to DFG. We hope that the session on indigenous people's perspectives will highlight the value of protecting the right to fish from a cultural perspective and how our Inuit communities can be even more involved in the management and conservation of salmon than today.

DFG condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. We want to express our full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. We stand in solidarity with our like-minded partners in the international community and support all measures to ensure truth, justice and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in Ukraine.

Mr. President, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are looking forward to a productive week in Moncton, where we hope to engage in constructive discussions and collectively contribute to a successful outcome of this 40<sup>th</sup> Annual NASCO meeting.

Thank you.

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### ***Opening Statement to Council submitted by European Union***

Mr. President, Mrs Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The European Union is delighted to participate in the 40th Annual Meeting of NASCO, and we would like to thank the Secretariat for all the hard work that went into the preparation of this hybrid meeting.

We have a very full agenda and there are several important issues to be discussed this year.

One of the most important issues for the EU is the consideration of the third NASCO external performance review and its associated recommendations. The EU is looking forward to engaging with the Parties on a way forward for the implementation of these recommendations. The EU is also anticipating an effective discussion on the climate change management actions by the various NASCO Parties. The EU would welcome a positive exchange on the good

practices and lessons learnt to reduce the impact of climate change on the stocks of Atlantic salmon.

In this regard, the EU is looking forward to fruitful cooperation with all the Parties during this annual meeting, and we are looking forward to deciding on issues that will reinforce the conservation of wild Atlantic Salmon.

To conclude, Mr. President let me express the European Union and its Member States' full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified act of aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the United Nations Charter, and undermines international security and stability.

The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders and abide by UN General Assembly resolution titled "Aggression against Ukraine" supported by 141 states at the 11th emergency special session.

The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's inherent right of self-defence and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

At all times Russia must respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, including with respect to the protection of civilians, women and children.

Russia also needs to stop its disinformation campaign and cyber-attacks.

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### ***Opening Statement to Council submitted by Norway***

Mr. President, Mrs. Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First and foremost we would like to address the ongoing situation in Ukraine. Norway condemns Russia's illegal full-scale war. Russia's brutal aggression is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia must unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from Ukraine within internationally recognised borders. Russia's attack on Ukraine is also an attack on European security and our values and we cannot let Russia win this war.

Russia's warfare is causing immense suffering and destruction in Ukraine. Russia must uphold its obligation under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. We are horrified by the atrocities that have been committed in liberated areas previously occupied by Russian forces. Those responsible at all levels must be held to account. Norway will stand firmly with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

We must not, however, let Russia's actions overshadow the important work of this organisation and this meeting. We would like to thank Canada for hosting the fortieth Annual Meeting of NASCO here in Moncton and we look forward to productive discussions over the next few days.

The work of NASCO becomes ever more relevant as the decline of Atlantic salmon stocks continue. In Norway, the pre-fishery abundance of wild Atlantic salmon in 2022 remained low.



Well over a third of our salmon populations are, according to the wild salmon quality norm, classified to be in a poor or very poor state. Low sea-survival and a changing climate remain as two of the main underlying big scale drivers of the population decline. There are however, still adverse human impacts that strongly influence the development and status of stocks in Norway. Escaped farmed salmon and salmon lice infections related to salmon farming remain the most severe anthropogenic threats to Norwegian wild Atlantic salmon, and the present mitigation measures are still insufficient to stabilize and reduce these threats.

Alongside the well-known threats comes the new emerging threat of pink salmon. Based on what we have learned so far, it is possible that pink salmon will colonize all rivers in Norway and rivers in other countries around the North Atlantic if we fail to control the spawning in our rivers. In 2023 we are at a crossroads as we could face the biggest occurrence of pink salmon to date. We are however, far better prepared than we have been in previous years. The advisory group for pink salmon established in 2022 has mapped pink salmon abundance and coordinated and planned mitigation measures across northern Norway. We are currently working to install 30 traps in the most exposed watercourses in Finnmark as well as other measures in a range of smaller rivers. There are still large knowledge gaps that need to be filled considering pink salmon in the north Atlantic. We therefore need both national and international coordinated research and cooperation on measures to reduce the risk of negative impacts from pink salmon on our native salmonids.

The Teno watercourse had the most numerous run of pink salmon in 2021, and the stocks of Atlantic salmon have been in stark decline over several years. The latest report by the Teno Monitoring and Research Group concludes that there was still no harvestable surplus in most salmon populations in the Teno system in 2022. The forecast for the 2023 salmon run is also poor. In response, Finland and Norway have agreed to continue the ban on salmon fishing also in 2023. As in 2021 and 2022, a decision is made to close the salmon fisheries in the Teno fjord and in coastal areas in proximity to the Teno fjord. The fish trap planned to be installed in the Teno river in June will be the most extensive single measure to combat pink salmon anywhere in Norway.

The bleak picture of pink salmon and declining salmon stocks does however, have its bright spots. If all the eradication measures implemented to combat *Gyrodactylus salaris* are successful, the number of infected rivers in Norway will be reduced to eight. The new method using monochloramine at low concentrations has proven highly effective without having adverse effects on the fish or the surrounding ecosystem. The Driva region will be treated with monochloramine for the second time this year and we aim to begin the work in the Drammen region in 2025.

The Norwegian delegation is very much looking forward to this year's special sessions. The recommendations from the External Performance Review Panel, the indigenous perspectives and informing a strategic approach to address the impacts of climate change are all highly relevant and important topics we are eager to get new information on how parties hope to address these going forward.

Finally, the Norwegian delegation would like to thank the Secretariat for its hard work with all the preparations for this meeting, and we look forward to a productive meeting and the continued collaboration with all parties in working to conserve the wild Atlantic salmon.

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## ***Opening Statement to Council submitted by The Russian Federation***

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates and Observers of the Fortieth NASCO Annual Meeting, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Russian delegation and the Federal Agency for Fisheries, which represents the Government of the Russian Federation in NASCO, I am honoured to welcome all participants of the Fortieth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

For forty years now, NASCO and its Parties have been doing important work to conserve and enhance wild Atlantic salmon populations across the North Atlantic. Since the time it was established NASCO has been remarkable for a constructive and trusting spirit of cooperation among its parties. This unique forum brings together highly experienced experts, scientists, policy makers and representatives of inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations to discuss the status of wild Atlantic salmon and to consider management issues. The Russian Federation appreciates the coordination of activities among the Parties and contributes to addressing issues set for the Organization both at the annual sessions and in the intersessional period. We hope for further cooperation based on fruitful dialogue and mutual respect of interests.

I also find it important to acknowledge the work of the NASCO Secretariat. There is particular value in your effort and contribution to effective operation of the Organization. Your dedication and high professional level help us, the Parties, in addressing the challenges in conservation of Atlantic salmon.

Concluding my remarks, I would like once again to emphasize the role NASCO has played in consolidating efforts of all interested parties to preserve the wild Atlantic salmon for future generations. Let this be a valuable experience to share with other regional fisheries management organizations!

On behalf of the Russian delegation, I express hope for fruitful and efficient cooperation in the Fortieth Annual Meeting and wish luck to us all!

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## ***Opening Statement to Council submitted by the United States***

Mr. President, Madam Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As we meet here today, the United States cannot ignore the continued threat to international law posed by Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. delegation reiterates its urgent call for Russia to immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine and refrain from any further unlawful threat or use of force against any sovereign nation. While Russia's actions in Ukraine are reprehensible, we cannot and should not allow this heinous situation to impede the important work facing NASCO this week.

The United States is looking forward to a productive week working together with our international partners to improve the conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon at this, the 40th Annual Meeting of NASCO. We are delighted to be in the lovely city of Moncton, located in the Province of New Brunswick, Canada. We sincerely thank our hosts for the wonderful meeting venue and arrangements, as well as the NASCO Secretariat for their hard work in preparing for this meeting. We are especially pleased to take part in welcoming Iceland as an observer to the 2023 Annual Meeting. As they take the necessary steps to ratify the

Convention, we wish them success in returning to NASCO hopefully in time to fully participate in the 2024 Annual Meeting.

In light of Iceland's actions, we would like to take this opportunity to strongly encourage France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) to join NASCO given its continuing interest in the harvest of Atlantic salmon. The mixed stock, interceptory fishery conducted off of St. Pierre and Miquelon harvests critically endangered and threatened populations of North American salmon and is conducted outside of an internationally agreed regulatory regime. Moreover, sampling of the fishery is below the level needed to fully characterize the contributing stocks. While recognizing harvests at St. Pierre and Miquelon have stabilized at a relatively low level in recent years and appreciative of the management actions and research activities that have been carried out to date, the United States implores France (in respect of St. Pierre and Miquelon) to carry out its duty to cooperate in the harvest of an anadromous species by joining the organization.

A key focus for the United States during the 2023 Annual Meeting will be on the Recommendations of the External Performance Review. We would like to thank the Review Panel for its hard work. The recommendations are wide-ranging, thoughtful, and many are quite creative. The work of the Review Panel sets the stage for the Parties to consider the challenges facing our organization and how we might meet them. We look forward to working with our partners as we give serious consideration to the Panel's recommendations and determine how best to follow up on them. We hope, in particular, that NASCO can identify high priority recommendations during this meeting and that they can be acted upon quickly. For the United States, some of the most urgent recommendations and needed actions relate to climate change.

Concerning climate change, we are very much looking forward to the Theme Based Special Session entitled, "Informing the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon." This special session should create additional impetus in NASCO and its Parties to improve climate resiliency and provide some tools and approaches for doing so. We are also looking forward to the Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives. The United States very much appreciates the opportunity to hear about the experiences with and knowledge of Atlantic salmon directly from indigenous peoples. Receiving this type of information in this way will be especially important as we consider the recommendations from the Tromsø Symposium and those from the EPR related to incorporating traditional and local knowledge and indigenous perspectives in activities related to salmon science, conservation and management.

Finally, we look forward to the Special Session on evaluation of Implementation Plans (IP) and Annual Progress Reports (APR). Giving consideration to the recommendations from the EPR as well as the Tromsø Symposium and any recommendations that result from the Climate Change TBSS, will be important to help inform our discussions on what the next reporting cycle should look like. As we enter discussions on the future of the IP/APR process, we remain committed to maintaining a process that ensures succinct, transparent, fair, balanced, and meaningful reporting on the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines by all Parties and jurisdictions.

In closing, I want to reaffirm that the United States is fully committed to NASCO and to working cooperatively and collaboratively with our international partners to successfully address the important issues and challenges facing us this week and into the future.

***Opening Statements Submitted by Inter-Governmental Organizations***

***Opening Statement to Council submitted by the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC)***

Mr. President, Madame Secretary, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an opening statement on behalf of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) at this the 40th Annual Meeting of NASCO.

By way of background EIFAAC is a statutory, advisory fishery body under the Constitution of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Established in 1957, it is an inter-governmental forum for collaboration and information exchange on inland fisheries and aquaculture across European countries. EIFAAC has currently 34 members including the European Union.

Governments, institutions and agencies, including NASCO, can benefit from international advice derived from the EIFAAC's network linking policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues.

EIFAAC's mission is to promote the long-term sustainable development, utilization, conservation, restoration and responsible management of European inland fisheries and aquaculture and to support sustainable economic, social, and recreational activities through:

- providing advice and information
- encouraging enhanced stakeholder participation and communication; and
- the delivery of effective research

EIFAAC has currently active project groups looking at a number of prioritised research areas that maybe of interest to NASCO parties, these include:

- the monitoring the performance of fish passes; developing CEN standard
- the development of advice on sustainable management actions on cormorant populations
- the welfare of fishes in aquaculture
- the downstream passage of fish at hydropower dams

An EIFAAC Symposium, titled Technology, Stock Assessment and Citizen Science in an Era of Climate Change was hosted by the Irish Government from the 20th to 21st of June 2022 in Killarney Ireland. The symposium supported a discussion between stakeholders, including anglers, managers, scientists, and legislators on the future of recreational fisheries in an era of climate change.

EIFAAC and NASCO share the common goal of wild Atlantic salmon conservation while respecting the social, economic and cultural value of this unique species. EIFAAC is well positioned to offer expert advice and support to NASCO on issues affecting the Atlantic salmon in the freshwater element of its lifecycle.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hosts and facilitators for their wonderful welcome to Moncton, Canada and for the facilities and hospitality provided. Finally, may I wish all of you a productive an enjoyable NASCO session.

Dr. Cathal Gallagher – EIFAAC

***Opening Statement to Council submitted by NASCO's Non-Governmental Organizations***

Mr. President, Secretary, Heads of Delegation, Distinguished Delegates, NGO colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, the NGOs appreciate this opportunity to make an opening statement to NASCO Council at the 2023 Annual Meeting. We would like to thank Canada for arranging this meeting in Moncton and we look forward to playing a full and inclusive part in proceedings.

The NGOs wish to concentrate on the External Performance Review (EPR) Report this year, especially the recommendations made for changes to NASCO's future working priorities. The 46 recommendations showed that NASCO has a long way to go to satisfy the modern requirements of wild Atlantic salmon conservation. As we have previously stated, both NGOs and the wider salmon world are increasingly angry and frustrated by the lack of commitment from NASCO Parties to their primary objective - the protection of wild Atlantic salmon - and the limited progress that has been made towards achieving NASCO's international goals.

The President recently stated that, the challenges we are facing mean that NASCO can no longer be satisfied with conducting its business as usual, and instead we must be opened to more radical and innovative approaches. Given that the Atlantic salmon is in crisis, we would add that the approaches are needed urgently and should be focused on, and effective at, meeting the international goals. The Parties' initial reaction to the EPR recommendations was far from encouraging and the NGOs now strongly urge that NASCO's response avoids - at all costs - a time-consuming and box-ticking exercise and, instead, urgently focuses on what needs to be done to assist wild Atlantic salmon conservation, as our Convention requires.

As the two previous performance reviews concluded, NASCO has developed good agreements (some might need updating in part but the international goals they contain remain relevant) but there is a lack of progress in achieving those goals. This must change urgently and be our clear focus. The NGOs believe that the radical action required from NASCO is that the Parties should urgently focus on their primary conservation objective rather than following their present policy of finding excuses to support activities with the potential to adversely impact wild salmon.

There is a huge gulf between the unanimously agreed international goals and how far NASCO jurisdictions are currently prepared to go to achieve them. Concerted action is required to address a range of pressures which impact wild Atlantic salmon - the EPR Group strongly recommends that NASCO should broaden its remit to tackle all those issues affecting salmon throughout its life cycle, not just those involving fisheries management. This must include the impacts of fish farming, hydro-electricity generation, barriers to migration, agricultural pollution, point source pollution, water scarcity and damage to freshwater habitat, amongst others. The vital issue of climate change is already the focus of a NASCO Special Session at this year's Annual Meeting but must remain central to future management decisions within Parties as the effects of a warming planet increase pressures on already crisis-ridden wild salmon populations.

The External Performance review rightly identified a lack of progress on the regulation of salmon farming - where very little, if any, progress has been made over the past decade. The current lack of enforcement of existing legislation covering all relevant pressures is a major frustration to the NGOs and the wider salmon world.

It is widely recognised, including by this and previous EPRs, that salmon farming, as presently conducted, is highly damaging to wild fish, and the scientific warnings to NASCO going back many years - of lice infestation, disease transmission, escapees causing genetic damage to wild stocks and environmental pollution around the cages - have materialised on NASCO's watch. We see this issue as a barometer of how NASCO is failing to achieve its international goals and so the lack of regulation, or its enforcement, of salmon farming is indicative of the Parties' approach to tackling other relevant issues. This must change urgently if NASCO is to become relevant to modern salmon conservation.

The NGOs welcome the EPR Group's recommendations over such topics as by-catch, the excellent management issues they cover and particularly the strong suggestion that NASCO's rule making mandate should be extended to include non-fisheries issues. We also support the recommendation that periodic ministerial-level meetings should be held so that salmon conservation issues are brought to the attention of relevant government ministers at the head of each Party. The NGOs urge NASCO to take these recommendations seriously and act on them as a matter of urgency, otherwise the relevance of this organisation to wild Atlantic salmon conservation will rapidly evaporate.

So, the NGOs strongly support the President's call for radical and innovative action. Rather than embarking on a time-consuming box ticking exercise that will deliver little benefit to wild salmon, this radical action must start with a genuine commitment from the Parties to bridge the gap between what is needed to protect the species – i.e., achieving the international goals already agreed at NASCO - and what they are presently prepared to do about it. Unless that conservation commitment is forthcoming, the NGOs fear that NASCO will be seen to have failed in its objectives and will become increasingly irrelevant to the wider salmon world that, despite the depressingly variable commitment from the Parties, is working so hard to protect this iconic species.

Wild Atlantic salmon deserve far greater political resolve to protect and conserve the species right across its north Atlantic range. The NGOs believe that the opportunity to action the EPR recommendations is the very last chance for NASCO to show it has any part to play in modern wild salmon conservation, and this must now be the urgent focus of this organisation and be clearly embraced by all the Parties and Jurisdictions in the next Implementation Plan cycle.

## 2023 List of Participants

\* Denotes Head of Delegation

CANADA		
*Mr Doug Bliss – Representative	<i>doug.bliss@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Moncton, New Brunswick
Mr Carl McLean – Representative	<i>mcleanc351@gmail.com</i>	Canadian Commissioner, North West River, Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr Blair Adams (Virtual Participant)	<i>BlairAdams@gov.nl.ca</i>	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr Julien April	<i>julien.april@mffp.gouv.qc.ca</i>	Ministère des Forêts de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec, Québec
Ms Cindy Breau	<i>cindy.breau@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Moncton, New Brunswick
Mr Todd Broomfield	<i>todd.broomfield@nunatsiavut.com</i>	Government of Nunatsiavut, Newfoundland and Labrador
Mr Stephen A. Chase	<i>chasesa@salmonconservation.ca</i>	Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation, Fredericton, New Brunswick
Ms Kathryn Ann Collet	<i>kathryn.collet@gnb.ca</i>	Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development, New Brunswick
Mr Levi Denny	<i>levi@uinr.ca</i>	Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, Nova Scotia
Dr Shelley Denny	<i>shelley.denny@uinr.ca</i>	Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, Eskasoni, Nova Scotia
Ms Susan A. Farquharson	<i>s.farquharson@atlanticfishfarmers.com</i>	Atlantic Canada Fish Farmers Association, Letang, New Brunswick
Ms Livia Goodbrand	<i>Livia.Goodbrand@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa
Ms Nadia Hamoui (Virtual Participant)	<i>nadia.hamoui@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa
Mr Matthew Hardy	<i>matthew.hardy@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Mr Ross Hinks	<i>rhinks@mfn.gov.ca</i>	Indigenous First Nation, Miawpukek First Nation,

		Newfoundland and Labrador
Ms Keely Hunter (Virtual Participant)	<i>Keely.hunter@internatioal.gc.ca</i>	Global Affairs Canada, Ottawa
Mr Steve Sanghwun Hwang	<i>steve.hwang@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa
Ms Quinna Laver	<i>quinna.laver@torngat.com</i>	Torngat Secretariat, Newfoundland and Labrador
Mr Barry LaBillois (Virtual Participant)	<i>b_labillois@hotmail.com</i>	Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council, Nova Scotia
Mr Jason LeBlanc	<i>jason.leblanc@ovascotia.ca</i>	Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Nova Scotia
Ms Marie-Pier Lévesque	<i>marie-pier.levesque@justice.gc.ca</i>	Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Legal Services, Ottawa
Ms Kayli McGarrigle	<i>naturalresources@nbapc.org</i>	New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, Fredericton, New Brunswick
Ms Charline McCoy	<i>charline@salmonconservation.ca</i>	The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation, New Brunswick
Mr Dale Marsden	<i>Dale.Marsden@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
Mr Charles Marshall	<i>charlie.marshall~apcfn.ca</i>	Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, Nova Scotia
Ms Isabelle Morisset	<i>isabelle.morisset@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
Ms Melissa Nevin	<i>melissa.nevin@apcfn.ca</i>	Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Secretariat, Nova Scotia
Mr Robert Otto	<i>rotto@asf.ca</i>	Atlantic Salmon Federation, New Brunswick
Dr Martha Robertson	<i>martha.robertson@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	Fisheries and Oceans Canada, St. Johns, Newfoundland and Labrador
President Todd Russell	<i>trussell@nunatukavut.ca</i>	NunatuKavut Community Council, Newfoundland and Labrador
George Russell Jr.	<i>grussell@nunatukavut.ca</i>	NunatuKavut Community Council, Newfoundland and Labrador
Mr Bill Taylor	<i>rwtaylor@asf.ca</i>	Atlantic Salmon Federation, St Andrews, New Brunswick



<b>DENMARK (In respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)</b>		
*Ms Katrine Kærsgaard	<i>katk@nanoq.gl</i>	Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting, Nuuk, Greenland
Ms Rebekka Jensen	<i>rjen@nanoq.gl</i>	Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting, Nuuk, Greenland
<b>EUROPEAN UNION</b>		
Dr Arnaud Peyronnet – President	<i>arnaud.peyronnet@ec.europa.eu</i>	European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
*Mr Ignacio Granell – Representative (Virtual Participant)	<i>ignacio.granell@ec.europa.eu</i>	European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
*Mr Seamus Howard	<i>seamus.howard@ec.europa.eu</i>	European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
Mr Magnus Andersson	<i>Magnus.andersson@gov.se</i>	Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure, Stockholm, Sweden
Dr Ida Ahlbeck Bergendahl (Virtual Participant)	<i>ida.ahlbeck.bergendahl@slu.se</i>	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Drottningholm, Sweden
Ms Anjelina Bengyuzova	<i>anjelina.bengyuzova@consilium.europa.eu</i>	General Secretariat, Council of the European Union, Brussels, Belgium
Mr Clemens Fieseler	<i>clemens.fieseler@ble.de</i>	Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, Bonn, Germany
Mr Barry Fulham	<i>barry.fulham@decc.gov.ie</i>	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Co. Cavan, Ireland
Mr Håkan Carlstrand	<i>hakan.carlstrand@havochvatten.se</i>	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Gothenburg, Sweden
Ms Lynda Connor	<i>lynda.connor@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Co. Tipperary, Ireland
Dr Jaakko Erkinaro	<i>jaakko.erkinaro@luke.fi</i>	Natural Resources Institute, Finland
Ms Isabel Figueira (Virtual Participant)	<i>ifigueira@dgrm.mm.gov.pt</i>	General-Directorate for Natural Resources, Security and Maritime Services, Lisbon, Portugal
Dr Cathal Gallagher	<i>cathal.gallagher@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
Mr Julián García Baena	<i>jgbaena@mapa.es</i>	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Madrid, Spain

Mr Tapio Hakaste	<i>tapio.hakaste@mmm.fi</i>	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Helsinki, Finland
*Mr Seamus Howard	<i>seamus.howard@ec.europa.eu</i>	European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
Dr Seán Kelly	<i>sean.kelly@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
Mr Denis Maher	<i>denis.maher@dccae.gov.ie</i>	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Co. Cavan, Ireland
Dr Sarah McLean	<i>sarah.mclean@loughs-agency.org</i>	Loughs Agency, Derry, Northern Ireland
Dr Michael Millane	<i>michael.millane@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
Mr Francis O'Donnell	<i>Francis.O'Donnell@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	Inland Fisheries Ireland, Dublin, Ireland
Dr Niall Ó Maoiléidigh	<i>niall.omaoleidigh@marine.ie</i>	Marine Institute, Newport, Ireland
Mr Jens Persson	<i>jens.persson@havochvatten.se</i>	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Gothenburg, Sweden
Ms Christiane Pilz	<i>christiane.pilz@bmel.bund.de</i>	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Berlin, Germany
Mr Neil Ruane (Virtual Participant)	<i>neil.ruane@marine.ie</i>	Marine Institute, Rinville, Oranmore, Co. Galway, Ireland
Dr Thomas Staveley (Virtual Participant)	<i>tom.staveley@slu.se</i>	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Drottningholm, Sweden
Mrs Isabel Teixeira (Virtual Participant)	<i>iteixeira@dgrm.mm.gov.pt</i>	General-Directorate for Natural Resources, Security and Maritime Services, Lisbon, Portugal
Ms Bénédicte Valadou	<i>benedicte.valadou@ofb.gouv.fr</i>	OFB (Office français de la Biodiversité), Direction Générale, Montpellier, France
Mr Ultan Waldron (Virtual Participant)	<i>ultan.waldron@agriculture.gov.ie</i>	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, Ireland
<b>NORWAY</b>		
*Mr Raoul Bierach – Representative	<i>raoul.bierach@miljodir.no</i>	Norwegian Environment Agency, Trondheim
Mr Helge Dyrendal	<i>helge.axel.dyrendal@miljodir.no</i>	Norwegian Environment Agency, Trondheim
Ms Heidi Ekstrøm (Virtual Participant)	<i>heidi.ekstrom@kld.dep.no</i>	Ministry of Climate and Environment, Oslo

Dr Peder Fiske	<i>peder.fiske@nina.no</i>	Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Trondheim
Ms Heidi Hansen	<i>heidi.hansen@miljodir.no</i>	Norwegian Environment Agency, Trondheim
Ms Guro Mathieson (Virtual Participant)	<i>guro.mathiesen@nfd.dep.no</i>	Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, Oslo
Ms Lovise Marie Vaarhus (Virtual Participant)	<i>lovise.marie.varhus@miljodir.no</i>	Norwegian Environment Agency, Trondheim
Mr Håvard Vedeler Nilsen	<i>harvard-vedeler.nilsen@kld.dep.no</i>	Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, Oslo
<b>RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b>		
*Dr Alexander Khatuntsov Representative (Virtual Participant)	<i>Khatuntsov.a@tsuren.ru</i>	Federal State Budgetary Establishment “Central Department of Fisheries Examination and Review and Protection and Acclimatization Standards”, Moscow
Ms Ekaterina Kazantseva (Virtual Participant)	<i>kazanceva_EO@fishcom.ru</i>	Federal Agency for Fisheries, Moscow
Ms Maria Amelina (Virtual Participant)	<i>a.mariya@tsuren.ru</i>	Federal State Budgetary Establishment “Central Department of Fisheries Examination and Review and Protection and Acclimatization Standards”, Moscow
Mr Victor Rozhnov (Virtual Participant)	<i>rozhnov@sevtu.ru</i>	Severomorskoe Territorial Department of the Federal Agency for Fisheries, Murmansk
Ms Elena Basova (Virtual Participant)	<i>basova@sevtu.ru</i>	Severomorskoe Territorial Department of the Federal Agency for Fisheries, Murmansk
Mr Alexander Lizogub (Virtual Participant)	<i>lizogub@sevtu.ru</i>	Severomorskoe Territorial Department of the Federal Agency for Fisheries, Murmansk
Ms Nina Pantileeva (Virtual Participant)	<i>pantileeva@pinro.ru</i>	Polar Branch of VNIRO (PINRO named after N.M.Knipovich), Murmansk
Dr Sergey Prusov (Virtual Participant)	<i>prusov@pinro.ru</i>	Polar Branch of VNIRO (PINRO named after N.M.Knipovich), Murmansk
Ms Daria Ursu (Virtual Participant)	<i>ursu@tsuren.ru</i>	Federal State Budgetary Establishment “Central

		Department of Fisheries Examination and Review and Protection and Acclimatization Standards”, Moscow
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>		
*Ms Ruth Allin – Representative	<i>Ruth.Allin@defra.gov.uk</i>	Defra, Bristol, England
Dr Gemma Cripps	<i>Gemma.Cripps@defra.gov.uk</i>	Defra, London, England
Mr Seamus Connor – Representative	<i>Seamus.Connor@daera-ni.gov.uk</i>	Inland Fisheries, Marine and Fisheries, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Miss Charlotte Gildersleve	<i>Charlotte.Gildersleve@defra.gov.uk</i>	Defra, London, England
Dr Katie St John Glew	<i>katie.stjohnglew@defra.gov.uk</i>	Defra, London, England
Dr Jonathan Gillson (Virtual Participant)	<i>jonathan.gillson@cefas.co.uk</i>	Cefas, Lowestoft, England
Dr Faye Jackson (Virtual Participant)	<i>faye.jackson@gov.scot</i>	Marine Scotland Science, Pitlochry, Scotland
Mr Alexander Kinninmonth	<i>alexander.kinninmonth@gov.scot</i>	Marine Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland
Mr Robert Floyd	<i>robert.floyd@gov.wales</i>	Cardiff, Wales
Professor Iain Malcolm (Virtual Participant)	<i>iain.malcolm@gov.scot</i>	Marine Scotland, Pitlochry, Scotland
Dr Stuart Middlemas (Virtual Participant)	<i>stuart.middlemas@gov.scot</i>	Marine Scotland, Pitlochry, Scotland
Mr Lawrence Talks	<i>lawrence.talks@environment-agency.gov.uk</i>	Environment Agency, Hampshire, England
Mr Simon Toms	<i>simon.toms@environment-agency.gov.uk</i>	Environment Agency, Hampshire, England
Dr Alan Walker	<i>alan.walker@cefas.co.uk</i>	Cefas, Lowestoft, England
Dr Ben Wilson	<i>ben.wilson@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk</i>	Natural Resources , Llandarcy, Neath, Wales
<b>UNITED STATES</b>		
*Ms Kimberly Damon-Randall – Representative	<i>kimberly.damon-randall@noaa.gov</i>	National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland
Mr Stephen Gephard – Representative	<i>sgephard@gmail.com</i>	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Inland Fisheries Division, Old Lyme, Connecticut
Ms Kimberly Blankenbeker	<i>kimberly.blankenbeker@noaa.gov</i>	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland

Mr John Burrows	<i>jburrows@asfmaine.org</i>	Atlantic Salmon Federation, Brunswick, Maine
Ms Callan Yanoff	<i>yanoffcj@state.gov</i>	US Department of State, Washington DC
Mr Dan Kircheis	<i>dan.kircheis@noaa.gov</i>	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Orono, Maine
Ms Mahvish Madad (Virtual Participant)	<i>MadadMZ@state.gov</i>	US Department of State, Washington DC
Mr Tim Sheehan	<i>tim.sheehan@noaa.gov</i>	National Marine Fisheries Service, Woods Hole, Massachusetts
Ms Rebecca Wintering	<i>WinteringRJ@state.gov</i>	US Department of State, Washington DC
<b>STATES NOT PARTY TO THE CONVENTION</b>		
<b>France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon)</b>		
Ms Heloïse Le Bougeant	<i>heloise.le-bougeant@equipement-agriculture.gouv.fr</i>	Maritime Affairs, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, France
Ms Constance Couston (Virtual Participant)	<i>constance.couston@equipement-agriculture.gouv.fr</i>	Maritime Affairs, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, France
<b>Iceland</b>		
Dr Guðni Magnús Eiríksson	<i>gudni.m.eiriksson@fiskistofa.is</i>	Directorate of Fisheries, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland
Mr Guðni Guðbergsson	<i>gudni.gudbbergsson@hafogvatn.is</i>	Marine and Freshwater Research Institute in Iceland, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland
<b>INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>		
Dr Cathal Gallagher	<i>cathal.gallagher@fisheriesireland.ie</i>	European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission
Dr Joanne Morgan (Virtual Participant)	<i>Joanne.morgan@ices.dk</i>	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, Copenhagen, Denmark
<b>NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>		
<b>**Denotes NGO Co-Chairs</b>		
<b>Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation</b>		
Mr Stephen A Chase	<i>chasesa@salmonconservation.ca</i>	
<b>Atlantic Salmon Federation, Canada</b>		

Dr Stephen Sutton**	<i>ssutton@asf.ca</i>
Mr Dave Meerburg	<i>dmeerburg@asf.ca</i>
<b>Atlantic Salmon Federation, US</b>	
Mr Nathan Wilbur	<i>nwilbur@asf.ca</i>
Ms Deirdre C. Green	<i>dgreen@asf.ca</i>
<b>Atlantic Salmon Trust, UK</b>	
Professor Ken Whelan (Virtual Participant)	<i>Ken.whelan@hotmail.com</i>
Professor Melanie Smith (Virtual Participant)	<i>melanie@atlanticsalmontrust.org</i>
<b>Connecticut River Salmon Association</b>	
Mr Thomas Chrosniak	<i>president@ctriversalmon.org</i>
<b>Der Atlantische Lachs</b>	
Mr Heinz Ackmann	<i>team@lachsverein.de</i>
Mrs Maria Ackmann	<i>maria.ackmann@gmx.de</i>
<b>Downeast Salmon Federation</b>	
Mr Dwayne Shaw (Virtual Participant)	<i>dwayne@mainesalmonrivers.org</i>
<b>European Angler's Alliance</b>	
Mr Bob Seward	<i>bobseward08@yahoo.com</i>
Mr Andrew Morgan	<i>morganandrew005@gmail.com</i>
<b>Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers</b>	
Mr Noel Carr	<i>fisstata2017@gmail.com</i>
<b>Fédération québécoise pour le saumon Atlantique</b>	
Ms Myriam Bergeron	<i>secretariat@fqa.ca</i>
<b>Fisheries Management Scotland</b>	
Dr Alan Wells (Virtual Participant)	<i>Alan@fms.org</i>
Ms Charlotte Middleton (Virtual Participant)	<i>charlotte@fms.org</i>
<b>Institute of Fisheries Management, UK</b>	
Dr Nigel Milner	<i>n.milner@apemltd.co.uk</i>
<b>Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council</b>	
Ms Vanessa Mitchell	<i>vmitchell@mapcorg.ca</i>
Mr Gavin Scott	<i>vmitchell@mapcorg.ca</i>
<b>Norske Lakseelver, Norway</b>	
Mr Nils Olav Gjone (Virtual Participant)	<i>nogjone@online.no</i>

Mr Paal Mugaas (Virtual Participant)	<i>paal@lakseelver.no</i>
<b>North Atlantic Salmon Fund Iceland</b>	
Mr Elvar Örn Fridriksson (Virtual Participant)	<i>elvar@nasf.is</i>
Mr Fridleifur Gudmundsson	<i>fridleifur@icloud.com</i>
<b>North Atlantic Salmon Fund US</b>	
Mrs Kateryna Rakowsky	<i>kateryna@northatlanticsalmonfund.org</i>
<b>Norwegian Association of Hunters &amp; Anglers</b>	
Øyvind Fjeldseth	<i>o.f@njff.no</i>
<b>Salmon Watch Ireland</b>	
Mr Niall Greene	<i>niall.b.greene@gmail.com</i>
<b>Scottish Anglers national Association (SANA)</b>	
Dr Andy Walker (Virtual Participant)	<i>andywalker231@aol.com</i>
<b>WildFish</b>	
Mr Paul Knight **	<i>paul@wildfish.org</i>
<b>Wildfish, Scotland</b>	
Ms Rachel Mulrenan (Virtual Participant)	<i>rachel@wildfish.org</i>
<b>INVITED SPEAKERS / PARTICIPANTS</b>	
Dr Øystein Skagseth (Virtual Participant)	<i>oystein.skagseth@hi.no</i>
Dr André St-Hilaire	<i>andre.st-hilaire@inrs.ca</i>
Dr Torbjørn Forseth (Virtual Participant)	<i>Torbjorn.Forseth@nina.no</i>
Dr Marie Nevoux (Virtual Participant)	<i>marie.nevoux@inrae.fr</i>
Dr Erik J Molenaar	<i>E.J.Molenaar@uu.nl</i>
Dr Paddy Gargan (Virtual Participant)	<i>paddyggargan@gmail.com</i>
Eirik Frøiland	<i>fmfieifr@fylkesmannen.no</i>
Ms Anne Nuorgam (Virtual Participant)	<i>anuorgam@gmail.com</i>
Chief Clarissa Sabattis	<i>csabattis@maliseets.com</i>
Keptin Stephen Augustine	<i>c/o celia_oshea@cbu.ca</i>
Chief Terry Richardson	<i>Terrence4209@hotmail.com</i>
Patricia Saulis	<i>psaulis2@yahoo.ca</i>
Wenona LaBillois	<i>Wenona.Labillois@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>

<b>SUPPORT STAFF</b>		
Ms Susan LeBlanc Robichaud	<i>Susan.LebLANCRobichaud@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	
Mr Luc Thériault	<i>Luc.Theriault@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</i>	
<b>SECRETARIAT</b>		
Dr Emma Hatfield	Secretary	<i>hq@nasco.int</i>
Dr Wendy Kenyon	Assistant Secretary	<i>hq@nasco.int</i>
Ms Louise Forero Segovia	Information and Publications Officer	<i>hq@nasco.int</i>
Ms Vicky Newton	Office Manager	<i>hq@nasco.int</i>
Ms Martha Swan	Administration Assistant	<i>hq@nasco.int</i>



CNL(23)66

*Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Council*

*Delta Beausejour Hotel, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada*

*5 – 8 June 2023*

*Agenda*

- 1. Opening of the Meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Election of Officers**
- 4. Financial and Administrative Issues**
  - a) Report of the Finance and Administration Committee
- 5. Scientific, Technical, Legal and Other Information**
  - a) NASCO News 2023
  - b) Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize
  - c) Scientific Advice from ICES
    - (i) Scientific Advice from ICES
    - (ii) A new approach / presentation of the ICES Advice
  - d) Report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board
  - e) Report of the Standing Scientific Committee
  - f) Invitation to Iceland and France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO
  - g) Update on the Review of the Effect of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations
  - h) Update on the Stocking Guidelines Working Group
  - i) Progress Report on the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas
- 6. Report of the External Performance Review Panel**
  - a) Special Session: Report from the Performance Review Panel
  - b) Decisions Taken Regarding the Performance Review Recommendations

**7. Conservation, Restoration, Enhancement and Rational Management of Atlantic Salmon under the Precautionary Approach**

- a) Informing a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon
  - (i) Theme-based Special Session: Informing a Strategic Approach to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Wild Atlantic Salmon
  - (ii) Decisions Taken in Light of the Theme-based Special Session
- b) Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon: full title to be confirmed
  - (i) Special Session on Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon: full title to be confirmed
  - (ii) Decisions Taken in Light of the Special Session
- c) Evaluation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)
  - (i) Special Session: Evaluation of Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)
  - (ii) Decisions Taken Regarding the Evaluation of Implementation Plans Under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)
  - (iii) Decisions Taken Regarding the Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports Under the 2019 – 2024 Implementation Plans
- d) Fourth Reporting Cycle: Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Annual Progress Reports
- e) International Year of the Salmon Legacy Activities
- f) New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management
  - (i) New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management
  - (ii) The NASCO Working Group on Pink Salmon
- g) Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery
- h) Reports on the Conservation Work of the Three Regional Commissions

**8. Other Business**

**9. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

**10. Press Release**

**11. Report of the Meeting**

**12. Close of the Meeting**

## CNL(23)67

**North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization  
2024 Budget and 2025 Forecast Budget (Pounds Sterling)**

	Budget 2024	Forecast 2025
<b>Expenditure</b>		
1. Staff-related costs	437,500	453,700
2. Travel and subsistence	27,500	27,500
3. Research and advice	70,800	74,694
4. Contribution to Working Capital Fund	0	0
5. Meetings	10,000	10,400
6. Office supplies, printing and translation	22,000	22,800
7. Communications	20,000	20,800
8. Headquarters Property	52,850	54,800
9. Office furniture and equipment	1,600	1,600
10. Audit and other expenses	14,800	15,050
11. Tag Return Incentive Scheme	4,500	4,500
12. International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund	0	0
13. Contribution to Contractual Obligation Fund	0	0
14. Contribution to Recruitment Fund	0	0
15. Contribution to IYS Fund	0	0
16. Contribution to Periodic Projects Special Fund	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>661,550</b>	<b>685,844</b>
<b>Income</b>		
17. Contributions - Contracting Parties	603,550	627,844
18. General Fund – Interest	1000	1000
19. Income from Headquarters Property	57,000	57,000
20. Surplus or Deficit (-) from 2021	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>661,550</b>	<b>685,844</b>

**2024 Budget & 2025 Forecast Budget (Pounds Sterling) - Expenditure by Sub-Section**

	2024	Forecast 2025
<b>1. Staff related costs</b>		
1.1 Secretariat members	279,230	289,600
1.2 Temporary and part-time staff costs	62,900	65,200
1.3 Staff Fund, allowances, insurances and other costs	95,370	98,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>437,500</b>	<b>453,700</b>
<b>2. Travel &amp; subsistence</b>		
2.1 Travel to Annual Meeting	7,000	7,000
2.2 Official travel and subsistence	20,500	20,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,500</b>	<b>27,500</b>
<b>3. Research and advice</b>		
3.1 Contribution to ICES	70,800	74,694
3.2 Other research & advice	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,800</b>	<b>74,694</b>
<b>4. Contribution to Working Capital Fund</b>	0	0
<b>5. Meetings</b>		
5.1 Costs of annual meeting	3,000	3,100
5.2 Costs of other meetings	7,000	7,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>10,400</b>
<b>6. Office supplies, printing and translation</b>		
6.1 Office supplies	12,500	13,000
6.2 Printing	6,500	6,700
6.3 Translations	3,000	3,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>22,800</b>
<b>7. Communications</b>		
7.1 Telecommunications	5,000	5,200
7.2 Postage and courier services	2,500	2,600
7.3 IT Support & Website	12,500	13,000
7.4 Communications, professional support and design	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20,800</b>
<b>8. Headquarters Property</b>		
8.1 Capital and interest payments	0	0
8.2 Maintenance, services and other building related costs	52,850	54,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,850</b>	<b>54,800</b>
<b>9. Office furniture and equipment</b>		
9.1 Furniture	0	0
9.2 Equipment	1,600	1,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>1,600</b>
<b>10. Audit and other expenses</b>		
10.1 Audit and accountancy fees	11,600	11,750
10.2 Bank charges and insurances	500	500
10.3 Miscellaneous	2,700	2,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,800</b>	<b>15,050</b>
<b>11. Tag Return Incentive Scheme</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>4,500</b>
<b>12. Contribution to IASRF</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>13. Contribution to Contractual Obligation Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>14. Contribution to Recruitment Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>15. Contribution to IYS Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>16. Contribution to Periodic Projects Special Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>661,550</b>	<b>685,844</b>

### 2023 Budget Contributions (Pounds Sterling) Adjusted for Confirmed rather than Provisional 2021 Catches (tonnes)

Party	2021 catch (provisional)	2021 catch (confirmed)	2023 contribution (provisional)	2023 contribution (confirmed)	Adjustment
Canada	103	98	98,986	98,831	-155
Denmark (Faroe Islands and Greenland)	40	40	54,397	55,778	1,381
European Union	99	83	96,155	87,697	-8,459
Norway	295	295	234,878	245,063	10,185
Russian Federation	49	49	60,767	62,459	1,692
United Kingdom	16	9	37,411	32,767	-4,644
USA	0	0	26,086	26,086	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>608,680</b>	<b>608,680</b>	<b>0</b>

*Note. A positive adjustment represents an underpayment in 2022.*

### NASCO Budget Contributions for 2024 and Forecast Budget Contributions for 2025 (Pounds Sterling)

Party	2022 catch (provisional)	2024 contribution	Adjustment from 2023	2024 adjusted contribution	2025 forecast contribution
Canada	100	90,764	-155	90,609	94,418
Denmark (Faroe Islands and Greenland)	29	44,687	1381	46,068	46,486
European Union	69	70,646	-8459	62,187	73,490
Norway	390	278,968	10185	289,153	290,197
Russian Federation	55	61,560	1692	63,252	64,038
United Kingdom	8	31,058	-4644	26,415	32,308
USA	0	25,866	0	25,866	26,908
<b>Total</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>603,550</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>603,550</b>	<b>627,844</b>

*Contributions are based on the official returns.*

*Column totals in both tables can be in error by a few pounds due to rounding.*

## Five-year NASCO Budgeted Expenditure and Income Projections 2024 – 2028

		2024	Forecast 2025	Forecast 2026	Forecast 2027	Forecast 2028
<b>Expenditure</b>						
1.	Staff related costs	437,500	453,700	470,487	487,895	505,947
2.	Travel & Subsistence	27,500	27,500	27,500	27,500	27,500
3.	Research & advice	70,800	74,694	76,188	77,712	79,266
4.	Contribution to Working Capital	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Meetings	10,000	10,400	10,750	11,100	11,500
6.	Office supplies, printing and translations	22,000	22,800	23,500	24,350	25,250
7.	Communications	20,000	20,800	21,500	22,000	22,500
8.	Headquarters Property	52,850	54,800	55,000	55,000	55,000
9.	Office furniture & equipment	1,600	1,600	13,600	1,600	1,600
10.	Audit & other expenses	14,800	15,050	15,300	15,500	15,700
11.	Tag return incentive scheme	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500
12.	International Co-operative Research	0	0	0	0	0
13.	Contribution to Contractual Obligation Fund	0	0	30,000	25,000	25,000
14.	Contribution to Recruitment Fund	0	0	0	0	0
15.	Contribution to IYS Fund	0	0	0	0	0
16.	Contribution to Periodic Projects Special Fund	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>661,550</b>	<b>685,844</b>	<b>748,325</b>	<b>752,157</b>	<b>773,763</b>
<b>Income</b>						
17.	Contributions of Contracting Parties	603,550	627,844	690,325	694,157	715,763
18.	Interest Received on General Fund	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
19.	Income from HQ property	57,000	57,000	57,000	57,000	57,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>661,550</b>	<b>685,844</b>	<b>748,325</b>	<b>752,157</b>	<b>773,763</b>

CNL(23)71

***Revised Interim Policy on the Interpretation and Application of NASCO Staff Fund Rule 3.2 and Staff Rule 8.2(b) Concerning the Lump Sum Entitlement***

*Considering* previous discussions by the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) on the need to clarify NASCO's Staff Rules and Staff Fund Rules regarding the lump sum issue to remove ambiguity and, if needed and appropriate, to consider if any adjustment to its level might be needed or if some other type of adjustment to NASCO's financial benefits for its staff should be considered;

*Recognising* the limited time available to fully address this important issue during the 2023 NASCO Annual Meeting and the need for additional discussions to resolve outstanding issues; and

*Desiring* to balance the need to proceed carefully and deliberately on possible revisions to NASCO's Staff Rules and Staff Fund Rules while providing, without prejudice to future FAC discussions on this matter, near-term certainty to Secretariat staff on an important financial aspect of their employment;

The NASCO Council adopts the following interim policy regarding the interpretation and application of NASCO Staff Fund Rule 3.2 and Staff Rule 8.2(b):

- a) Any member of the Secretariat staff who voluntarily leaves full-time employment with NASCO after completing their probationary employment period is considered to be '*retiring from full-time employment with NASCO*' as that phrase is used in Staff Rule 8.2(b) and Staff Fund Rule 3.2 and is eligible to receive a lump sum payment pursuant to those rules.
- b) The level of lump sum payment to be provided will be one tenth after tax of the final year's gross salary and allowances for each year of service with NASCO, fractions of a year to count pro-rata, consistent with the Staff Rule 8.2(b) and Staff Fund Rule 3.2.

This interim policy applies until June 8, 2024, unless otherwise decided by the Council. In order to develop a longer-term solution to the issues related to the lump sum and other staff benefit issues, the FAC will ask the Secretary to seek appropriate legal and / or Human Resource advice in its consideration of these issues for both existing and any new staff and recommend a way forward no later than at the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting.

## ICR(23)18

*Revised Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group*

## VISION

Factors causing salmon mortality at sea are understood to the level that supports the development of management actions by Parties to reduce mortality to recover, protect and conserve salmon stocks.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board) is a body, established by, and reporting to, the Council of NASCO, to promote and initiate collaboration and co-operation on research into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality through the following activities:
  - i. maintaining an inventory of relevant research;
  - ii. identifying and prioritising research needs;
  - iii. providing a forum for co-ordination of relevant research efforts by the Contracting Parties of NASCO;
  - iv. maintaining and reviewing the administrative mechanisms to accept financial contributions to an International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund (the Fund);
  - v. seeking and accepting financial contributions and managing the Fund; and
  - vi. evaluating, funding and / or endorsing relevant research projects, according to agreed guidance.

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE BOARD

2. The Board will comprise one representative from each Party. Each Party's representative will be considered a Member of the Board and may be assisted, as appropriate, by one or more advisers. Each Party is responsible for covering the costs associated with its participation on the Board. In exceptional circumstances, the Board may, by consensus, deviate from the terms of this paragraph.
3. The Board will work by consensus but in the event that agreement cannot be reached the matter concerned will be referred to the Council for resolution.
4. The Board will meet on an annual basis or at more frequent intervals if it, or the Council of NASCO, so decides.
5. Between meetings, the Board may conduct its work and take decisions by correspondence and / or conference calls.
6. The Board will elect a Chair, who will serve for a term of two years and will be eligible for re-election provided that the individual does not serve for more than four years in succession. A Party providing the Chair will be entitled to provide a replacement representative to serve as a Member of the Board and one or more advisers as appropriate.



7. If needed, the Chair with agreement from the Members of the Board may establish informal, ad hoc, Working Groups to enable progress in specific areas of its work. Discussions and any outputs or recommendations from such Groups will be presented to the Board for consideration.
8. The Board may seek advice from NASCO's Standing Scientific Committee.
9. As necessary and appropriate, the Board may make arrangements for external scientific evaluation of research projects funded by the Board or any research projects considered for funding.

#### NGO INVOLVEMENT

10. The Board will invite one of the Co-Chairs of NASCO's accredited NGOs, or their designee from within the accredited NGOs, to participate in the meetings of the Board and provide relevant input on the issues under discussion. The Chair of the Board may recognise requests from the floor by the NGO representative on any agenda item under discussion. The NGO representative will be included in all correspondence to the Board.

#### SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY GROUP

11. To assist the Board in carrying out its responsibilities, a Scientific Advisory Group (the SAG) may be established to provide scientific and technical input and advice to the Board where needed.
12. The SAG will meet only at the behest of the Board. To enable the work of the SAG, the Board will establish separate Terms of Reference to outline appropriate tasks, timelines, and meeting procedures.
13. The SAG will be composed of one representative from each Party. Each Party's representative will be considered a Member of the SAG. Each Party is responsible for covering the costs associated with its participation on the SAG. In exceptional circumstances the Board may, by consensus, deviate from the terms of this paragraph.
14. The SAG will elect a Chair who will serve for a term of two years and who will be eligible for re-election provided that the individual does not serve for more than four years in succession. A Party providing the Chair of the SAG will be entitled to provide a replacement representative to serve as a Member of the SAG if necessary.
15. The Board will invite one of the Co-Chairs of NASCO's accredited NGOs, or their designee from within the accredited NGOs, to participate in SAG meetings and provide relevant input on the issues under discussion. The NGO representative will be included in all correspondence to the SAG.

#### SUPPORT, REPORTING and REVIEW

16. The Secretariat will provide support to the Board and the SAG, including serving as Rapporteur as necessary and appropriate. Reports of the meetings will be finalised in a timely manner for presentation to the relevant NASCO body. SAG meeting reports will be considered by the Board for adoption. Board meeting reports will be considered by the Council for adoption.
17. To maintain an up-to-date inventory of the current Board and SAG Members, the Secretary will request confirmation of this information from each Party and the NGO Co-Chairs every two years. Further, any time there is a change in the representation on either the Board or the SAG, the Party or NGO Co-Chair making the change will notify the Secretariat of the name of its new Member without delay.

18. These Terms of Reference are subject to review by the Council at any time.

## CNL(23)11rev\*

*Request for Scientific Advice from ICES*

- 1. With respect to Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic area:**
  - 1.1 provide an overview of salmon catches and landings by country, including unreported catches and catch and release, and production of farmed and ranched Atlantic salmon in 2023<sup>1</sup>;
  - 1.2 report on significant new or emerging threats to, or opportunities for, salmon conservation and management<sup>2</sup>;
  - 1.3 provide a compilation of tag releases by country in 2023; and
  - 1.4 identify relevant data deficiencies, monitoring needs and research requirements.
- 2. With respect to Atlantic salmon in the North-East Atlantic Commission area:**
  - 2.1 describe the key events of the 2023 fisheries<sup>3</sup>;
  - 2.2 review and report on the development of age-specific stock conservation limits, including updating the time-series of the number of river stocks with established CLs by jurisdiction;
  - 2.3 describe the status of the stocks, including updating the time-series of trends in the number of river stocks meeting CLs by jurisdiction; and
  - 2.4 provide catch options or alternative management advice for the 2024 / 2025 – 2026 / 2027 fishing seasons, with an assessment of risks relative to the objective of exceeding stock conservation limits, or pre-defined NASCO Management Objectives, and advise on the implications of these options for stock rebuilding<sup>4</sup>.
- 3. With respect to Atlantic salmon in the North American Commission area:**
  - 3.1 describe the key events of the 2023 fisheries (including the fishery at St Pierre and Miquelon)<sup>3</sup>;
  - 3.2 update age-specific stock conservation limits based on new information as available, including updating the time-series of the number of river stocks with established CLs by jurisdiction;
  - 3.3 describe the status of the stocks, including updating the time-series of trends in the number of river stocks meeting CLs by jurisdiction; and
  - 3.4 provide catch options or alternative management advice for 2024-2027 with an assessment of risks relative to the objective of exceeding stock conservation limits, or pre-defined NASCO Management Objectives, and advise on the implications of these options for stock rebuilding<sup>4</sup>.

\*Grammatical errors corrected 15 June 2023

**4. With respect to Atlantic salmon in the West Greenland Commission area:**

- 4.1 describe the key events of the 2023 fisheries<sup>3</sup>;
- 4.2 describe the status of the stocks<sup>5</sup>; and
- 4.3 provide catch options or alternative management advice for 2024-2026 with an assessment of risk relative to the objective of exceeding stock conservation limits, or pre-defined NASCO Management Objectives, and advise on the implications of these options for stock rebuilding<sup>4</sup>

**Notes:**

- 1. *With regard to question 1.1, for the estimates of unreported catch the information provided should, where possible, indicate the location of the unreported catch in the following categories: in-river; estuarine; and coastal. Numbers of salmon caught and released in recreational fisheries should be provided.*
- 2. *With regard to question 1.2, ICES is requested to include reports on any significant advances in understanding of the biology of Atlantic salmon that is pertinent to NASCO.*
- 3. *In the responses to questions 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1, ICES is asked to provide details of catch, gear, effort, composition and origin of the catch and rates of exploitation. For homewater fisheries, the information provided should indicate the location of the catch in the following categories: in-river; estuarine; and coastal. Information on any other sources of fishing mortality for salmon is also requested. For 4.1, if any new surveys are conducted and reported to ICES, ICES should review the results and advise on the appropriateness of incorporating resulting estimates into the assessment process.*
- 4. *In response to question 2.4, 3.4 and 4.3, provide a detailed explanation and critical examination of any changes to the models used to provide catch advice and report on any developments in relation to incorporating environmental variables in these models. Also provide a detailed explanation and critical examination of any concerns with salmon data collected in 2023 which may affect the catch advice considering the restrictions on data collection programmes and fisheries due to the COVID 19 pandemic.*
- 5. *In response to question 4.2, ICES is requested to provide a brief summary of the status of North American and North-East Atlantic salmon stocks. The detailed information on the status of these stocks should be provided in response to questions 2.3 and 3.3.*

**Attendees:**

Sergey Prusov (NEAC, manager representative)

Peder Fiske (NEAC, scientist representative)

Dale Marsden (NAC, manager representative)

Tim Sheehan (NAC, scientist representative)

Rebekka Jensen (WGC, manager representative)

Niall Ó Maoiléidigh (WGC, scientist representative)

Martha Robertson / Alan Walker (ICES representative, Observer)

Livia Goodbrand (Co-ordinator)



Government of Iceland  
Ministry of Food,  
Agriculture and Fisheries

government.is

NASCO - North Atlantic Salmon Conservation  
Organization  
11 Rutland Square  
EH1 2AS Edinburgh  
Scotland UK

Reykjavík June 5, 2023  
Reference: MAR23030184/12.00

Dear Dr Arnaud Peyronnet, President of NASCO

Thank you for the letter of 19 December 2022 where you invite Iceland to rejoin The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO).

As you mention in the letter, the withdrawal in 2009 was solely for economic reasons and not because of Iceland's lack of commitment to the conservation and rational management of Atlantic salmon. Iceland's commitment remains resolute and we recognize the responsibility we bear in safeguarding this remarkable species for future generations.

We firmly believe that cooperation among nations is vital in addressing the challenges faced by our shared environment and we acknowledge the invaluable role played by NASCO in promoting the preservation and sustainable use of salmon populations.

It is indeed timely that Iceland re-enters NASCO and we are excited about the prospect of joining the organization in the new phase that will commence in the months following the latest performance review. Therefore, I hereby confirm that Iceland is seeking full membership of NASCO from the date first of January 2024.

Rejoining NASCO will allow us to collaborate with like-minded nations and pool our expertise and resources to further the cause of salmon conservation.

As a member of NASCO once again, Iceland is committed to actively participating in the organization's endeavors, including the implementation of effective measures to protect and enhance salmon stocks, the exchange of scientific knowledge, and the promotion of sustainable fishing practices. We believe that our collective efforts will yield positive outcomes and reinforce the long-term conservation goals we share.

Svandís Svavarsdóttir,  
Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

# CNL(23)75

Update on the State of Knowledge Paper of the effect  
of salmon lice and escaped farmed salmon on wild  
Atlantic salmon

Presentation at the 2023 NASCO Annual Meeting

Dr Paddy Gargan – Project Co-ordinator

## The Agreed Approach to the review

- After considerable discussion, the Expert Group agreed that the approach that should be taken for the genetic introgression work and the sea lice work was quite different and two sub-groups were formed.
- Genetic introgression was reviewed in 2017 and there is also a lot more definitive information on the impacts of escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon and little or no conflict in the literature on the impact of escapes.
- For the sea lice work, the Group felt that a systematic review and critical appraisal of the literature will be required and the approach and methodology that will be taken will be different to the escapes work.
- Therefore it is proposed to produce one paper on the genetic introgression work and one paper on the impacts of sea lice.
- The possibility of combining the findings of both papers into a third policy paper with management implications has also been discussed.



## Both the sea lice and genetic introgression sub-groups invited additional scientists to participate in the State of Knowledge Paper

- Sea Lice Sub-group
  - Simon Jones – DFO – Canada
  - Knut Wlik Vollset - Norce - Norway
  - Damien Brady – Univ of Maine USA
  - Steven Cooke – Canada
  - Marie Lie Larsen – Norway
  - Robert Lennox - Canada
  - Sandy Murray - Marine Scotland
  - Sussie Dalvin – IMR, Norway,
  - Sam Shephard – Inland Fisheries Ireland,
  - Frank Nilsen – University of Bergin Norway.
- Genetic Introgression Sub-group
  - Sten Karlsson – NINA \_ Norway
  - Eva Thorstad – NINA – Norway
  - Ian Bradbury – DFO – Canada
  - Geir Bolstad – NINA - Norway
  - John Gilby – Marine Scotland
  - Phil McGinnity – UCC - Ireland
  - Brendan Wringe – DFO - Canada
  - Leó Gudmundsson - Iceland

## Progress from the Genetic Introgression group since the State of Knowledge Workshop in February 2023

- The main focus of the genetic introgression sub-group now is to present the state of knowledge on genetic introgression in the eastern and western side of the North Atlantic, including the British Isles (Scotland and Ireland), Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden), Iceland, North America (Canada, USA).
- The group are in the process of collecting data to create a map of the entire North Atlantic showing levels of genetic introgression and a map showing production of farmed Atlantic salmon.
- This collection of data will be completely new in that it will present levels of genetic introgression across the entire distribution range of Atlantic salmon.
- The group will also give an update on the state of knowledge of the consequences of genetic introgression on natural wild salmon populations
- The intention is to have a manuscript draft by the end of 2023.

## Progress from the Sea Lice Group since the State of Knowledge Workshop in February 2023

- The sea lice group have devised primary questions regarding:
  - a) *To what extent does sea lice from aquaculture contribute to the burden of sea lice on migrating salmon post smolts?*
  - b) *How does the (various) level of sea lice infestation impact the performance of wild salmon post smolts?*
  - c) *Is there a population reduction in wild adult salmon from salmon lice? If so, how much?*
- A critical appraisal tool is being developed to determine the ideal studies designs to investigate these question with respect to reducing their potential biases in the methodology.

## Progress from the Sea Lice Group since the State of Knowledge Workshop in February 2023

- Literature searches have been checked with libraries at University of Bergen and NINA.
- Searches have been performed in three bibliographic databases resulting in 1845 unique publications, all of which have been screened at title and abstract.
- A call for grey literature was developed and is in circulation and these will also be screened
- Work is continuing on the systematic review and critical appraisal of the impact of sea lice on wild Atlantic salmon with a view to having a quantitative analysis and initial draft paper by the end of the year

## CNL(23)82

***Question and Answer Session held during the  
External Performance Review Special Session***

The presentation is available here: [Presentation from the Chair of the Third Performance Review Panel](#)

**Verbal Statement given by Paul Knight on behalf of the NGOs**

Firstly, the NGOs would like to thank the three members of the Review Panel for their in-depth work and reporting, and especially for the 46 recommendations they make for NASCO's evolution in support of wild Atlantic salmon conservation.

One of my predecessors as NGO Chair, Chris Poupard, once said to me that he started every NASCO meeting in a state of high anticipation that this would be the year when Council took some concrete decisions that would better protect and conserve wild salmon. At the end of each successive NASCO meeting, he was left in despair that yet another year had gone by and nothing meaningful had been achieved – outside of limiting the fisheries at Greenland and the Faroe Islands, the one issue with which NASCO has had some success and can offer itself a modicum of congratulation. However, the sacrifices made by Greenland and the Faroe Islands have certainly not been reciprocated by sufficient meaningful action in other jurisdictions, and this must rapidly change.

NASCO is a wild salmon conservation organization but one issue which the NGOs believe was not fully covered by the EPR Group is this lack of commitment from the Parties to deliver the Organization's major conservation objective through delivery of NASCO's goals and international agreements. The EPR Group certainly says that NASCO can and must do better, but perhaps diplomacy stopped them short of commenting outright on the lack of political will in home governments to embrace policies that genuinely protect wild salmon from the many issues limiting their numbers across their north Atlantic range.

Wild salmon deserve so much more from this Organization than a lack of committed response to the 46 EPR recommendations. The reactions of Parties so far suggests that the easy recommendations will be acted upon, but the difficult ones will be kicked into the long grass. This cannot become just another NASCO box-ticking exercise – wild salmon can no longer afford that. My colleague, Steve Sutton, attended the Heads of Delegation meeting yesterday where these issues were discussed and, led by the President, he was impressed by the renewed enthusiasm for changing the way in which NASCO currently operates. However, NASCO must be held to account for a rapid process for change – and they will be by the NGOs and wider salmon world. Wild salmon need more than just fine words – this is a species in deep crisis, recognised by the public as the most iconic natural indicator of a pristine freshwater and oceanic environment, but wild salmon need direct action now if they are not to become extinct in many of their historic global habitats.

All too often in the past, the priority of NASCO Parties seems to be to make excuses for supporting activities that potentially impact salmon rather than protecting them, as NASCO's constitution demands. Whether it be salmon farming, bycatch, agricultural or point source pollution, hydro generation, or operations which cause barriers to migration, water scarcity or damage to freshwater habitats, these activities seem to get the bulk of NASCO Party support

before any thought is given to conserving wild salmon. The EPR Report recognises many of these issues and NASCO's lack of addressing them, and after 40 years of existence, this should be a matter of deep shame for this Organization. Thankfully, the President has now made it crystal clear that NASCO has to change the way it operates – the status quo should no longer be acceptable to anyone in this Organization.

The NGOs would go one stage further and say that if NASCO doesn't radically change its attitude towards wild salmon conservation, this Organization will cease to have any relevance to modern salmon conservation and will gradually die. In many cases, the wider salmon world already ignores anything that NASCO says, writes or does – to them, this Organization is already an irrelevance. That thought might appeal to some of you, but it does precious little to conserve wild salmon which, I repeat, is the primary objective of this Organization. If you are not prepared to work for that conservation target, you shouldn't be here at all. Wild salmon don't need your excuses, they need positive action, and in its present mode of operation NASCO is plainly failing to action anything meaningful beyond fisheries management decisions affecting Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Plenty of good words are written in NASCO's goals and international agreements, but they seldom turn into actions that benefit wild salmon and that should be a matter of deep concern within this room. Fine words must now turn into direct action, and we will hold the Parties to account for the speed with which they adopt their new commitment to conserving the species, as NASCO's Convention requires.

The NGOs quite understand the point made recently by the Norwegian Head of Delegation that political decisions get in the way of what is agreed at NASCO. However, we see all too often that rather than fight to embed NASCO's international agreements into home government policies, Heads of Delegation come here in defensive mode and, all the while, wild salmon continue on their crisis path. On one occasion, I mentioned NASCO to a former fisheries minister and although he vaguely knew about the Organization, he had little idea of what it did or stood for. NASCO's international goals had obviously not crossed his desk, and we strongly suspect this is being replicated in other jurisdictions.

This must change and so the NGOs suggest you look seriously at EPR recommendation 46 and organize ministerial meetings – perhaps two in each IP cycle; one to explain IPs at the beginning of the cycle and one as a mid-term report – so we know for certain that NASCO's primary conservation objective and its international goals have reached political decision makers. It is essential that our politicians understand the issues currently impacting wild salmon if we are to make any meaningful headway in conserving the species into the future. And along similar lines, the NGOs would repeat our earlier suggestion that the EPR group should be asked to report on NASCO's response to their 46 recommendations – perhaps in three years to act as referees as to how much fine talk has been turned into action!

So, Mr President, the EPR Report and recommendations offer NASCO Council one last chance to live up to this Organization's Convention and start delivering concrete actions to benefit wild salmon. The NGOs completely support your call for greater action, but we would go further and say that this is NASCO's last chance to be seen as a decisive force for good in wild salmon conservation. The reports from your Head of Delegation meeting yesterday are encouraging, but if you do not take this opportunity, or the Parties merely agree to action the easy options and continue to ignore the more difficult issues, then we see little point in NASCO's continued existence. The NGOs will gradually melt away and the wider salmon world will completely ignore what goes on within this Organization, continuing their conservation work in spite of NASCO, not because the Parties offer any meaningful assistance in protecting wild Atlantic salmon populations.

It is now up to NASCO Parties, Mr President, to adopt a rapid process of change – but as far as the wider salmon world is concerned, the clock is already ticking – fast!

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you Paul and thank you to the NGOs for their very frank, very honest statement. I'd just like to say that while I share the view that yes, perhaps NASCO did not deliver on certain aspects I think it is important to underline that Parties and, in particular, the people who are here representing the Parties today, are working very hard, and have always been working hard, towards improving the status of salmon and we have some very positive results. One can only wonder, if it wasn't for that work, where we would be. It would be even worse. I am now going to open the floor for questions.

**Todd Broomfield (Canada):** thank you, Mr Chair. Todd Broomfield, Nunatsiavut Government. I'd just like to highlight that, in Northern Labrador, we are bucking the trend, if you're wanting to call it that. We have lots of salmon rivers. Our salmon numbers are increasing. There's evidence from the one counting fence that is in Northern Labrador at English River that numbers are going up.

And what we see in our communities with traditional knowledge in our food fishery, people set nets primarily to catch char and trout, with salmon as a bycatch. And you move your net to try to avoid salmon and, wherever you move your net, there's salmon. So, we're not seeing the problems that are happening in the southern areas.

I don't know if there's any comfort in that, but I just wanted to highlight that, in Labrador in particular, we have lots of rivers that produce salmon, and the numbers have been increasing over the past number of years. So, it's a good news story, I guess, in a bigger picture with lots of bad news.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you for that. Anyone else? Raoul, please.

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** thank you and thank you for your really good presentation wrapping up the extensive report. I think your findings and your analysis of what went well, and not, and why are correct. At least, I share these views.

But I was wondering, in your experience, because I'm not in other international organizations, what are the important or the most important conditions prior to launch something like a Convention change, or even what you suggested as an alternative, in order to succeed? What do you think has to be the launching point for when it's the time right to do that, and which conditions should be in place in order to succeed, actually to achieve what you want? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** Thank you, Raoul, and thank you, also, for your co-operation throughout the process. So, for Convention change and also the agreed interpretations, there is a need for consensus there, all the NASCO Parties would have to agree on this. So, in each individual NASCO Party, I think there has to be political support that something has to be done on these non-fisheries issues.

And so, one way, as a lawyer, you automatically reach for a mandate to adopt legally binding instruments. I realise that this is special because most of these impacts occur either on territory or in waters that are part of a state's territory. So, there is a concern about restrictions on sovereignty – the domestic arena. But, in itself, that doesn't really stop states from doing that.

So, basically, states are sovereign, but they are happy or they are able to transfer some of that sovereignty to inter-governmental organizations. Of course, the European Union is one example of that. So, it's a voluntary step to accept restrictions on your sovereignty.

Another step, a step you would be pioneering in international law, would basically give an international organization the power to have real teeth on something that happens in your territory. But that is probably the only way in which this will succeed, or perhaps you, in the room, have different ideas.

So, restrictions on sovereignty are often necessary to make progress on issues that are transboundary or where all parties contribute to a problem. So, it has to be transformed from contributing to a problem to contributing to a solution. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, this question is really going at the heart of it, isn't it? And I don't know if some of the other Parties want to intervene on this. This has been a key challenge for NASCO, without a doubt.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Steve Sutton, NGO Co-Chair. Just to follow up on Raoul's question, could you speak a bit more about what an agreed interpretation is and give us an example of how that might work as an alternative to a Convention change?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** that's a really detailed question, but I think, in the NASCO Handbook of Basic Texts, there are footnotes in the text on provisions in the Convention on which these Parties have agreed to maybe deviate a little bit or to operationalise or apply this provision in special circumstances. So, it's an alternative for Convention change.

For instance, if you look at the Law of the Sea Convention, which I'm most familiar with, it has a very elaborate procedure for Convention amendment which has never been used because it's really too difficult. And so, what Parties have decided is to adopt Implementation Agreements, so that's the Deep Seabed Mining Agreement, the Fish Stocks Agreement and, now, the newest, the BBNJ (Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement. So, states can find a way around this if they agree to do that. So, obviously, you need consensus.

Another example that I'm familiar with is the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. So, the shift from targeted fishing to, let's say, impacts on bycatch species, that started to shift around the early 2000s, and they have had a Convention with an objective that's very focused on targeted fishing. They decided, okay, this is not sufficient, and they immediately adopted some measures without changing the Convention. At the same time, they also started to work on Convention change.

So, the key message is really that you are the States party to this Organization and, if you want to do something, you can do this, and you will find a way.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and thank you, Steve, for the question.

**Alexander Kinninmonth (United Kingdom):** just following on from that and notwithstanding NASCO's uniqueness, I wondered if you could give some other examples of similar organizations where legally binding instruments apply. Just in your answer to the question from Norway, you described that we could be pioneering. Is that the case? Would that be quite a precedent-setting move?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I'm sure there are many precedent-setting or, basically, many pioneering activities. So, I'm most familiar with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) on the Antarctic. So, they have a precautionary approach, an *avant la lettre* in the treaty, and as the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, an *avant la lettre*.

The CCAMLR Convention was adopted, I think, at the same time as the NASCO Convention, so early maybe 1980 entered into force. CCAMLR has been a pioneer in implementing and operationalising the Convention, and that has become the norm in many RMFOs. And, actually, at the moment, there's so many problems in CCAMLR that some RMFOs are actually more progressive. So, it is possible.

I was just telling Arnaud that I'm also involved in the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement in which the participation of Indigenous peoples is very prominent, and this is



certainly a new development in international law. And so, with the adoption of this Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement, and many of the Parties here today are also Parties to that treaty, they took a new step that pioneered in international law by acknowledging the role of Indigenous, local knowledge and the ability of Indigenous peoples to participate in meetings of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement.

So, I think, again, there are many examples. And the process is then, often, that, in international fisheries law, the regional bodies, they are the key institutions. And they basically develop new practice that creates a minimum standard, and then the minimum standard is elevated to the global level. So, the Fish Stocks Agreement incorporates a lot of the pioneering practice of the leading RMFOs. So, it's up to you to take a step and look at other pioneering steps in other regions around the world.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. So, I guess we can summarise this as saying, when there is a will, there's a way. We also can get inspiration from other RMFOs or organizations. I don't necessarily want to move on from that topic. I think it's a very important one.

**Niall Greene (Salmon Watch Ireland):** hello. I'm Niall Greene of Salmon Watch Ireland, an NGO. I don't have a question, Chairman, but, with your permission, I'd like to make a few comments over which hang some very large questions.

We're meeting in a year where, in Ireland and Britain, both returns of multi-sea-winter fish and one-sea-winter fish are at unprecedented low levels and well below even pessimistic trend forecasts. If this was maintained for the rest of the year, and it may not be if we get plenty of rain, the current levels of return would have a catastrophic impact on 2023 production, which will carry over into subsequent years.

The three members of the Panel deserve our thanks for their very thorough report and for the effort that went into producing it in a relatively short time. One does not have to agree with all of their assessments and conclusions to acknowledge that they have written a deeply thought-provoking piece of work and a thorough piece of work and that they deserve our honest and serious consideration and implementation.

As Paul Knight has already said, the report and its recommendations present a major challenge for NASCO and its Parties. The nature and depth of the recommendations are such that they do not fit neatly into a narrow, siloed approach to the mission of NASCO and its constituent jurisdictions.

Unfortunately, the results of the initial considerations of the EPR recommendations by the Heads of Delegation, and as reported in one of the NASCO papers, are so tentative and defensive that it makes one worry about whether they can make any progress. But I understand that a more positive assessment is now beginning to emerge, and we welcome that.

The recommendations demand, in many instances, an ecosystem-based approach to the protection and conservation of the species and one that goes beyond the tightly bound constraints of national, ministerial, and departmental demarcations.

In his presentation, Erik listed three reasons as to why NASCO may have been, or was unsuccessful in going beyond, fishery issues. I would add a fourth, which is the very vertical way in which government departments and its agencies are organized in respect of their responsibilities and the general inability, sometimes unwillingness, of governments in all jurisdictions to work horizontally. And that, I think, is a major problem which faces the NASCO jurisdictions.

The report lays out most of the demands that must be made, not just on NASCO, but especially on our national jurisdictions so that the wild salmon has some chance of survival, even at the

current battered population levels. The Panel has produced many entirely workable components to answer the question what is to be done.

The first thing that has to be done is we have to raise the capability of our freshwater systems to produce more stronger and healthier smolts. In that regard, the Panel recommends the development of salmon habitat and restoration plans on an individual river system and to embed them in the IP / APR process. That is good stuff if the plans lead to action, but many cannot be actioned within the narrow mandate of many government departments and agencies concerned with salmon. It will require missionary work and not a little passion to get some plans to execution.

Secondly, we have to deal with direct human interventions in the life cycle of the salmon. Principal among these are salmon farming, bycatch, and levels of exploitation. The massive negative effect of salmon farming doesn't need to be rehearsed any further here, but, in the case of bycatch, the attention given to it by the panel of experts is welcome. Salmon Watch became involved with this question in respect of the blue whiting fishery in 2016 and, with the support of the EU delegation, had the issue raised in the request to ICES that year. ICES responded in 2017 to the effect that the Faroese and Norwegian authorities had no evidence of such bycatch but that 'uncertainties remain'. In the six years since then, the uncertainties have become more concrete and, in the 2023 report to NASCO, ICES, as we know, recommends a number of measures to investigate the matter further, including the adoption of a PIT tag programme on a North Atlantic-wide scale to investigate the issue. That may involve embarrassing problems for some jurisdictions in relation to their pelagic fisheries, but it chimes with the Panel's recommendation that NASCO, 'operationalise the precautionary approach for the bycatch of salmon in other fisheries'.

Finally, in relation to human interventions, the Panel recommends that we evaluate if more conservative, i.e. higher, SERs and CLs are needed to stop or revert the declining trends in PFAs. That can be done at a national level now and does not need to await NASCO reaching a consensus on it.

Against that background of so much work to be done, we welcome the recommendations for improving NASCO's effectiveness by the Panel, especially those in relation to seeking ways to adopt legally binding instruments for non-fishery issues and the occasional addition of ministerial involvement in NASCO deliberations.

Some years ago, I worked for a number of years as a political advisor to a minister in the Irish Government, and I well know the antipathy and sometimes well-placed antipathy that civil servants have for getting ministers involved in things that they're not currently involved in. But you can take a positive view of it as well, that if you can turn ministers into champions for salmon conservation, then it's a powerful instrument in government, and it is a layer of involvement that perhaps the NGOs should themselves be taking more interest in bringing about.

These are some highlights of the Panel's work from our point of view. With our fellow NGOs, we will be diligent in pursuing the re-implementation, both within NASCO and in our home jurisdictions. Thank you for your time, Mr President.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Niall, and I think they are very pertinent comments. I particularly relate to what you said at the end of your intervention there. I think we will need political will, and we will need to have people convinced that we need to act. That's something we're also working on with the Parties at the moment.

I think it's important also to mention that we, at the moment, are having those discussions. The Heads of Delegation are thinking hard about how to address the various recommendations, and

they will address some of your concerns. I'm thinking, in terms of habitat, for instance, and those issues, this is something that is also being considered.

We will come back later in the week as to what type of decisions are going to be taken, and we are not there yet, but I am reasonably optimistic that we will have something that will be ambitious enough for the challenge we are currently facing.

**Paul Knight (Wildfish):** Mr President, I've got a statement from Nigel Milner of the Institute of Fisheries Management. He says this constructive, well-argued review covers most of the points in the Institute of Fisheries Management consultation response, and we're glad that it was commissioned and delivered. So, well done, Erik.

First, we recognise and praise the amazingly effective management of salmon marine fisheries that Parties have delivered by their collaborative efforts through NASCO. However, without detracting from that, it is true that those fisheries are not now the major problem behind the accelerating decline of salmon in many regions. The central theme in the IFM response was that, to cover the full range of risks to salmon, NASCO's Parties and jurisdictions should adopt a more proactive, effective approach to the evaluation and resolution of pressures on salmon in home waters, particularly, but not exclusively, in fresh water. This message is repeated throughout the EPR report.

We do not here list many pressures, but most lie in the major categories of: (1) connectivity to complete life cycles in; (2) river catchment environment quality and flow regimes affecting outputs indexed by the abundance and quality of smolts; and (3) anthropogenic pressures on smolts in transitional and coastal waters.

The management of non-fisheries pressures looks in disarray for four main reasons. (1) shortage of good juvenile assessment data measured to a high scientific standard and ordered in such a way (GIS-based mapping of habitat and biota) as to usefully inform on priorities and intensity of pressures and, ultimately, the benefits of measures. (2) complementing (1), is the constraint of still-limited understanding of how freshwater and marine pressures integrate across the life cycle. We see that significant progress is now being made by LSF and LC modelling initiatives by, or associated with, ICES. (3) weak, poorly-supported infrastructure to deliver effective measures and (4) apparent lack of application by governments for home water salmon conservation and lack of clarity in how they see and rank the problems facing them.

The EPR makes recommendations on all these, intended to improve the underpinning science and make more effective the existing Resolutions, Agreements, and Guidelines. For example,

- habitat restoration and protection plans based on GIS mapping and national salmon standing management committees to oversee them;
- derivation and accuracy of conservation limits, other BRPs and related assessments. These would be greatly aided by the habitat and LC modelling recommendations;
- bycatch, a coastal and high-seas topic raised by the NGOs in 2022;
- climate change and ecosystem effects, and
- raising the policy profile and decision level of the salmon problem through ministerial engagement, initiating an outreach strategy, and raising public awareness.

That very much supports what we were saying earlier. Nigel's concluding point is several recommendations that are repeats from previous EPRs, but many are new (conservation limits, HRPP, climate and structural) because salmon and their ecosystems face long-standing and new, increasingly intense pressures. We emphasise that many of the recommendations are complementary and synergistic. Such that they are fully effective, they must be enacted together. Therefore, we urge Council not to pick just the easy ones but to think creatively and

embrace with determination all of them on the salmon's behalf.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Paul, and thank you to Nigel. And, yes, we have already gone through some of those elements, and I think, as I said, there are discussions at the moment on those aspects.

**Katrine Kærgaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)):** I want to thank the Panel for your work and very important recommendations. Thank you very much. I also want to thank the NGOs for your intervention. Thank you very much.

We are very pleased with the conclusion that NASCO needs to focus on other things than fisheries, the other stressors, the other threats there are to wild Atlantic salmon. It's something that our delegation has been saying and pushing for for years, so we're very pleased that others seem to begin to come to that conclusion as well. I think the result of this EPR is really our opportunity in NASCO to have a good, hard look at what we do, and how we can do it even better, and how we need to focus on the most important threats.

So, my question to you, Erik, is, if NASCO is going to make a strategy on the most important things that we can do for the next five to ten years, which would have the biggest impact on the conservation of salmon? Having worked through this report, what is your and the Panel's input to that? What could be the most important things that we could do that would have the greatest impact on the conservation of salmon in the coming years? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I actually hoped that I had already addressed that, Katrine. I'm a lawyer, I don't have a good idea on attributing the impact, but I understand that also the scientists really don't know what the impacts are. So, in my presentation, I linked this to the precautionary approach. In the absence of complete scientific certainty, and if there are indications of serious impacts and, in particular, irreversible impacts, States are required to take precautionary measures. It seems to me that this is really a classic scenario where you have to be very cautious, even if you don't really know how serious the problems are. And so, this is why the precautionary approach was developed, and this is not just a matter of fisheries management. Of course, the precautionary approach was included in the Rio Declaration of 1992. The Fish Stocks Agreement operationalises the precautionary approach to fisheries management, but NASCO does much more. So, it's basically a precautionary approach to salmon conservation, and so you have to look at all the relevant aspects. That's what I tried to capture or we tried to capture with the notion of holistic approaches.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, the precautionary approach, and I think, in the context of climate change as well, we see something that resonates with all managers, how do we go about incorporating that into our day-to-day actions.

**Bénédicte Valadou (European Union):** I'm Bénédicte Valadou from France, EU. So, my question is whether it is possible for NASCO to have regular meetings with administrations such as the EU, because the EU is working on such big issues as nature restoration and conservation. NASCO could be there at the first consultation. For me, it's very important that NASCO could be involved in that way. I think it's the same in EU, in America, in Canada and in Russia.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Bénédicte. I won't comment on the process in the European Union. Maybe our colleagues from the EU might at some stage. Yes, this is about NASCO being heard, and we are also talking about this with the Heads of Delegation, to make sure that those issues are being heard by the decision makers.

Yes, you're right. At the moment there's a process, a nature restoration law, and that seems to be really ambitious. And we need to try not only to be heard but to make some coherence there

with initiatives like this and to walk closer with people when, one day, they look at developing these types of laws. It's far reaching and, yes, it's very relevant, I think. Your intervention makes sense. Now, it's all how do we do this? I'm not sure at the moment we are equipped to do this, and we will have to think carefully on how this can be done.

**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** hello. I'm Dave Meerburg with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, one of the NGOs here. I've been involved in the NASCO process actually since year one, so I've attended most of the 40 years of meetings, and part of that time was as a Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canadian representative biologist and, more lately, as an NGO. So, I'd like to comment on the procedure, and the process, and the Review Panel's work. I congratulate them on a very comprehensive report. I really couldn't find many recommendations that I would disagree with. I would encourage the Parties to look at them very carefully and take them up on that.

But what I would like to comment on here is to follow up on a few statements about ministerial involvement. When I was with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, I know we used to have regular meetings of something called the Atlantic Council of Fisheries Ministers. Occasionally, we would get Atlantic salmon on the agenda for those fisheries ministers when they met around the North Atlantic. So, my question, and maybe this is something that Erik's not aware of but the Parties could respond, is does that Council of Fisheries Ministers still meet regularly? Is there any opportunity to have a more focused approach on one of their meetings on NASCO and the issues with Atlantic salmon around the North Atlantic? I know the issue in the past was always that the Atlantic Council of Fisheries Ministers deal primarily with fisheries and ministers themselves may not have the capability to discuss issues if, say, for example, some of them were aquaculture or habitat for salmon. But I think, if they had such a meeting and perhaps the President came and talked about the issue, I think that other ministers from each of the Parties or each of the countries involved in that process could be involved. That would have capability of doing something in the future on some of these issues other than just the fisheries. So, the question is does that Council of Fisheries Ministers still meet, and do they ever talk about salmon?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Dave. To my knowledge, it's not the case, but I don't know. Maybe the Parties have more information on this. I don't think this is the case anymore. So, yes, for me, a missed opportunity there.

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** We've put into place, in order to achieve some of the things you were talking about, the IP process. We have had that now for quite a few years. When the Panel had a look at that, do you think it has achieved anything? Do you think it's a positive cost benefit, because we have really used a lot of energy on it? Is it worth doing? And did you have some sort of input, some thoughts, reflections, about how we could make it more effective? You have said a bit about it in the report, but please elaborate because it's a very important element. We have to think about that very carefully, and how we continue with this process.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Raoul. A very good question, especially since this is on our agenda this year. We have to think about the possibility to have a fourth reporting cycle, what it would look like, but, also, a bit of a provocative question. Has it delivered, has it done anything? I think it's good to ask that question. Erik, please.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes, thank you for that question, which is a very difficult one. I think the report could have done a bit better on this aspect. I guess we had a lot on our plate, and so we did not focus sufficient attention on this. So, Philip had a look at a lot of these documents and the information. There is just so much, and we had so little time, so it's very difficult to come up with credible conclusions in such a short timeframe for people who are completely new to this process.

I think we noticed that only one or two of the Parties or jurisdictions had an adequate assessment of the most recent Annual Progress Reports. That's more or less correct, and I think we used that as an indicator of the fact that this is not performing well. We don't really know how this can be strengthened. The key issue is a non-fisheries issues, and there is no legally binding mandate for this, so I assume that NASCO Parties do not take this as seriously as they should and that was the power for a recommendation. But I hope that you maybe have alternative ideas.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and maybe a slight addition here. If we don't have a positive assessment of the APR, this will not necessarily be because the process is not working. The process itself of IP / APR, is really valued by the Parties, by the NGOs, because it puts the spotlight on certain issues and also the work of the Parties. When we get a negative assessment, in my mind, the process is working. So, this is an important process, I think.

**Ken Whelan (Atlantic Salmon Trust):** First of all, to say how sorry I am that I'm not with you all there in person. My first NASCO meeting was indeed in the Miramichi area, so it would've been nice to go back again. Secondly, just to congratulate the authors on what I think is an extremely valuable and challenging report.

I have one concern, and my concern is that in terms of trying to get to grips with the very important recommendations that Erik made earlier, the legal recommendations, the very difficult process that may be involved in terms of trying to make at least some of our recommendations mandatory. And I don't think we have that time.

To give you an example, my colleagues from Inland Fisheries Ireland issued a very timely warning this weekend. Imagine a warning in relation to warm water in Ireland in June. That says it all. There's no time here in terms of making progress on these things. So, I was thinking about what the Parties could bring back to their colleagues that are involved in other departments that could make this process work in a more timely fashion.

I think, probably, the most important aspects of NASCO to date are in relation to the targets that we manage to set. Some of these targets, a lot of these targets, may not have been implemented, particularly the ones in relation to aquaculture, but going back to the precautionary approach, looking at aquaculture, looking at habitat, looking, for example, at catch and release, looking at the very good recommendations in terms of PFAs, looking at the recommendations in the report in terms of conservation levels, they're all screaming to be reviewed.

I really feel very strongly that, in parallel with the process that might be taken forward legally, that it is time now to review these in the context of climate change. My comments may very well span both of our Special Sessions because the two things are so integrated. I really do feel that, in the context of some of these targets, NASCO needs to review them in a very timely way. In the discussions that will go forward, I think it is really useful when you're speaking to ministers. When you're speaking to ministers, when you're speaking to people in the Department of Agriculture, they want to know what are the targets that we have to meet. So, certainly, I think that the Parties can bring back targets.

They may not be able to implement those targets for the moment themselves, but I think that element of our work, and it was outlined several times by Erik when he commented on the precautionary approach, is important. What do we mean at the moment in terms of precautionary approach? Are our words that we have written down adequate? I feel that we really should be looking at a process, a very timely process, that will give us revised targets against which we're going to actually judge our performance reviews, against which we're going to judge then our success in terms of stemming the loss of the Atlantic salmon.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Ken, and I share the view that we don't have the time. You're right. We started to work with the Heads of Delegation back at the start of February on the draft recommendations. We met, also, at the end of April. We've met for the last two days, and what we are very much looking at is a process for things to happen and to happen quickly.

Now, your point on the targets is very valuable, and there's also thinking going on about how do we make those things more quantitative, so that we have something to report. So that we can tell the managers but also the people about the status of salmon and what we achieve. So, yes, what you said there is going to be of great interest to the Parties.

**Ben Wilson (United Kingdom):** Ben Wilson, Natural Resources Wales. The country, not the animal. The very first question, for you, Erik, was around what are the conditions for success? How is this going to work? What's the key to this working well? I want to turn that on its head and ask the question, if in, say, five years' time, come the next EPR, we look back and we go, this didn't work, we weren't successful in implementing these recommendations, we weren't successful in making a difference, why might that be? A pre-disastering question. If this goes wrong, what would be the causes of that?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I think I tried to explain that by these three factors, during my presentation, which relates to the mandate, the complexity, and a cost of measures to address the impacts. It's easier to deal with targeted salmon fishing than with the very complex, multi-source stressors, agriculture, aquaculture, river-based transport, hydroelectricity and the impacts of taking measures to address certain activities. There is also a disbalance. So, if you shut down a fishery, the socioeconomic interests are quite limited compared to if you prohibit shipping on the Rhine. So, I think those are the reasons, and Niall mentioned the structure or the composition of national delegations here, in NASCO. So, it's quite likely that, on the delegation of NASCO Parties, there are no representatives of all the relevant ministries involved, and I think that's a very good point.

So, that means that there is probably insufficient co-operation and co-ordination domestically and, therefore, implementation of what is agreed here will be more difficult. But maybe I overlook something, maybe a factor, or if there are delegations that don't agree with this.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, and just to clarify that closing fisheries can also be challenging and complex.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** in France.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** and we have seen that, also, in NASCO, not so long ago. I'm thinking of the northwest of Ireland where there was a fishery. It wasn't something easy, it has economic implications.

On the cost of the measures, I think it's also linked to what we discussed before about the need to raise salmon profile, salmon conservation. Because, suddenly, you're looking at a cost that may not be as high if you have all the elements and if you can put a value on salmon. That is something that I've shared with some colleagues. I think this is one way to do it. We need to be able to put a value on salmon stocks. At the moment, if you look at it just from the point of view of fisheries activities, recreational fisheries and even tourism, but there is also a strong social value for salmon. There's also a cost of losing those populations, a biodiversity cost, and we have not been able to materialise, to really put to decision makers and to say, this is what you will lose.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes. It appeared to me that whales, the species, is an interesting comparison. So, the international community has been able to give high priority to shutting down targeted, industrial, whaling. The main problem at

the moment with whales is not whale harvesting, in my view. These are many other impacts on whales. So, there are comparisons. So, if the international community is able to, or the North Atlantic community is able to, put salmon conservation to a higher political level, it may be easier to get very difficult things done. And, in that sense, I think a comparison with whale conservation is appropriate.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. So, anyone with a question or comment maybe triggered by the recent discussion there?

**Kim Blankenkoper (USA):** I work for the National Marine Fisheries Service in the International Trade and Commerce Office there. Erik, just to return for a second to the recommendation concerning the question of interpreting the Convention to take binding decisions on non-fisheries issues. It's a really interesting idea, very creative, and I was hoping to explore it a bit further. In your experience, how have other organizations reinterpreted their Conventions to confer binding management authority on them? That's not clearly specified in those Conventions.

I ask this because it seems that there could be a pretty substantial domestic legal risk within countries if they move forward in this way. What I mean by that is, when Parties ratify a convention, they do it based on their understanding of the legal obligations they're accepting. The process often involves not only the executive branches of a government, but their legislative branches as well for advice and consent, like we do in the US with our Senate. Then we usually develop or pass domestic laws through our legislative branches, under which we can implement binding decisions that are taken by an RFMO. Those statutes are generally tailored pretty closely to our understanding of the scope of the Convention. In fact, I think this is why most Conventions, in fact, all Conventions, have provisions in them that allow them to be amended if you find that they're not exactly fit for purpose anymore, or they're too old.

So, I'm wondering how interpretive approaches that have been made, in your experience, by other IGOs can be reconciled or address these legal issues and risks. Just to be clear, I'm not talking about the kinds of actions that NASCO may have taken to reinterpret its Convention or its Rules of Procedure with respect to who can serve as an officer in the Organization. Those kinds of things don't really imply the need to take regulatory action at home, and they don't bring, therefore, a legal risk that we'll do something that's outside the scope of our authority and then be sued and not be able to implement a binding decision that we agreed to internationally.

So, I hope that's clear and appreciate your background and experience as a lawyer. I was hopeful that you could just help us understand this creative idea that you've put on the table.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes, Kim, thank you for your intervention. In my presentation, I also mentioned that we are aware that there are various hurdles. The text responds directly to your intervention. I guess, on the one side, I'm a lawyer, and, on the other side, I try to be creative, and this is really to help you. So, I have tried to come up with alternatives for Convention change.

One of the cases I'm familiar with is this action by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, at the time, around 2004 or so, which dealt with the impact of deep-sea bottom fishing on deep water on cold-water corals. It was not a target fishery issue but an impact issue. They did take action despite the fact that the objective of the NEAFC Convention did not provide for that.

So, I acknowledge that it may be difficult to do this. I just identified it as a possibility. If you decide, together, that this is not possible, that's of course totally correct. So, nothing in the report, as such, is binding on the NASCO Parties. We were trying to find solutions, and maybe



that's too creative.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and thank you, Kim, also, for bringing that up. I have a small comment on this. I just think that, yes, we see this is really the elephant in the room in terms of our Convention, and the mandate of the Organization. I don't have a perfect solution there, or any solution for the time being. But I would just like to mention, to the Parties, that, very often, when an organization like NASCO doesn't find a way to deal with those issues, someone else does, and we lose control. I've seen that happening in the past in other organizations where some issues weren't looked at. It's only when someone else started to look at it, that we started to find ways. And the problem in this particular case is that we no longer have the time to wait for someone else to come with a solution for those particular problems.

I wanted to mention it because it's really important for all the Parties to take that into account and to go beyond those impediments and try to find ways to address those issues more proactively. Yes, it's not directly another mandate, yes, that brings legal uncertainty, but are there actions that we can find together that would lead to different ways to look at it and different solutions? That's also something we need to think about.

**Cathal Gallagher (European Union):** good afternoon, everyone. Just thinking about the mandatory nature of control of salmon, there's a good example in the EU already where we've handed over conservation legislative control of salmon through the EU directive, where we are obliged to take actions, develop management plans, report on conservation status. And whether, in the EU jurisdictions, that is something that would come back to the jurisdictions or if there is some way NASCO could be involved at the EU level under the Habitats Directive. I think it might be a little bit complex. So, I don't know, Erik, if you had any thoughts around that. I forgot to mention at the start, also, compliments on the report, and we found it very useful and thought-provoking. Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I don't really understand the question. Could you maybe repeat the essence of it? So, EU is, of course, a member of NASCO.

**Cathal Gallagher (European Union):** the EU is a member of NASCO, and jurisdictions inside the EU are obliged under the Habitats Directive to perform conservation tasks, conservation objectives. The Habitats Directive legislation is then handed back to individual jurisdictions who then have to implement measures. So, it's an example of individual jurisdictions handing the conservation powers over through the EU. So, I was just wondering then, if you were looking at it from an individual jurisdiction perspective, how would that work? We've already handed over powers to the EU, and then you would be handing over mandatory conservation efforts to an organization like NASCO as well. Is there any thought around that, or maybe your thoughts around how that is working, because that was the purpose of the Habitats Directive, to direct the conservation of salmon and other species. Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes. So, the essence of what you're saying, is that for the EU, it would not really make a big difference. That's what you were saying, because EU member states already have to comply with a body of legally binding, overarching rules. It's an example of States agreeing voluntarily to transform some of their competence to a super national body. The same thing would be for States that are Parties to NASCO but not to the EU.

It is an effort for States to solve problems that can be transboundary or that they contribute jointly to a problem and to make a joint effort to solve that problem by making international organizations stronger. Yes, I agree that this would be the way forward, and this is probably unusual because a lot of these non-fisheries issues are happening on territory.

That is something very sad in international governments, that we can sometimes agree on issues that take place on the high seas, for instance, through the BBNJ agreement, but we have to be honest that most of the pressing problems do not occur in areas beyond national jurisdiction. They occur on land and in areas within the national jurisdiction. States are often unwilling to make international organizations stronger to solve those problems, but this has to happen in one way or another.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Just a small clarification on that point because it's interesting to draw that parallel, but we also see some other constraints. That's because, when you deal with fisheries, the EU and the Commission also have exclusive competence but not in freshwater. Here, you have a body of legislation which is a Directive or several Directives, in fact, and they are environmental legislation, but it's up to the Party, in that case, the Member States, to decide how they implement them. So, I think it's a reflection of the challenges in pushing national authorities to give up on their right to decide how they manage things in order to do things. So, there's a parallel there, definitely.

**Katrine Kærgaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)):** thank you. So, I just want to try to rephrase my question from before. You have 46 recommendations, and I think we can all be honest and say that we will not be able to implement all 46 recommendations at once. So, if we can pick, let's say, the top five that we'd need to do as fast as possible... We would need to prioritise them. From your point of view, what would be the top five that we need to do as soon as possible? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** that's really difficult, Katrine, because they're so wide ranging. I think the intervention made by Paul on someone else's intervention highlighted that there are a number of more scientific-oriented recommendations relating to conservation limits. Philip developed a lot of recommendations relating to aquaculture. That sounds like a high priority, to me.

I focused on different parts of the report. I tried to, in this presentation, bring everything together through the lens of the precautionary approach and that it's really all about the amount of risk that NASCO Parties are prepared to make for loss of biodiversity. So, it's a balancing of costs against conservation burdens.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** I'd like to bring the conversation back to whales. The animal, not the place. When you answered the question, at the end you talked about how political will can get things done, and I think that's a really important point. I think that recommendation about elevating salmon to a higher political level is probably one of the most important ones. Because we keep coming up against this idea that the political will is just not there to get things done, and to me, we need that political will. We need to really be building that political will. That's really important and building political will is not easy. It takes effort. It takes time. It's about more than just meeting a minister once or twice. That will take a strategy. It goes hand in hand with the other recommendation about NASCO taking a role in educating the public about the plight of salmon and what needs to be done. Because, if you want to build political will, you need to be educating the constituents, the people who make the decisions. So, to me, that goes hand in hand.

I think that's a really exciting new role for NASCO, and it's an area where the NGOs can play a really strong role as well. So, I'm really excited about that, and I'm very excited to understand that NASCO sees that as a new focus for the Organization as well.

I just wanted to make that point and bring it back to close that loop on the whales. That's a very good example of what you can do when you have the political will. Without that, with things like aquaculture, we're not going to get anywhere. So, that recommendation, to me, is very important, and it's something we need to put some attention to and figure out exactly what it is

we're talking about when we're talking about elevating to a higher political level.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Steve. I couldn't agree more. I've said it to some other colleagues. Sometimes, the feeling we operate into a NASCO bubble, and nothing comes out of it. People outside of it don't have the understanding that we have of the problem, and the possible solution, and how we should get there. And it's back to what I was saying, nobody can hear us.

**Ben Wilson (United Kingdom):** I'm indebted to Nigel Milner, who published an evidence report for Natural Resources Wales which has highlighted the extinction risk for salmon in Wales on a number of our rivers. That has highlighted to members of Welsh Government, and not least the salmon species champion, that the plight of salmon rests not only on taking action for salmon but taking action to preserve our rivers. I am highlighting the point around the need for broad consensus and that our role, and NASCO's role, is around that advocacy piece about demonstrating the value of salmon, not just as an economic resource but as an emblem of the importance of the wider freshwater and marine environment as well. Maybe that's the thing we need to be quantifying or valuing just as much as salmon itself but the other benefits that accrue from healthy freshwater and marine ecosystems.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** so, that's, in a sense, then, its role as an indicator species of a healthy environment. I agree.

**Barry Fulham (European Union):** I work for the Irish government. We have an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list on threatened species in the world which looks at conservation status of species ranging from extinct, to threatened, to least concern. It sends out an absurd message that, on IUCN list for the Atlantic salmon, the species is classified as of least concern. Is there a way that NASCO, as an intergovernmental organization, could put pressure on a fellow intergovernmental organization, such as the IUCN, to review that classification so we can transmit a message to the world that the status of salmon is significantly threatened to focus that political will more acutely?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** You're absolutely right, and that's the way the assessments are done, and we have seen some... excuse me for saying it, funny things coming from an IUCN list in the past because they are trying to apply a methodology which is fitting for most stocks, but, in some cases, it's not necessarily adapted. Here we talk about the species, but, when we talk population, and stocks, and that genetic value is lost when we lose a population, that's not reflected in the assessment by IUCN.

So, can NASCO engage with IUCN? That's a very good question. I personally think that we should most definitely try to argue for that point. We may have a number of populations still there, but, in some other cases, we're losing this population, and we're losing thousands of years of evolution, and there's no coming back. That's part of the advocacy. That's part, again, of trying to make people understand about salmon.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** so, you're from Ireland? So, the Netherlands is a member of IUCN. Is Ireland a member of IUCN? A lot of the NASCO Parties are also members of IUCN and, therefore, have direct access to calling for such a re-assessment of that status or looking at a different type of assessment for salmon.

**Paul Knight (Wildfish):** thanks, Mr President. My own organization, WildFish, that used to be Salmon and Trout Conservation, has commissioned IUCN over the last year to look at wild salmon populations, and they've reported, and we're about to come out with a press release. They have put Atlantic salmon in the UK on their red list. I believe the rest of the Northern Hemisphere is on their amber list. But we have done that work, and it cost an awful lot of money for a very small organization like ourselves.

But, certainly, the UK is on their red list and, hopefully, that'll help NASCO Parties and the wider salmon world to get more political pressure to protect the species. As we've all been saying, there are populations that are on the verge of extinction, and we just can't let that happen. So, hopefully, it's going to help, but that work has been done. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Paul. Yes, and I recalled engaging before with IUCN on different issues, and it is true that they make you pay for the assessment.

**Alan Walker (United Kingdom):** I'd just like to note a point of clarification there, that the IUCN red list...the whole list is red, but being on the list doesn't mean anything in itself. A species or a stock can be on the list and be in a perfectly great state. The listing itself has different categories, like endangered, or critically endangered, or of least concern. So, just to say, having a species on the red list doesn't mean it's red, but I'm sure, Paul, in the press release, it'll explain the actual categorisation of the salmon. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you. Just to recap, thanks to Erik Molenaar for being here today to present the outcome of the Performance Review and for answering all the questions. And thank you all for your questions. I think it was valuable. We see some interesting trends there in terms of the expectations. There seems to be some consensus for the need for NASCO to shift gear and to change its approach in terms of trying to bring salmon as a big conservation issue. We heard about educating people and to make sure also that we get to the point that politicians are going to rally behind the salmon cause. We also had a discussion on the current limits of the Convention. Something that has been discussed many times. How do we change that; how do we get around that? For me those are the main messages today. I should also add we operate now in a different system – climate change is really starting to materialise in a big way for salmon. We have been talking about climate change for twenty years but now we are really seeing the changes so this is going to be the crucial element to everything we decide to do. The precautionary approach as well. So, we will close the meeting. Thank you very much for your participation.

# Recommendations to NASCO

1. Recommendation to set up a Working Group for three years to co-ordinate NASCO's climate change activities. If this was accepted by Council, the Terms of Reference may include, but not be limited to, the following tasks:
  - Draft a NASCO climate change strategy and a roadmap setting out how the strategy could be implemented;
  - Recommend where meaningful changes can be made within NASCO to manage, use, and communicate the information it receives on climate change activities, and to support the Parties' / jurisdictions' abilities to mitigate the impacts of climate change on salmon productivity. For example, consider organizing a regular symposium focused on climate change, and, if warranted, consider developing a climate change knowledge hub within the NASCO website;
  - Develop a NASCO resolution on climate change, aligning with those resolutions set out by other RFMOs (for example, ICCAT);
  - Develop a Carbon Policy to ensure NASCO's carbon emissions are in line with best practices on achieving carbon neutrality (for example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Climate Neutral Now Initiative); and
  - If deemed appropriate, advise on a long-term plan for continuing the work of the WG into the foreseeable future and advise on the most appropriate mechanism to do so (for example, Standing Committee).

# Recommendations to NASCO (cont'd)

2. Recommendation that NASCO produces an overarching statement highlighting the climate emergency and setting out its commitment to consider climate change impacts. NASCO may wish to include an obligation that climate change is considered systematically in all future decisions and resolutions that are developed by NASCO.
3. Council may wish to consider the incorporation of best practice related to climate change and salmon management into NASCO's relevant Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines when reviewed and revisited.
4. Recommendation that NASCO recognises the climate change research that is ongoing across the Parties / jurisdictions that can inform drivers of Atlantic salmon mortality. NASCO may wish to look for opportunities to facilitate funding and increase international scientific collaboration both through the Parties / jurisdictions and the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board.

# Recommendations to Parties / jurisdictions

1. Recommendation that Parties / jurisdictions consider taking a strategic multidisciplinary approach when developing and implementing their climate adaptive management measures. All reasonable opportunities should be taken to incorporate wider stakeholder views into decision making, including where appropriate, collaboration with other agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, and all relevant stakeholders.
2. Recommendation that Parties / jurisdictions consider undergoing an aligned exercise to assess which stressors to wild Atlantic salmon would be the most relevant for the Parties / jurisdictions. For example, using the Norwegian ranking stressor assessment across all Parties / jurisdictions. This would inform the Parties / jurisdictions which stressors are most impactful on their salmon stocks and are likely to increase with climate change, as well as where climate change ranks within the range of stressors experienced by salmon populations.

# Recommendations to Parties / jurisdictions (cont'd)

3. Recommendation that Parties / jurisdictions consider incorporating the below identified best practices, as reported on in the TBSS papers, as part of their climate adaptive management strategy:
  - increase access to, and implement protection of, thermal refuges to mitigate effects of increases in water temperatures in salmon rivers;
  - restore and maintain connectivity when it is compromised by climate change related effects. For example, river flows, estuarine thermal barriers, renewable energy infrastructures;
  - develop a strategically designed, quality controlled, national river temperature monitoring network;
  - develop 'warm water protocols' for recreational fishing to minimise the negative impacts of catch and release on recreationally caught salmon;
  - management strategies that seek to improve the climate resilience of rivers with consideration for nature-based solutions;
  - ensure that genetic and phenotypic diversity of all salmon populations is maintained to optimize their adaptive capacity;
  - maintain existing and, where appropriate, initiate new long-term population monitoring programs (e.g. life stage abundance and distribution, life history traits, harvest, origin) to provide critical data needed to evaluate population dynamics in the face of a changing climate; and
  - identify actual or potential invasive biota and pathogens presenting risk to wild salmon, whose occurrence maybe increased by climate change; develop and apply remedial measures.



## Recommendations to Parties / jurisdictions (cont'd)

4. Recommendation that Parties / jurisdictions consider identifying knowledge gaps through implementing the above recommendations, and through other means, that are preventing effective management actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. These knowledge gaps could be collectively reviewed to assess if NASCO can facilitate the information sharing needed, or if a request for scientific advice from NASCO to ICES would be needed.
5. Recommendation that Parties / jurisdictions implement management to reduce anthropogenic stressors on salmon populations.

## CNL(23)89

***Question and Answer Session held during the Special Session of the Council:  
Evaluation of Implementation Plans / Annual Progress Reports Under the  
Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)***

The presentation is available here: [Presentation on the IPs / APRs from the Chair of the Review Group](#)

**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** I'm Dave Meerberg, Atlantic Salmon Federation. Thanks, Cathal, for explaining again to us, you explain each year very well, and I believe in a year previous or two I may have made the comment, and I haven't seen there's been any change, but it just is really surprising to me. When I look at the Implementation Plans (IPs) this year for example, I see five IPs for Spain. For very, very small parts of Spain that have one or two rivers.

I see an IP for EU or UK – Northern Ireland, and then I look and I see an IP for Canada. And I think I've commented before, that, at least for Canada, because there's very different rules and regulations applied in the different provinces of Atlantic Canada, and different jurisdictions are in control of some of those things, I would certainly recommend that the Canadian IP and APR process in the future should at least be broken down by four or five different regions. Or provinces, or however Canada would wish to approach it.

But it just seems you must have had to spend a fair bit of time in each one of those five EU – Spain IPs, and yet it doesn't seem that if you're spending equivalent amounts of time on one item, like one part of Spain... If you're spending that amount of time on Canada. Canada's much more complex than that.

**Cathal Gallagher (Chair of the IP / APR Review Group):** I don't want to come in too much for Canada, but I suppose that's a very good point, and maybe that's something that could be considered in the next cycle. Spain is broken up that way, and the reason is, of course, that Spain has individual government jurisdictions in those areas that have responsibility for fish.

I know that that's the same in Canada from reading the Plan, and I know it's difficult for colleagues in Canada to even collate a national plan because all of that is very different. I don't know if anyone from Canada would like to comment on that? Doug?

**Doug Bliss (Canada):** thank you very much, and Dave, as always, thank you for your question. Yes, so, I do want to first thank all the members of the Committee who go through this. It's a fairly significant process every year, it takes a lot of time and energy of the NASCO Secretariat, Party members and everyone to not only put Plans together but for the meeting, I think it was a five-day meeting and preparations.

I think as we have moved on in the whole IP process, we have found that there's certainly improvements. Cathal, in your Committee's report you talked about moving forward in terms of developing measurable metrics that you can report on things of this nature. So, I think comments like Dave's and yours are all very important elements to our discussion about the fourth reporting cycle and should be considered.

So, maybe I'll just read something as well, and I think it really speaks to Dave's question, actually. Canada is a large and complex country. You've learned about that complexity, for

example, in the ways in which we share jurisdictions, and our sheer size, throughout this year's meeting. And while we in Canada accept that we can and need to do better for Atlantic salmon and indeed for our reporting and our measures. Canada also recognises that some of the Review Group's dissatisfactions with our actions relate more to our difficulty in collating and reporting data across five provinces and well over 800 to 900 rivers. Canada recognises the need for introspection. We hope to enhance our ability to track and report in our progress reviews as part of our larger domestic effort to build a more cohesive, co-ordinated narrative around our conservation and restoration effort of our Atlantic salmon through the wild Atlantic salmon conservation strategy. Thank you.

**Cathal Gallagher (Chair of the IP / APR Review Group):** thanks, Doug. And I know we're tight for time, so if there are any other questions for the process or the IP Review Group?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** I also wanted to thank the Review Group for all the work over the years. We know that this is a process that has improved, but the efforts going in are really, really serious. It's also very important and very difficult for the Parties. We know that we have some jurisdictions who find it difficult to provide an IP, although there's very good work going on the ground, and I think people should keep that in mind.

So, I think it's important now to open the floor for discussions on specific questions that you may have. You may have particular considerations, things that you want clarifications for and so on. So, the floor is open. So, Niall, please.

**Niall Greene (Salmon Watch Ireland):** well, at first, I'd like to start off by associating myself with the comments about the work of the Review Group. They brought great rigour and process and indeed, objectivity to us. The amount of work involved is quite humongous. I was on the Review Group for years, some years ago, and I was very pleased to get off it. Sitting in judge and jury on the work of the jurisdictions is tough work.

People in NASCO are probably at this stage a bit fed up with hearing NGOs from Ireland banging on about salmon farming. But the truth of the matter is that we have no national forum within which the kind of issues we have can be thrashed out. Even not resolved, just thrashed out, just consulted on, and that results in quite a lot of recourse through the courts on environmental issues and so on. So, I'll keep any comments I have to make as short as possible, and I have quite a few questions.

The first question I have is only, I fear, somewhat tangentially concerned with the APRs. But in the past few weeks there has been an article published by Barry and others, describing a project in which they tracked smolts from the northeast of the Republic of Ireland, going up the Irish Sea and into the North Channel. And the research, to a fairly high degree of confidence, confirms a routing that people suspected was the one the smolts were taking. It appears to take them quite close, because the North Channel is a very narrow channel, to concentrations of salmon farms in Scotland. Concentrations of salmon farms, and concentrations of sea lice, obviously. So, the potential for smolts from Ireland to be interfered with in that journey by salmon farming in another jurisdiction, I think raises some serious questions. Not so much under the Habitats Directive because the UK is no longer subject to that Directive, but it raises law of the sea issues about the migration of fish.

So, this is a short-notice question about EU and UK, but I wonder if there are any initial thoughts by either delegation on that subject? Ireland, by international standards, has a tiny, almost miniscule salmon farming industry, which is declining. But even the small number of farms that we have still in existence, they're virtually all sited in a way which causes them to interfere with the migration of wild salmonids. It is an extraordinary feature of the Irish system that there is no salmon farm in Ireland that has ever been subjected to the rigours of modern environmental evaluation, the application of the best scientific advice available, and so on.

Because the licences which they initially had and which should have been coming up over the past 20 years for review and extension or denial have been the subject of a temporary piece of legislation introduced about 20 years ago, which allowed their existing licence to continue beyond its expiry date if they simply notified the minister that that's what they would like. So, as a result, no rigorous assessment has been made of the impact of those farms. So, the first question I have is whether the Irish authorities now have any plans to regularise that situation.

I then have a few questions arising from the APR, from Section 3.3, and the first is in relation to Action A1, which promises a revised sea lice protocol, but no indication as to when that's going to be issued. Also under A1 it's stated that no breaches of trigger levels have occurred with sea lice since July '22. Now, selecting July '22 as your baseline very conveniently ignores the critical period that led up to that July '22, March, April and May, and nowadays part of June. So, perhaps we could be enlightened about why that particular dateline was chosen and not, perhaps, a more critical one that would show that many individual farms certainly exceeded in '22 and may even have exceeded in '23.

Action A2 promises a new protocol on escapees, and the same question arises. When are we going to get it? Action A2 also refers to the fact that there were no officially reported escapes during 2022. I don't think I'm being mischievous by suggesting that implies that there may have been unreported escapes, and I'd welcome a comment on that. Irish salmon farms have increasingly gone over to the use of fish as a means of cleaning lice, lumpsuckers and wrasse. The lumpsuckers come from breeding stations, but hundreds of thousands of the wrasse are being collected in the wild and then transported into farms with no obvious environmental assessment of what impact that has on the areas where the fish were gathered and where they are being planted.

As I said, the Irish industry is very small. A tiny, open-cage industry, and I should say in parentheses here that in Salmon Watch we're not opposed to salmon farming. We're opposed to open-cage salmon farming. But there's a growing acceptance in all circles, of sea lice and escapee damage. There are significant and growing disease problems, which are being exacerbated by climate change. High mortality and up to 40% of the smolt implant dying in the course of their maturing, and that raises many issues, including animal welfare issues.

There's declining employment in the sector, and of course there's rigorous opposition from NGOs to new licences and that is gumming up the system, including leading to legal actions. So, it's a wonder why Ireland continues with open-cage farming when it could be devoting its energies to closed containment. That's the conclusion of what I wanted to say, Mr President.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Niall. Yes, indeed, those issues I just recall have been raised in the past and they keep coming back. This is important, because this is also one of the areas of the IPs and APRs which is systematically highlighted by the Review Group as problematic for the Parties. So, I was wondering if the EU could provide some replies?

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you, Niall, for the questions. Also, to acknowledge the work of Cathal and the Review Group, it is a truly amazing collaborative effort which keeps people like me on my toes. As does Niall.

So, in relation to the first question, I think as Niall has pointed out, this report, Barry *et al*, is relatively recent. I think our initial review of it, my own from a policy perspective and Inland Fisheries Ireland from a technical perspective, is that we need a little more time to consider it comprehensively. But we are alive to the potential threat to Irish smolts, and indeed smolts emanating from other parts – the UK in particular. At certain points, as it transitions along the Scottish coast and past, effectively, a narrow corridor, there is quite a bit of aquaculture. So, our initial view is that there was a high level of confidence in the sample size. Despite the fact that it's small in relation to the indications that are coming from the report. We would like to

suggest that we would liaise closely with our colleagues in UK – Scotland, when we've had the opportunity to examine the report in more detail. And obviously we'd be happy to keep Niall and the NGO Group advised of that liaison.

So, I'm sure I can rely on our colleagues in UK – Scotland, to participate in that when we've had a chance, and indeed they've had a chance to review the report in a more comprehensive fashion. Unless UK – Scotland want to add anything there?

**Alexander Kinninmonth (United Kingdom):** thanks very much. I'm Alex Kinninmonth from the Scottish Government, the UK delegation. Well, while I've got the microphone, I'll also add thanks to Cathal and the Review Group for all their work. Yes, on this specific point, as Denis has pointed out, scientists from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate have been partners in the research project that's been mentioned there. And yes, we're considering the findings and we're committed to liaise with our colleagues in Ireland and across the rest of the UK on those findings. But just to be clear that the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers take the issue of declining salmon populations extremely seriously.

There's a lot of information in our IP and APR, and I do encourage you to look at that, but just last week, the Scottish Government's main environmental regulator, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, opened a consultation. It will take place over the next 14 weeks, and that's on proposals for a new Sea Lice Risk Assessment Framework that would apply an evidence-based sea lice exposure threshold during the critical migration period to salmon farms. That will apply in over 120 wild salmonid detection zones on Scotland's west coast and Western Isles. The west coast and islands are the only areas where salmon farming is permitted under National Planning Policy. So, as I say, that 14-week consultation will take place, and we'll look to see the implementation of that framework by the end of this year in a phased way on new and expanding farms, but also existing farms.

That is part of a really important programme of work which reflects Scottish Ministers' commitment to better protect our wildlife and the wildlife of our neighbours, critically in these circumstances, and the environment. It really will see a significant change in the approach of how we manage interactions between wild and farmed fish in Scotland. Thank you.

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thanks, I look forward to working with Alex and liaising with Alex. I don't want to ignore the other questions that Niall has asked. I am Ireland's, I suppose, leading policy maker for wild fish, not for aquaculture. But two of our colleagues from the department and agency responsible for the development and regulation of aquaculture are online and they'll be in a position to respond.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** Ultan Waldron is my name, I'm head of Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in Ireland, and I have responsibility for the processing of licence applications for aquaculture. I am joined by my colleague, Neil Ruane, from the Marine Institute, so I might ask Neil to supplement some of the more technical questions. Just firstly, I welcome the opportunity to address you, the findings in the report and the review. We'd certainly be interested in engaging further on that.

I would ask if there's any guidance from the Review Group as to how one does actually achieve a satisfactory status? There's a couple of colours on the map, we'd obviously always like to be in the green, but there's three in particular that we'd like to further engage on, if there's any guidance from the NASCO Committee in that space we would welcome it.

In response to some of the questions: there are a number of salmon farm applications on hand with us at the moment and they're currently going through the environmental assessment processes that Niall mentioned. We were faced with quite a challenge a number of years ago

in terms of a backlog which meant the priority in numbers terms were concentrated on other parts of the aquaculture backlog to licence those.

So, we are looking at the salmon farm questions. As Niall mentioned it is quite a small number that we're looking at. I think we've got about just over 30 on hand to process. They will be subject to the full rigours of the environmental assessment and will comply with all EU as well as national legislation in terms of the environmental assessment process.

In terms of consulting and engaging with the sector, each of those applications is subject to a statutory as well as a public period of consultation. So, everybody has an opportunity to provide input into the licencing process in the country, and those factors are taken into consideration. Ultimately, we are guided by the science, so if the appropriate assessments or the environmental assessments dictate that a licence cannot be issued, well, then that's the result. And that has been the case in the past for other licence applications. They get refused where the science says no, amongst other factors which the minister of the day has to consider when a licence is being put forward for consideration.

I think that's the main questions that were asked of me. As Denis says, he has responsibility for the wild fish stocks. So, I don't know if Neil wants to add anything to that, and if I need to clarify anything further, please don't hesitate to ask further questions.

**Neil Ruane (European Union):** thank you, Ultan. Yes, just some small comments in relation to sea lice. I'm Neil Ruane, I'm the manager for the Aquaculture Section here at the Marine Institute in Ireland, and we oversee the running of the national sea lice monitoring program in the country. Just some comments then, in relations to sea lice. July of last year was not meant to be a baseline, it was just a simple statement of fact in the report for last year, that since July of 2022 until the end of that year, within that reporting period there were no breaches of our national sea lice trigger levels. Obviously, in the graph in the report, you could see that we had 93% of inspections below trigger levels. Therefore, there were some breaches prior to that time. All of that information is available in our Annual Sea Lice Report for 2022, which is available on the Marine Institute website.

In relation to upcoming actions, we do have plans to revise the National Sea Lice Pest Management Strategy in Ireland, and this is linked in with the National Aquaculture Strategy, which is due to be published soon. As far as I'm aware, that had been prepared primarily by BIM in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, and that will have a number of action points for the next cycle of that plan. Some of those points will include sea lice monitoring, and ensuring that, as best we can, that the programme that we operate is operated under the best information, the best scientific evidence available to us at the time. I think that's all I have for the moment, thank you.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** if I could just add one additional point, just in terms of transparency about the licencing process. Last year we launched, and this is in conjunction with our colleagues in the Marine Institute and with certain mapping with the assistance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, we launched an online viewer. So, anybody can view any of the licence sites around Ireland and click on them, it will give certain information. We are trying to get more information onto that site, but it'll tell you where the site's located, what they're licenced for and the species that they're licenced to farm, whether that is salmon farming, mussels, oysters, etc. So, that's publicly available to anybody who wants to gain access to it. It's called [AQUAMIS](#).

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Ultan and Neil. Just before we go there were two additional questions, I think. One regarding a new protocol on escapees, and one regarding the use of wild wrasse. Do you have any information on those?

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** the protocol on escapees, we haven't had any reports of escapees, not in my time and certainly right before that. So, there is a strict design protocol there for any operators that is agreed with their marine engineers who operate in that space.

I wasn't aware there was an issue with the actual protocol, and certainly we encourage any members of the public, or NGOs or for that matter our colleagues in the IFAs to contact us with reports of any escapes. But there hasn't been any reported to us.

**Neil Ruane (European Union):** yes, we do have plans to develop a protocol for reporting of escapes to outline the procedure and the protocol, because there are different stipulations depending on the age of each company's aquacultural licence and when it was granted. We would like to bring all the available information together into one protocol so that it's clear for everyone what is required to report, and to who. Also, we will be reaching out with our colleagues, not only in the department, but also in Inland Fisheries Ireland for any information or any additional stipulations they would like to see included in that protocol.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** the additional question was on the use of lump sucker or wrasse. I can only say to Niall, if he wanted to supply additional information through Denis to ourselves, we can certainly engage in that. Because it's taking fish from the wild, so that's not under our competence. So, I would need to follow-up on that separately, if that's okay?

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thank you, and just to say thank you to you, Ultan, and to Neil for coming on the call. I think from an NGO point of view, if there's anything more specific you want to raise with me, I will liaise with you internally at home, and I'll keep in touch.

**Noel Carr (Federation of Irish Salmon Sea Anglers):** Noel Carr from Federation of Irish Salmon Sea Anglers. Thanks Niall and Ultan for addressing this. Our concern is about the responsibility for the organic label and the production in Ireland for issuing the organic signal. Do you, under your Head of Agriculture Department, have responsibility for that and monitoring that, and especially the stock that comes in from Scotland at the moment at Donegal, Rinmore? Because that's where quite a lot of the product goes back organically labelled. Thanks.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Noel. Neil, do you want to answer?

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** no, just within the division answer it's just unfortunate that we're having a national conversation at an international forum. I'm happy to provide answers to those questions, but in terms of organic farming, no, we are not responsible, or myself personally responsible, it's just for the licencing of the actual production, the certification or the processing.

I know definitely there is a role from organic certification, and BIM will be involved in the marketing side of it. But I think if you could give me some more specific details I will certainly ensure that an answer is provided to you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** very good. Thank you, gentlemen, and we'll move on now. Are there any other questions regarding other APRs? Steve, please, go ahead.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Steve Sutton, I have a question for Canada on their Annual Progress Report. In the Canadian APR there's a very brief mention of the development of a tool for identifying European introgression. I believe that relates to a paper published last year by scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, describing a discovery of genetic material in a population of wild salmon in southern Newfoundland. The discovery was of European genes in a population of salmon in southern Newfoundland. The scientists concluded that that genetic material could only have come from the recent use of European salmon in an aquaculture facility, and the subsequent escape of those salmon and interbreeding

of those salmon with the wild population. That, of course, would be an unauthorised use of European genetic strain in the industry.

That would be the second time that European genetics have been discovered in wild salmon in Canada. The first was here in the Bay of Fundy several years ago when European genetics were discovered in the gene-banking programme for the endangered inner Bay of Fundy salmon population. So, it seems we have a problem here in Canada with the unauthorised introduction and use of European strain salmon in the aquaculture industry. The development of a tool to identify that genetic material in wild populations will be useful, but obviously there's other questions.

In particular, what is Canada doing to identify the source of those fish? What is Canada doing to make sure those fish are not still in the water? What is Canada going to do to make sure those fish don't go into the water in the future? Is there any member of the Canadian delegation here who can shed some light on that situation. What's going to be done to make sure we don't continue to have those European strain fish in use in the aquaculture industry here in Canada?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** Thank you, Steve.

**Doug Bliss (Canada):** so, thank you very much for the question from the Atlantic Salmon Federation. I think Livia Goodbrand might be able to help us out on that one.

**Livia Goodbrand (Canada):** thank you, Steve. Yes, we're aware of the report and we are tracking this file. There's actually a Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) meeting going on in parallel with the NASCO meeting, so they are deliberating on these very questions. And until we get that report finalised, I don't think we can really answer. That's the point of the CSAS process, and I trust that it is rigorous. I know that they've invited many different external participants, including international participants. So, unfortunately, we'll have to await the results of that review and report. Thank you.

*Additional response received by correspondence from Canada 7 July 2023:*

- *DFO is aware of the presence of European genes in wild and farmed salmon in Atlantic Canada.*
- *The use of reproductively-viable European salmon in net-pen aquaculture has never been permitted in Atlantic Canada, though some controlled work has been permitted in land-based facilities. It is expected that some European genetic presence has been unintentionally introduced into aquaculture, and European genes have been inadvertently released into the wild from farm escapes.*
- *DFO is working closely with provincial authorities and the industry to address this issue. We are reviewing several additional management measures. This includes stronger protocols and measures to reduce the risk of aquaculture salmon escaping and consideration of genetic screening approaches.*
- *DFO also continues to research mitigation measures to better protect wild Atlantic salmon. For example, DFO is working with provinces to review regulatory requirements of net pens to further mitigate escapes.*
- *Additionally, a DFO Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) process is currently underway, to assess the risk posed to wild Atlantic Salmon population abundance and diversity by direct genetic interaction with escapes from East Coast Atlantic Salmon aquaculture. This process will also consider potential mitigation options to address potential risks.*

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Canada.



**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Dave Meerberg, Atlantic Salmon Federation. I guess, Livia, I'd like to follow up on that, then. I find it a little bit surprising that DFO is saying they're holding off on doing anything about this until they get the result of a further scientific study on what the implications are of introgression into the wild populations. I believe what Steve asked, is that DFO seems to be aware there must be European-strain fish being used in the aquaculture industry, you've known that for a couple of years. Why aren't you out there looking at the industry and finding out where it came from?

It's got nothing to do with what answers are going to come from the scientific process, it's following up on what you should be looking at as a big concern. It's a concern of European strain fish in Canadian aquaculture that's not allowed by NASCO. So, it's a violation of NASCO's guidelines, and it should be followed up on, not put off to wait for some further scientific answer.

**Livia Goodbrand (Canada):** thank you. This is my understanding, and it may not be perfect. Part of the reason that they're meeting to discuss the science still, as opposed to taking action, is we don't really understand, based on the data we have, when and where those introgressions happened. Once those European genes get into the population, it's difficult to say what their source was or when that interaction occurred. So, I think part of the science that's left to be done is around increasing our understanding.

Yes, the European genes are there, we don't know if those are continuing to be added into the population's genetic structure, or if this was a problem that may have happened 10, 20 years ago. My understanding is that we need to find a resolution to understand when and how this happened, and if it's continuing to happen, before we can really determine how to move next. That's my understanding, but it really is imperfect and that's why I'm waiting on CSAS.

I just thought you'd have the process to go sample the industries, sample the smolts they're producing, sample the fish in the cages and see if you can find where they're coming from. I think it's a good idea, and I'm sure it's something that there's a lot of different ways to build a sampling programme. I expect that's something that's being worked on. Happy to take further questions or comments including if anybody from the Canadian delegation has a better understanding. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Livia. Nigel, please?

**Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management):** thank you very much, Nigel Milner here from the NGO group. This is a question on behalf of the Norwegian salmon rivers, so I guess it's aimed to the Norwegian delegation. It's a bit of a hybrid question, because it also refers to NASCO generally. In the IP there's a statement that the Director of Fisheries will investigate episodes of strayed and farmed salmon in fjords and rivers, and where possible track fish back to the farm of origin and use that information to optimise control regimes. We would like to know if they feel, in their view, that the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries has not carried out what they regard as a clear order from Government – to implement a common tracking system for all farmed salmon. This was set to be a priority in 2022, but the work has still not been done.

So, firstly, why hasn't that been done? That's to the Norwegian delegation. Secondly, to ask NASCO to stress to all relevant governments and their agencies the importance of complying with all agreed efforts to protect wild salmon. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Nigel, and someone from Norwegian delegation?

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** at this point I want to ask Guro Mathiesen, who's online, to comment on this question because she's an expert on it. Thank you.

**Guro Mathiesen (Norway):** thank you. Hi, I'm Guro Mathiesen from the Department of

Trade, Industry and Fisheries in Norway, and we put great emphasis on reducing the challenges for escape incidences. Norway is positively inclined towards establishing a tracking system and providing a demonstration it is appropriate and efficient. Different methods are under evaluation in Norway, and the Directorate of Fisheries is currently considering where and how we may track the farmed salmon. So, that's where we are at this point in time, we're considering how we may track farmed salmon.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** okay, thank you, thank you very much. Nigel, is that okay?

**Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management):** yes, thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** We have reached the end of the Session today; thank you again to the Review Group and to all the Parties for the questions.

CNL(23)79

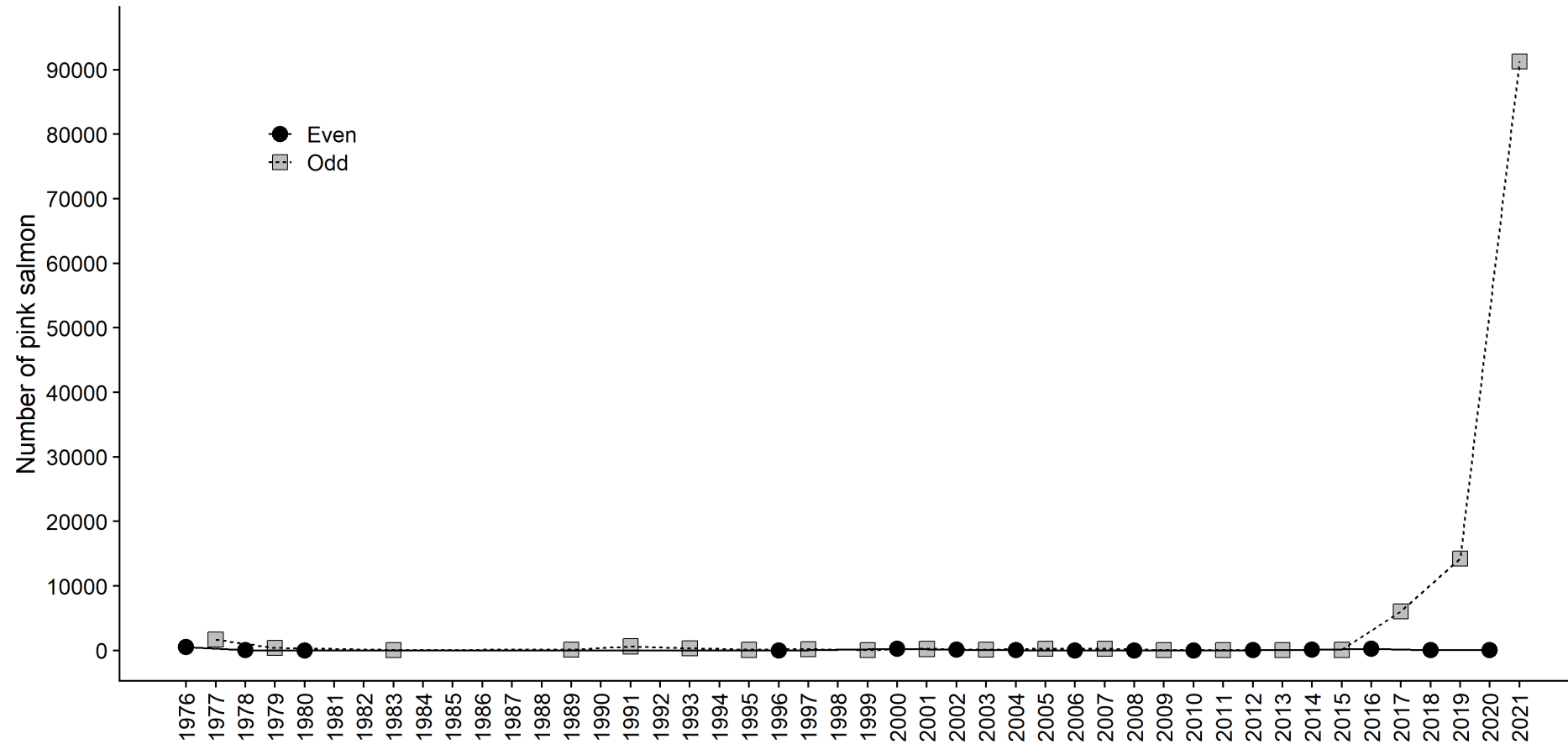
# Pink salmon in Norway

Control measures in 2023

Eirik Frøiland

NASCO annual meeting 7 June 2023

# Historical river catches in Norway



Graph: Henrik Berntsen



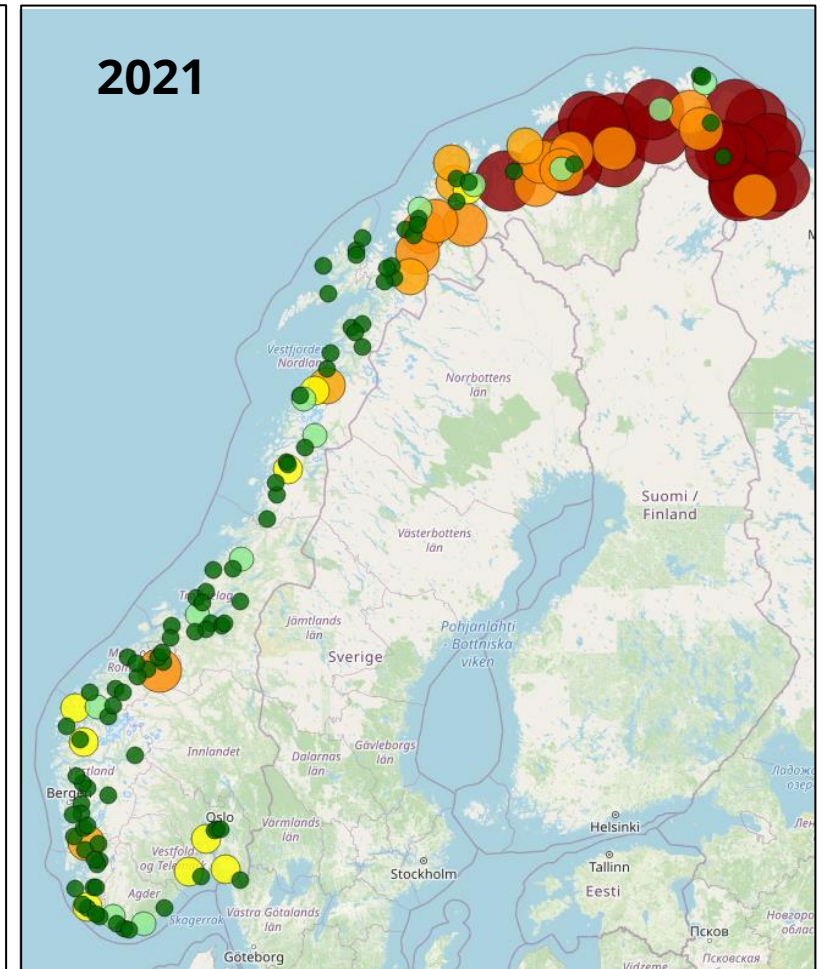
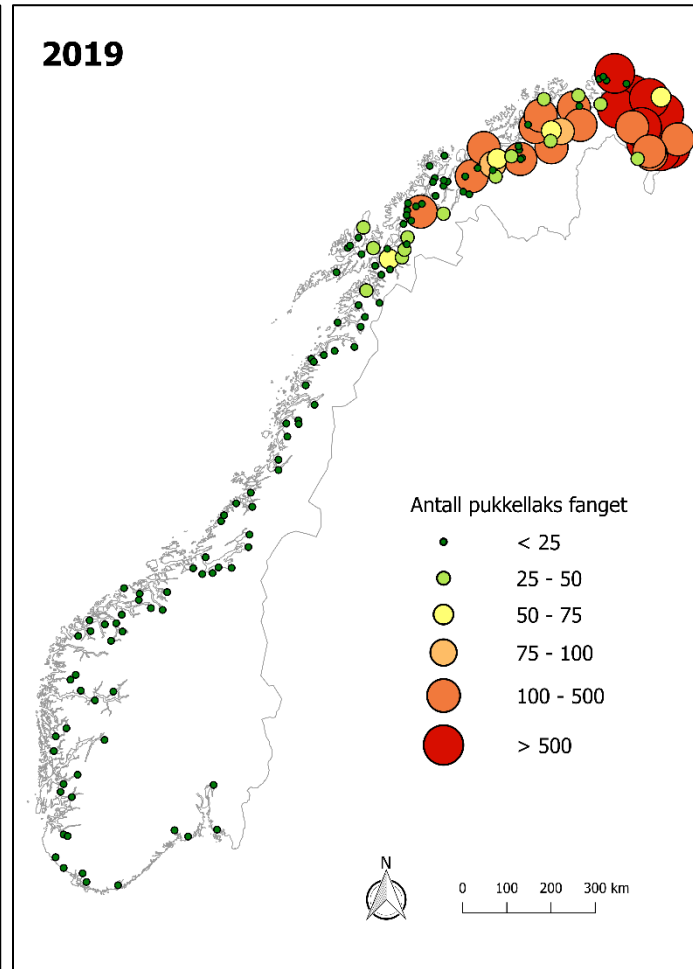
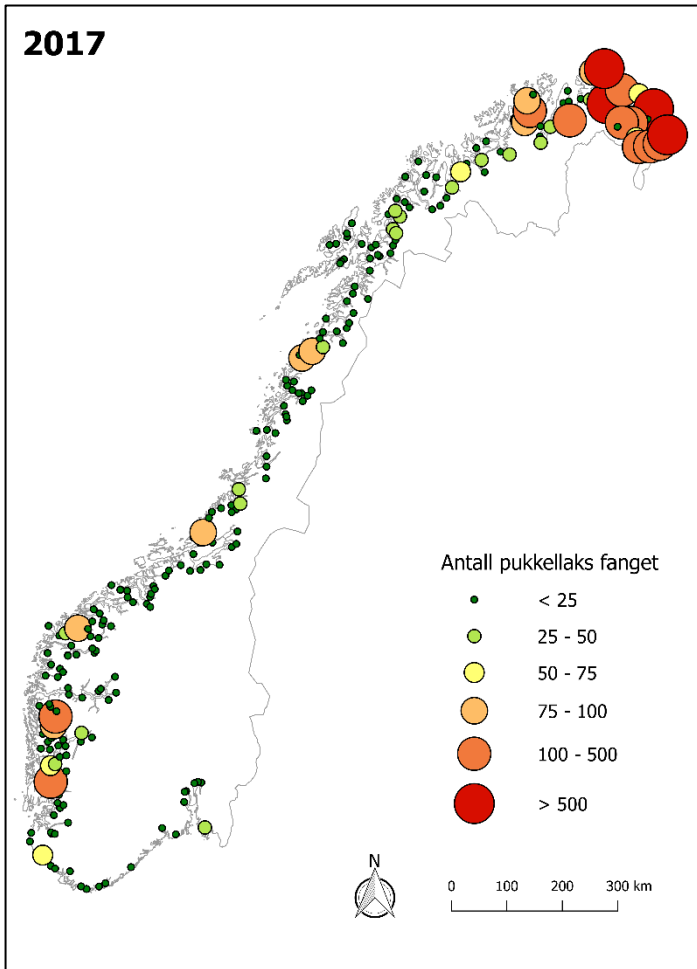


Illustration: Norwegian Institute for Nature Research





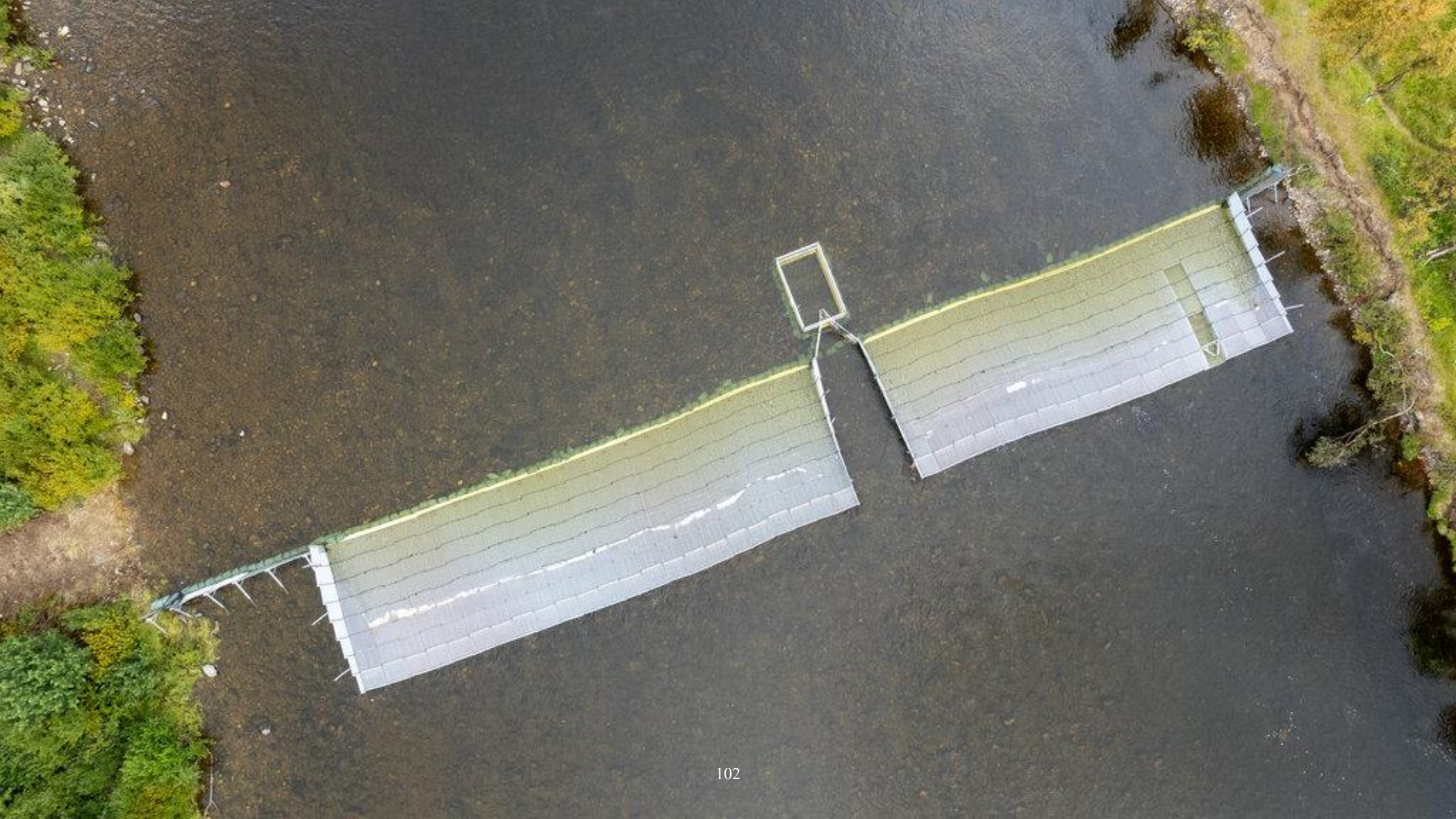








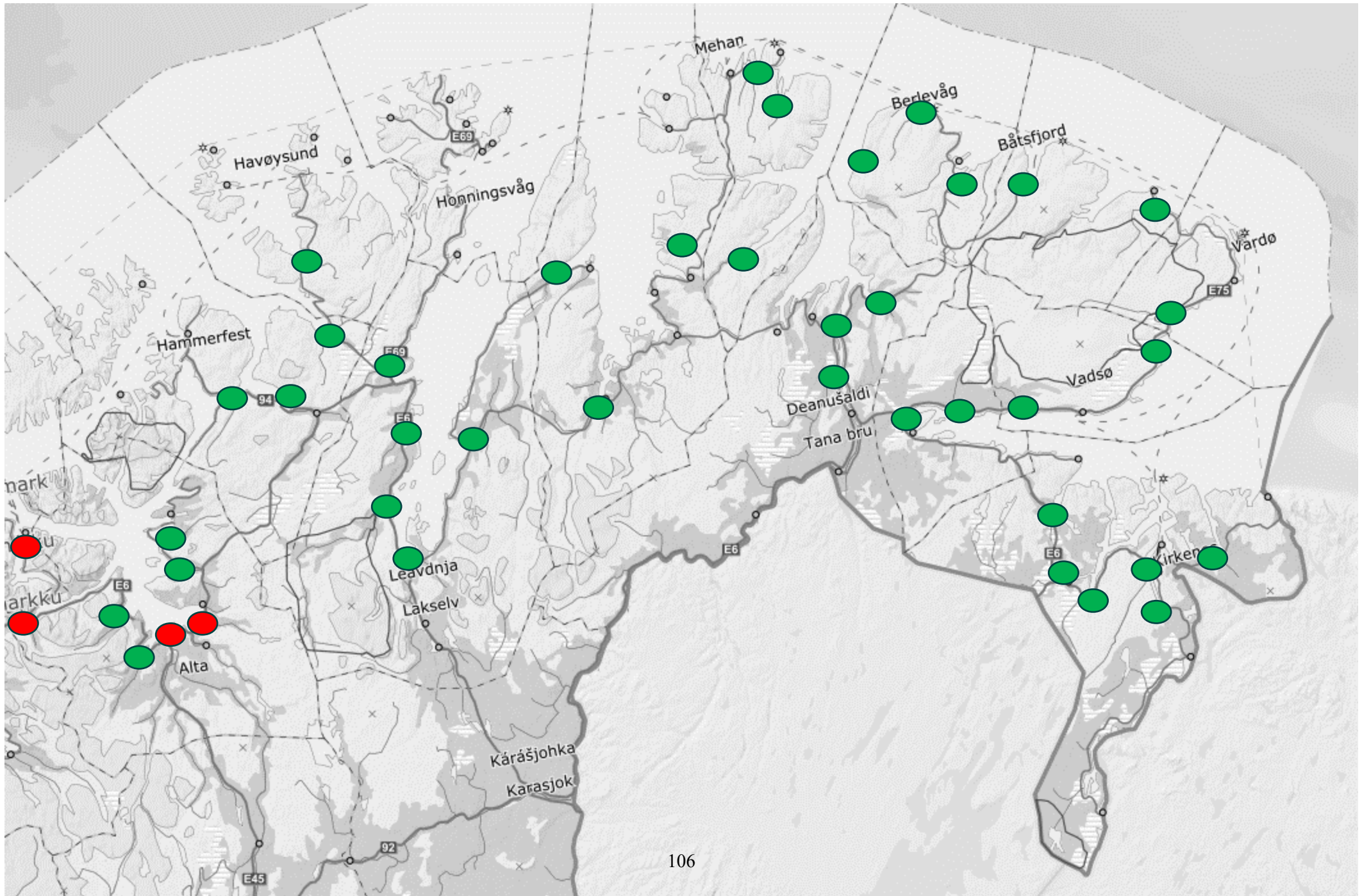
Foto: Gamvik JFF/Lars Magne Hansen



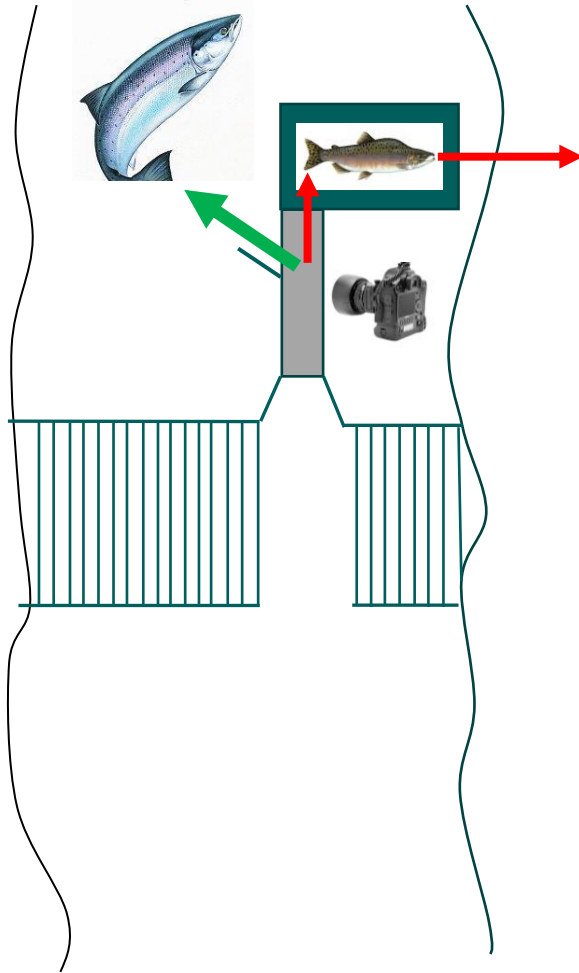


Foto: Greg Ruggerone





# Automatic sorting



- The weir operations will have negative impacts:
  - All fish are held back in a cage until sorted
  - Delayed migration
  - Stress and aggression
  - Risk of infections
  - Manual handling damages scales and mucus
  - Expensive and hard work
- We are aiming at developing AI-based automatic sorting within 2027

# Latest news

- Danish research vessel Dana caught 40 pink salmon southwest of Bodø in Mai.
- Norwegian vessel G.O. Sars on the same research cruise caught zero pink salmon.
- Too early to say what 2023 will bring.





Norwegian  
Environment  
Agency

*Press Release*

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)  
Fortieth Annual Meeting,  
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada  
5 – 8 June 2023

**Climate Change, Other Threats to Wild Atlantic Salmon Clear  
North Atlantic Countries Taking Action. Commit to Doing More**

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), the international body responsible for promoting the recovery, conservation, and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon, closed its Fortieth Annual Meeting today. Delegates gathered in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, on the banks of the Petitcodiac River, where Atlantic salmon are actively being restored. Countries from around the North Atlantic discussed the alarming effects climate change will have – and is already having – on Atlantic salmon and ways to improve the climate resiliency of the stocks. NASCO also welcomed Indigenous peoples from across the North Atlantic to share their perspectives on the importance of this species to their social and cultural lives and to explore how they could participate more fully in the work of NASCO.

According to information presented during a Special Session held by NASCO on climate change and Atlantic salmon, the warming environment will be devastating for this species, and its effects are already becoming evident. The Special Session highlighted actions that NASCO Parties are taking in their own waters to mitigate those effects, but more is urgently needed at the national and international levels to address this existential threat. Already many Atlantic salmon stocks are threatened with extinction; the climate crisis is increasing the urgency to take meaningful action to ensure the future of this iconic species. Today, NASCO Parties expressed their unwavering commitment to Atlantic salmon by agreeing to consider climate change and its impacts in a systematic manner in all aspects of its work. This commitment was part of a broader NASCO initiative to reform and refocus the work of the organisation – based on the results of a third performance review conducted by independent experts – to meet the most important challenges facing Atlantic salmon today and into the future.

*‘Atlantic salmon is a magnificent species that we must not fail to recover and conserve.’* said NASCO President Arnaud Peyronnet. *‘This is a pivotal time for NASCO and for the species it manages. Atlantic salmon face many stressors during their complex life cycle, and these are being exacerbated by climate change. The renewed commitment made to salmon by all Parties during this NASCO Annual Meeting, however, is cause for hope.’*

A Special Session was also held to invite the perspectives of Indigenous peoples on wild Atlantic salmon. A series of presentations informed NASCO about the fundamental importance of salmon to Indigenous peoples around the North Atlantic, about the roles, successes, and challenges of Indigenous peoples in salmon conservation and management, and about the value they could bring through strengthened engagement in NASCO’s work. The successful session led to a commitment by NASCO to enhance the engagement of Indigenous peoples in the work of the Organization going forward. Said the NASCO President, ‘Indigenous peoples bring

unique and important perspectives to the table. Ensuring these groups can participate meaningfully in NASCO is essential. Our Organization is stronger when all voices concerned with Atlantic salmon are heard.’

NASCO also established a new Working Group aimed at addressing the threat to Atlantic salmon posed by the spread of invasive Pacific pink salmon across the Atlantic. Outputs from this important body will be considered in 2024.

Finally, NASCO welcomed the news that Iceland is taking steps to rejoin the organization. ‘I am so pleased that Iceland, a founding member of this Organization, will again take its rightful place in NASCO. Iceland’s participation will strengthen our Organization further,’ said President Peyronnet. Iceland participated in the 2023 NASCO Annual Meeting as an observer.

Non-member France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) also attended NASCO as an observer. France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) conducts a fishery that harvests wild Atlantic salmon originating from the rivers of NASCO members. NASCO has urged France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) to join the Organization for many years in light of its ongoing fishing interests. It did so again in 2023. To-date, France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) has declined the invitation, but it is taking steps to ensure transparency in the fishery and conduct sufficient sampling.

The Fortieth Annual Meeting of NASCO was held during 5 – 8 June 2023 in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. The Forty First Annual Meeting will be held in Westport, Ireland, from 3 – 7 June 2024.

#### **Notes for Editors:**

NASCO is an intergovernmental organization formed by a treaty in 1984 and is based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Its objectives are to promote the conservation, enhancement, restoration and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon stocks, which do not recognise national boundaries. It is the only inter-governmental organisation with this mandate which it implements through international consultation, negotiation, and co-operation.

The Parties to the Convention are: Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. There are 46 non-governmental observers accredited to the Organization.

The 2023 Annual Meeting was convened in a hybrid format, with 92 participants joining in-person and 34 joining remotely. The participants included scientists, policy makers and representatives of inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations who met to discuss the status of wild Atlantic salmon and to consider management issues.

For further information contact: Dr Emma Hatfield, Secretary NASCO

Tel: +44 (0)131 228 2551

Email: [hq@nasco.int](mailto:hq@nasco.int) Website: [www.nasco.int](http://www.nasco.int)



***Closing Statement to Council submitted by the United States***

The United States would like to thank the Secretariat and the Parties to NASCO for a very productive week working together to improve the conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon. We would especially like to thank Canada for providing a wonderful meeting venue and arranging for the wonderful social events and tours that provided opportunities for important professional networking and relationship building.

Notably, 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the organization's convention. As noted during the meeting, this anniversary serves as an important opportunity for the Parties to reflect on the progress of the organization in addressing overfishing as well as to chart a course for its future. In particular, we are pleased that this year, we have agreed terms of reference for the Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON). This initiative provides an important and timely opportunity for NASCO and its Parties to renew their commitment to ensuring future generations have healthy stocks of wild Atlantic salmon in their waters. Further, we are delighted that NASCO, through its 2023 Special Session on Climate Change, has jump started a conversation on the most consequential issue facing Atlantic salmon of our time. During that session, real progress was made in understanding the impacts of climate change on Atlantic salmon and in sharing information regarding effective steps Parties are taking to help mitigate those impacts. While we are at the beginning of this conversation, NASCO should be commended for its commitment to incorporate climate change considerations into all of its work going forward. We also greatly appreciated the open and heartfelt exchange offered by the participants of the "Special Session of the Council: Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon." We eagerly look forward to participating in and contributing to the process that the FAC is undertaking intersessionally and are committed to working internally in the United States with our indigenous groups and others on this very important issue.

In the United States, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, under which U.S. populations of Atlantic salmon are designated as endangered. The Endangered Species Act is among the world's most powerful legal instruments in protecting species at risk of extinction. The United States would like to take the opportunity presented by this auspicious moment to renew its unwavering commitment to the recovery and conservation of this iconic species both in U.S. waters and throughout its range.

Each year, the APR process takes a critical look at the progress being made by Parties to implement key NASCO instruments. However, it is just as important to take a broader view on these matters and to assess how well the organization and its members are doing at meeting the Convention objective. As we have openly acknowledged, dams remain a significant challenge to Atlantic salmon restoration in the United States and, therefore, we have focused our efforts and resources on making these facilities as invisible to Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fishes as possible. Throughout the U.S. range of Atlantic salmon, numerous large-scale mainstem and tributary dams have been removed. For other hydro-electric dams, we have imposed measures that require industry to achieve downstream and upstream passage rates for Atlantic salmon at levels previously not considered feasible.

Each year, the United States takes domestic actions that go above and beyond the specific agreements, guidelines, and decisions adopted by NASCO in support of our overarching goal of helping to create an environment where Atlantic salmon can thrive. In 2022 alone, the United States invested over 6.1 million dollars (USD) in support of connectivity projects in Maine that benefit Atlantic salmon and their ecosystems. This work has been accomplished via partnerships with numerous federal and state governments, tribal nations, and our NGO

partners. As reinforced numerous times during NASCO's climate change special session, removing dams and other barriers remains one of the most important actions that we can take domestically to address the negative impacts of climate change on the productivity of Atlantic salmon.

While Atlantic salmon populations continue to be precariously low, the cumulative number of returns to the Penobscot River this year are at the highest for this date for the last forty-five years of record. Moreover, we have observed significant and continually increasing abundance and distribution of river herring and other sea-run fish in response to increased connectivity and improved ecosystem function across many of our watersheds. For example, river herring returns have increased from just 2,000 individuals in 2011 to over **5.2 million** in 2023 on the Penobscot River. We recognize that this information must be interpreted carefully, but it makes us optimistic that the work we are doing both domestically and internationally *is* making a difference.

Finally, we would like to thank the President for his leadership in establishing the WGFON process that will ensure that NASCO remains relevant and at the forefront of the restoration and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon. While the work ahead is significant, we are very optimistic that we will be successful, and we look forward to working with the Parties, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders on this process.

## CNL(23)82

***Question and Answer Session held during the  
External Performance Review Special Session***

The presentation is available here: [Presentation from the Chair of the Third Performance Review Panel](#)

**Verbal Statement given by Paul Knight on behalf of the NGOs**

Firstly, the NGOs would like to thank the three members of the Review Panel for their in-depth work and reporting, and especially for the 46 recommendations they make for NASCO's evolution in support of wild Atlantic salmon conservation.

One of my predecessors as NGO Chair, Chris Poupard, once said to me that he started every NASCO meeting in a state of high anticipation that this would be the year when Council took some concrete decisions that would better protect and conserve wild salmon. At the end of each successive NASCO meeting, he was left in despair that yet another year had gone by and nothing meaningful had been achieved – outside of limiting the fisheries at Greenland and the Faroe Islands, the one issue with which NASCO has had some success and can offer itself a modicum of congratulation. However, the sacrifices made by Greenland and the Faroe Islands have certainly not been reciprocated by sufficient meaningful action in other jurisdictions, and this must rapidly change.

NASCO is a wild salmon conservation organization but one issue which the NGOs believe was not fully covered by the EPR Group is this lack of commitment from the Parties to deliver the Organization's major conservation objective through delivery of NASCO's goals and international agreements. The EPR Group certainly says that NASCO can and must do better, but perhaps diplomacy stopped them short of commenting outright on the lack of political will in home governments to embrace policies that genuinely protect wild salmon from the many issues limiting their numbers across their north Atlantic range.

Wild salmon deserve so much more from this Organization than a lack of committed response to the 46 EPR recommendations. The reactions of Parties so far suggests that the easy recommendations will be acted upon, but the difficult ones will be kicked into the long grass. This cannot become just another NASCO box-ticking exercise – wild salmon can no longer afford that. My colleague, Steve Sutton, attended the Heads of Delegation meeting yesterday where these issues were discussed and, led by the President, he was impressed by the renewed enthusiasm for changing the way in which NASCO currently operates. However, NASCO must be held to account for a rapid process for change – and they will be by the NGOs and wider salmon world. Wild salmon need more than just fine words – this is a species in deep crisis, recognised by the public as the most iconic natural indicator of a pristine freshwater and oceanic environment, but wild salmon need direct action now if they are not to become extinct in many of their historic global habitats.

All too often in the past, the priority of NASCO Parties seems to be to make excuses for supporting activities that potentially impact salmon rather than protecting them, as NASCO's constitution demands. Whether it be salmon farming, bycatch, agricultural or point source pollution, hydro generation, or operations which cause barriers to migration, water scarcity or damage to freshwater habitats, these activities seem to get the bulk of NASCO Party support

before any thought is given to conserving wild salmon. The EPR Report recognises many of these issues and NASCO's lack of addressing them, and after 40 years of existence, this should be a matter of deep shame for this Organization. Thankfully, the President has now made it crystal clear that NASCO has to change the way it operates – the status quo should no longer be acceptable to anyone in this Organization.

The NGOs would go one stage further and say that if NASCO doesn't radically change its attitude towards wild salmon conservation, this Organization will cease to have any relevance to modern salmon conservation and will gradually die. In many cases, the wider salmon world already ignores anything that NASCO says, writes or does – to them, this Organization is already an irrelevance. That thought might appeal to some of you, but it does precious little to conserve wild salmon which, I repeat, is the primary objective of this Organization. If you are not prepared to work for that conservation target, you shouldn't be here at all. Wild salmon don't need your excuses, they need positive action, and in its present mode of operation NASCO is plainly failing to action anything meaningful beyond fisheries management decisions affecting Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Plenty of good words are written in NASCO's goals and international agreements, but they seldom turn into actions that benefit wild salmon and that should be a matter of deep concern within this room. Fine words must now turn into direct action, and we will hold the Parties to account for the speed with which they adopt their new commitment to conserving the species, as NASCO's Convention requires.

The NGOs quite understand the point made recently by the Norwegian Head of Delegation that political decisions get in the way of what is agreed at NASCO. However, we see all too often that rather than fight to embed NASCO's international agreements into home government policies, Heads of Delegation come here in defensive mode and, all the while, wild salmon continue on their crisis path. On one occasion, I mentioned NASCO to a former fisheries minister and although he vaguely knew about the Organization, he had little idea of what it did or stood for. NASCO's international goals had obviously not crossed his desk, and we strongly suspect this is being replicated in other jurisdictions.

This must change and so the NGOs suggest you look seriously at EPR recommendation 46 and organize ministerial meetings – perhaps two in each IP cycle; one to explain IPs at the beginning of the cycle and one as a mid-term report – so we know for certain that NASCO's primary conservation objective and its international goals have reached political decision makers. It is essential that our politicians understand the issues currently impacting wild salmon if we are to make any meaningful headway in conserving the species into the future. And along similar lines, the NGOs would repeat our earlier suggestion that the EPR group should be asked to report on NASCO's response to their 46 recommendations – perhaps in three years to act as referees as to how much fine talk has been turned into action!

So, Mr President, the EPR Report and recommendations offer NASCO Council one last chance to live up to this Organization's Convention and start delivering concrete actions to benefit wild salmon. The NGOs completely support your call for greater action, but we would go further and say that this is NASCO's last chance to be seen as a decisive force for good in wild salmon conservation. The reports from your Head of Delegation meeting yesterday are encouraging, but if you do not take this opportunity, or the Parties merely agree to action the easy options and continue to ignore the more difficult issues, then we see little point in NASCO's continued existence. The NGOs will gradually melt away and the wider salmon world will completely ignore what goes on within this Organization, continuing their conservation work in spite of NASCO, not because the Parties offer any meaningful assistance in protecting wild Atlantic salmon populations.

It is now up to NASCO Parties, Mr President, to adopt a rapid process of change – but as far as the wider salmon world is concerned, the clock is already ticking – fast!

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you Paul and thank you to the NGOs for their very frank, very honest statement. I'd just like to say that while I share the view that yes, perhaps NASCO did not deliver on certain aspects I think it is important to underline that Parties and, in particular, the people who are here representing the Parties today, are working very hard, and have always been working hard, towards improving the status of salmon and we have some very positive results. One can only wonder, if it wasn't for that work, where we would be. It would be even worse. I am now going to open the floor for questions.

**Todd Broomfield (Canada):** thank you, Mr Chair. Todd Broomfield, Nunatsiavut Government. I'd just like to highlight that, in Northern Labrador, we are bucking the trend, if you're wanting to call it that. We have lots of salmon rivers. Our salmon numbers are increasing. There's evidence from the one counting fence that is in Northern Labrador at English River that numbers are going up.

And what we see in our communities with traditional knowledge in our food fishery, people set nets primarily to catch char and trout, with salmon as a bycatch. And you move your net to try to avoid salmon and, wherever you move your net, there's salmon. So, we're not seeing the problems that are happening in the southern areas.

I don't know if there's any comfort in that, but I just wanted to highlight that, in Labrador in particular, we have lots of rivers that produce salmon, and the numbers have been increasing over the past number of years. So, it's a good news story, I guess, in a bigger picture with lots of bad news.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you for that. Anyone else? Raoul, please.

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** thank you and thank you for your really good presentation wrapping up the extensive report. I think your findings and your analysis of what went well, and not, and why are correct. At least, I share these views.

But I was wondering, in your experience, because I'm not in other international organizations, what are the important or the most important conditions prior to launch something like a Convention change, or even what you suggested as an alternative, in order to succeed? What do you think has to be the launching point for when it's the time right to do that, and which conditions should be in place in order to succeed, actually to achieve what you want? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** Thank you, Raoul, and thank you, also, for your co-operation throughout the process. So, for Convention change and also the agreed interpretations, there is a need for consensus there, all the NASCO Parties would have to agree on this. So, in each individual NASCO Party, I think there has to be political support that something has to be done on these non-fisheries issues.

And so, one way, as a lawyer, you automatically reach for a mandate to adopt legally binding instruments. I realise that this is special because most of these impacts occur either on territory or in waters that are part of a state's territory. So, there is a concern about restrictions on sovereignty – the domestic arena. But, in itself, that doesn't really stop states from doing that.

So, basically, states are sovereign, but they are happy or they are able to transfer some of that sovereignty to inter-governmental organizations. Of course, the European Union is one example of that. So, it's a voluntary step to accept restrictions on your sovereignty.

Another step, a step you would be pioneering in international law, would basically give an international organization the power to have real teeth on something that happens in your territory. But that is probably the only way in which this will succeed, or perhaps you, in the room, have different ideas.

So, restrictions on sovereignty are often necessary to make progress on issues that are transboundary or where all parties contribute to a problem. So, it has to be transformed from contributing to a problem to contributing to a solution. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, this question is really going at the heart of it, isn't it? And I don't know if some of the other Parties want to intervene on this. This has been a key challenge for NASCO, without a doubt.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Steve Sutton, NGO Co-Chair. Just to follow up on Raoul's question, could you speak a bit more about what an agreed interpretation is and give us an example of how that might work as an alternative to a Convention change?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** that's a really detailed question, but I think, in the NASCO Handbook of Basic Texts, there are footnotes in the text on provisions in the Convention on which these Parties have agreed to maybe deviate a little bit or to operationalise or apply this provision in special circumstances. So, it's an alternative for Convention change.

For instance, if you look at the Law of the Sea Convention, which I'm most familiar with, it has a very elaborate procedure for Convention amendment which has never been used because it's really too difficult. And so, what Parties have decided is to adopt Implementation Agreements, so that's the Deep Seabed Mining Agreement, the Fish Stocks Agreement and, now, the newest, the BBNJ (Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement. So, states can find a way around this if they agree to do that. So, obviously, you need consensus.

Another example that I'm familiar with is the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. So, the shift from targeted fishing to, let's say, impacts on bycatch species, that started to shift around the early 2000s, and they have had a Convention with an objective that's very focused on targeted fishing. They decided, okay, this is not sufficient, and they immediately adopted some measures without changing the Convention. At the same time, they also started to work on Convention change.

So, the key message is really that you are the States party to this Organization and, if you want to do something, you can do this, and you will find a way.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and thank you, Steve, for the question.

**Alexander Kinninmonth (United Kingdom):** just following on from that and notwithstanding NASCO's uniqueness, I wondered if you could give some other examples of similar organizations where legally binding instruments apply. Just in your answer to the question from Norway, you described that we could be pioneering. Is that the case? Would that be quite a precedent-setting move?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I'm sure there are many precedent-setting or, basically, many pioneering activities. So, I'm most familiar with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) on the Antarctic. So, they have a precautionary approach, an *avant la lettre* in the treaty, and as the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, an *avant la lettre*.

The CCAMLR Convention was adopted, I think, at the same time as the NASCO Convention, so early maybe 1980 entered into force. CCAMLR has been a pioneer in implementing and operationalising the Convention, and that has become the norm in many RMFOs. And, actually, at the moment, there's so many problems in CCAMLR that some RMFOs are actually more progressive. So, it is possible.

I was just telling Arnaud that I'm also involved in the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement in which the participation of Indigenous peoples is very prominent, and this is

certainly a new development in international law. And so, with the adoption of this Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement, and many of the Parties here today are also Parties to that treaty, they took a new step that pioneered in international law by acknowledging the role of Indigenous, local knowledge and the ability of Indigenous peoples to participate in meetings of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement.

So, I think, again, there are many examples. And the process is then, often, that, in international fisheries law, the regional bodies, they are the key institutions. And they basically develop new practice that creates a minimum standard, and then the minimum standard is elevated to the global level. So, the Fish Stocks Agreement incorporates a lot of the pioneering practice of the leading RMFOs. So, it's up to you to take a step and look at other pioneering steps in other regions around the world.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. So, I guess we can summarise this as saying, when there is a will, there's a way. We also can get inspiration from other RMFOs or organizations. I don't necessarily want to move on from that topic. I think it's a very important one.

**Niall Greene (Salmon Watch Ireland):** hello. I'm Niall Greene of Salmon Watch Ireland, an NGO. I don't have a question, Chairman, but, with your permission, I'd like to make a few comments over which hang some very large questions.

We're meeting in a year where, in Ireland and Britain, both returns of multi-sea-winter fish and one-sea-winter fish are at unprecedented low levels and well below even pessimistic trend forecasts. If this was maintained for the rest of the year, and it may not be if we get plenty of rain, the current levels of return would have a catastrophic impact on 2023 production, which will carry over into subsequent years.

The three members of the Panel deserve our thanks for their very thorough report and for the effort that went into producing it in a relatively short time. One does not have to agree with all of their assessments and conclusions to acknowledge that they have written a deeply thought-provoking piece of work and a thorough piece of work and that they deserve our honest and serious consideration and implementation.

As Paul Knight has already said, the report and its recommendations present a major challenge for NASCO and its Parties. The nature and depth of the recommendations are such that they do not fit neatly into a narrow, siloed approach to the mission of NASCO and its constituent jurisdictions.

Unfortunately, the results of the initial considerations of the EPR recommendations by the Heads of Delegation, and as reported in one of the NASCO papers, are so tentative and defensive that it makes one worry about whether they can make any progress. But I understand that a more positive assessment is now beginning to emerge, and we welcome that.

The recommendations demand, in many instances, an ecosystem-based approach to the protection and conservation of the species and one that goes beyond the tightly bound constraints of national, ministerial, and departmental demarcations.

In his presentation, Erik listed three reasons as to why NASCO may have been, or was unsuccessful in going beyond, fishery issues. I would add a fourth, which is the very vertical way in which government departments and its agencies are organized in respect of their responsibilities and the general inability, sometimes unwillingness, of governments in all jurisdictions to work horizontally. And that, I think, is a major problem which faces the NASCO jurisdictions.

The report lays out most of the demands that must be made, not just on NASCO, but especially on our national jurisdictions so that the wild salmon has some chance of survival, even at the

current battered population levels. The Panel has produced many entirely workable components to answer the question what is to be done.

The first thing that has to be done is we have to raise the capability of our freshwater systems to produce more stronger and healthier smolts. In that regard, the Panel recommends the development of salmon habitat and restoration plans on an individual river system and to embed them in the IP / APR process. That is good stuff if the plans lead to action, but many cannot be actioned within the narrow mandate of many government departments and agencies concerned with salmon. It will require missionary work and not a little passion to get some plans to execution.

Secondly, we have to deal with direct human interventions in the life cycle of the salmon. Principal among these are salmon farming, bycatch, and levels of exploitation. The massive negative effect of salmon farming doesn't need to be rehearsed any further here, but, in the case of bycatch, the attention given to it by the panel of experts is welcome. Salmon Watch became involved with this question in respect of the blue whiting fishery in 2016 and, with the support of the EU delegation, had the issue raised in the request to ICES that year. ICES responded in 2017 to the effect that the Faroese and Norwegian authorities had no evidence of such bycatch but that 'uncertainties remain'. In the six years since then, the uncertainties have become more concrete and, in the 2023 report to NASCO, ICES, as we know, recommends a number of measures to investigate the matter further, including the adoption of a PIT tag programme on a North Atlantic-wide scale to investigate the issue. That may involve embarrassing problems for some jurisdictions in relation to their pelagic fisheries, but it chimes with the Panel's recommendation that NASCO, 'operationalise the precautionary approach for the bycatch of salmon in other fisheries'.

Finally, in relation to human interventions, the Panel recommends that we evaluate if more conservative, i.e. higher, SERs and CLs are needed to stop or revert the declining trends in PFAs. That can be done at a national level now and does not need to await NASCO reaching a consensus on it.

Against that background of so much work to be done, we welcome the recommendations for improving NASCO's effectiveness by the Panel, especially those in relation to seeking ways to adopt legally binding instruments for non-fishery issues and the occasional addition of ministerial involvement in NASCO deliberations.

Some years ago, I worked for a number of years as a political advisor to a minister in the Irish Government, and I well know the antipathy and sometimes well-placed antipathy that civil servants have for getting ministers involved in things that they're not currently involved in. But you can take a positive view of it as well, that if you can turn ministers into champions for salmon conservation, then it's a powerful instrument in government, and it is a layer of involvement that perhaps the NGOs should themselves be taking more interest in bringing about.

These are some highlights of the Panel's work from our point of view. With our fellow NGOs, we will be diligent in pursuing the re-implementation, both within NASCO and in our home jurisdictions. Thank you for your time, Mr President.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Niall, and I think they are very pertinent comments. I particularly relate to what you said at the end of your intervention there. I think we will need political will, and we will need to have people convinced that we need to act. That's something we're also working on with the Parties at the moment.

I think it's important also to mention that we, at the moment, are having those discussions. The Heads of Delegation are thinking hard about how to address the various recommendations, and



they will address some of your concerns. I'm thinking, in terms of habitat, for instance, and those issues, this is something that is also being considered.

We will come back later in the week as to what type of decisions are going to be taken, and we are not there yet, but I am reasonably optimistic that we will have something that will be ambitious enough for the challenge we are currently facing.

**Paul Knight (Wildfish):** Mr President, I've got a statement from Nigel Milner of the Institute of Fisheries Management. He says this constructive, well-argued review covers most of the points in the Institute of Fisheries Management consultation response, and we're glad that it was commissioned and delivered. So, well done, Erik.

First, we recognise and praise the amazingly effective management of salmon marine fisheries that Parties have delivered by their collaborative efforts through NASCO. However, without detracting from that, it is true that those fisheries are not now the major problem behind the accelerating decline of salmon in many regions. The central theme in the IFM response was that, to cover the full range of risks to salmon, NASCO's Parties and jurisdictions should adopt a more proactive, effective approach to the evaluation and resolution of pressures on salmon in home waters, particularly, but not exclusively, in fresh water. This message is repeated throughout the EPR report.

We do not here list many pressures, but most lie in the major categories of: (1) connectivity to complete life cycles in; (2) river catchment environment quality and flow regimes affecting outputs indexed by the abundance and quality of smolts; and (3) anthropogenic pressures on smolts in transitional and coastal waters.

The management of non-fisheries pressures looks in disarray for four main reasons. (1) shortage of good juvenile assessment data measured to a high scientific standard and ordered in such a way (GIS-based mapping of habitat and biota) as to usefully inform on priorities and intensity of pressures and, ultimately, the benefits of measures. (2) complementing (1), is the constraint of still-limited understanding of how freshwater and marine pressures integrate across the life cycle. We see that significant progress is now being made by LSF and LC modelling initiatives by, or associated with, ICES. (3) weak, poorly-supported infrastructure to deliver effective measures and (4) apparent lack of application by governments for home water salmon conservation and lack of clarity in how they see and rank the problems facing them.

The EPR makes recommendations on all these, intended to improve the underpinning science and make more effective the existing Resolutions, Agreements, and Guidelines. For example,

- habitat restoration and protection plans based on GIS mapping and national salmon standing management committees to oversee them;
- derivation and accuracy of conservation limits, other BRPs and related assessments. These would be greatly aided by the habitat and LC modelling recommendations;
- bycatch, a coastal and high-seas topic raised by the NGOs in 2022;
- climate change and ecosystem effects, and
- raising the policy profile and decision level of the salmon problem through ministerial engagement, initiating an outreach strategy, and raising public awareness.

That very much supports what we were saying earlier. Nigel's concluding point is several recommendations that are repeats from previous EPRs, but many are new (conservation limits, HRPP, climate and structural) because salmon and their ecosystems face long-standing and new, increasingly intense pressures. We emphasise that many of the recommendations are complementary and synergistic. Such that they are fully effective, they must be enacted together. Therefore, we urge Council not to pick just the easy ones but to think creatively and

embrace with determination all of them on the salmon's behalf.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Paul, and thank you to Nigel. And, yes, we have already gone through some of those elements, and I think, as I said, there are discussions at the moment on those aspects.

**Katrine Kærgaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)):** I want to thank the Panel for your work and very important recommendations. Thank you very much. I also want to thank the NGOs for your intervention. Thank you very much.

We are very pleased with the conclusion that NASCO needs to focus on other things than fisheries, the other stressors, the other threats there are to wild Atlantic salmon. It's something that our delegation has been saying and pushing for for years, so we're very pleased that others seem to begin to come to that conclusion as well. I think the result of this EPR is really our opportunity in NASCO to have a good, hard look at what we do, and how we can do it even better, and how we need to focus on the most important threats.

So, my question to you, Erik, is, if NASCO is going to make a strategy on the most important things that we can do for the next five to ten years, which would have the biggest impact on the conservation of salmon? Having worked through this report, what is your and the Panel's input to that? What could be the most important things that we could do that would have the greatest impact on the conservation of salmon in the coming years? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I actually hoped that I had already addressed that, Katrine. I'm a lawyer, I don't have a good idea on attributing the impact, but I understand that also the scientists really don't know what the impacts are. So, in my presentation, I linked this to the precautionary approach. In the absence of complete scientific certainty, and if there are indications of serious impacts and, in particular, irreversible impacts, States are required to take precautionary measures. It seems to me that this is really a classic scenario where you have to be very cautious, even if you don't really know how serious the problems are. And so, this is why the precautionary approach was developed, and this is not just a matter of fisheries management. Of course, the precautionary approach was included in the Rio Declaration of 1992. The Fish Stocks Agreement operationalises the precautionary approach to fisheries management, but NASCO does much more. So, it's basically a precautionary approach to salmon conservation, and so you have to look at all the relevant aspects. That's what I tried to capture or we tried to capture with the notion of holistic approaches.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, the precautionary approach, and I think, in the context of climate change as well, we see something that resonates with all managers, how do we go about incorporating that into our day-to-day actions.

**Bénédicte Valadou (European Union):** I'm Bénédicte Valadou from France, EU. So, my question is whether it is possible for NASCO to have regular meetings with administrations such as the EU, because the EU is working on such big issues as nature restoration and conservation. NASCO could be there at the first consultation. For me, it's very important that NASCO could be involved in that way. I think it's the same in EU, in America, in Canada and in Russia.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Bénédicte. I won't comment on the process in the European Union. Maybe our colleagues from the EU might at some stage. Yes, this is about NASCO being heard, and we are also talking about this with the Heads of Delegation, to make sure that those issues are being heard by the decision makers.

Yes, you're right. At the moment there's a process, a nature restoration law, and that seems to be really ambitious. And we need to try not only to be heard but to make some coherence there

with initiatives like this and to walk closer with people when, one day, they look at developing these types of laws. It's far reaching and, yes, it's very relevant, I think. Your intervention makes sense. Now, it's all how do we do this? I'm not sure at the moment we are equipped to do this, and we will have to think carefully on how this can be done.

**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** hello. I'm Dave Meerburg with the Atlantic Salmon Federation, one of the NGOs here. I've been involved in the NASCO process actually since year one, so I've attended most of the 40 years of meetings, and part of that time was as a Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canadian representative biologist and, more lately, as an NGO. So, I'd like to comment on the procedure, and the process, and the Review Panel's work. I congratulate them on a very comprehensive report. I really couldn't find many recommendations that I would disagree with. I would encourage the Parties to look at them very carefully and take them up on that.

But what I would like to comment on here is to follow up on a few statements about ministerial involvement. When I was with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, I know we used to have regular meetings of something called the Atlantic Council of Fisheries Ministers. Occasionally, we would get Atlantic salmon on the agenda for those fisheries ministers when they met around the North Atlantic. So, my question, and maybe this is something that Erik's not aware of but the Parties could respond, is does that Council of Fisheries Ministers still meet regularly? Is there any opportunity to have a more focused approach on one of their meetings on NASCO and the issues with Atlantic salmon around the North Atlantic? I know the issue in the past was always that the Atlantic Council of Fisheries Ministers deal primarily with fisheries and ministers themselves may not have the capability to discuss issues if, say, for example, some of them were aquaculture or habitat for salmon. But I think, if they had such a meeting and perhaps the President came and talked about the issue, I think that other ministers from each of the Parties or each of the countries involved in that process could be involved. That would have capability of doing something in the future on some of these issues other than just the fisheries. So, the question is does that Council of Fisheries Ministers still meet, and do they ever talk about salmon?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Dave. To my knowledge, it's not the case, but I don't know. Maybe the Parties have more information on this. I don't think this is the case anymore. So, yes, for me, a missed opportunity there.

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** We've put into place, in order to achieve some of the things you were talking about, the IP process. We have had that now for quite a few years. When the Panel had a look at that, do you think it has achieved anything? Do you think it's a positive cost benefit, because we have really used a lot of energy on it? Is it worth doing? And did you have some sort of input, some thoughts, reflections, about how we could make it more effective? You have said a bit about it in the report, but please elaborate because it's a very important element. We have to think about that very carefully, and how we continue with this process.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Raoul. A very good question, especially since this is on our agenda this year. We have to think about the possibility to have a fourth reporting cycle, what it would look like, but, also, a bit of a provocative question. Has it delivered, has it done anything? I think it's good to ask that question. Erik, please.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes, thank you for that question, which is a very difficult one. I think the report could have done a bit better on this aspect. I guess we had a lot on our plate, and so we did not focus sufficient attention on this. So, Philip had a look at a lot of these documents and the information. There is just so much, and we had so little time, so it's very difficult to come up with credible conclusions in such a short timeframe for people who are completely new to this process.

I think we noticed that only one or two of the Parties or jurisdictions had an adequate assessment of the most recent Annual Progress Reports. That's more or less correct, and I think we used that as an indicator of the fact that this is not performing well. We don't really know how this can be strengthened. The key issue is a non-fisheries issues, and there is no legally binding mandate for this, so I assume that NASCO Parties do not take this as seriously as they should and that was the power for a recommendation. But I hope that you maybe have alternative ideas.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and maybe a slight addition here. If we don't have a positive assessment of the APR, this will not necessarily be because the process is not working. The process itself of IP / APR, is really valued by the Parties, by the NGOs, because it puts the spotlight on certain issues and also the work of the Parties. When we get a negative assessment, in my mind, the process is working. So, this is an important process, I think.

**Ken Whelan (Atlantic Salmon Trust):** First of all, to say how sorry I am that I'm not with you all there in person. My first NASCO meeting was indeed in the Miramichi area, so it would've been nice to go back again. Secondly, just to congratulate the authors on what I think is an extremely valuable and challenging report.

I have one concern, and my concern is that in terms of trying to get to grips with the very important recommendations that Erik made earlier, the legal recommendations, the very difficult process that may be involved in terms of trying to make at least some of our recommendations mandatory. And I don't think we have that time.

To give you an example, my colleagues from Inland Fisheries Ireland issued a very timely warning this weekend. Imagine a warning in relation to warm water in Ireland in June. That says it all. There's no time here in terms of making progress on these things. So, I was thinking about what the Parties could bring back to their colleagues that are involved in other departments that could make this process work in a more timely fashion.

I think, probably, the most important aspects of NASCO to date are in relation to the targets that we manage to set. Some of these targets, a lot of these targets, may not have been implemented, particularly the ones in relation to aquaculture, but going back to the precautionary approach, looking at aquaculture, looking at habitat, looking, for example, at catch and release, looking at the very good recommendations in terms of PFAs, looking at the recommendations in the report in terms of conservation levels, they're all screaming to be reviewed.

I really feel very strongly that, in parallel with the process that might be taken forward legally, that it is time now to review these in the context of climate change. My comments may very well span both of our Special Sessions because the two things are so integrated. I really do feel that, in the context of some of these targets, NASCO needs to review them in a very timely way. In the discussions that will go forward, I think it is really useful when you're speaking to ministers. When you're speaking to ministers, when you're speaking to people in the Department of Agriculture, they want to know what are the targets that we have to meet. So, certainly, I think that the Parties can bring back targets.

They may not be able to implement those targets for the moment themselves, but I think that element of our work, and it was outlined several times by Erik when he commented on the precautionary approach, is important. What do we mean at the moment in terms of precautionary approach? Are our words that we have written down adequate? I feel that we really should be looking at a process, a very timely process, that will give us revised targets against which we're going to actually judge our performance reviews, against which we're going to judge then our success in terms of stemming the loss of the Atlantic salmon.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Ken, and I share the view that we don't have the time. You're right. We started to work with the Heads of Delegation back at the start of February on the draft recommendations. We met, also, at the end of April. We've met for the last two days, and what we are very much looking at is a process for things to happen and to happen quickly.

Now, your point on the targets is very valuable, and there's also thinking going on about how do we make those things more quantitative, so that we have something to report. So that we can tell the managers but also the people about the status of salmon and what we achieve. So, yes, what you said there is going to be of great interest to the Parties.

**Ben Wilson (United Kingdom):** Ben Wilson, Natural Resources Wales. The country, not the animal. The very first question, for you, Erik, was around what are the conditions for success? How is this going to work? What's the key to this working well? I want to turn that on its head and ask the question, if in, say, five years' time, come the next EPR, we look back and we go, this didn't work, we weren't successful in implementing these recommendations, we weren't successful in making a difference, why might that be? A pre-disastering question. If this goes wrong, what would be the causes of that?

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I think I tried to explain that by these three factors, during my presentation, which relates to the mandate, the complexity, and a cost of measures to address the impacts. It's easier to deal with targeted salmon fishing than with the very complex, multi-source stressors, agriculture, aquaculture, river-based transport, hydroelectricity and the impacts of taking measures to address certain activities. There is also a disbalance. So, if you shut down a fishery, the socioeconomic interests are quite limited compared to if you prohibit shipping on the Rhine. So, I think those are the reasons, and Niall mentioned the structure or the composition of national delegations here, in NASCO. So, it's quite likely that, on the delegation of NASCO Parties, there are no representatives of all the relevant ministries involved, and I think that's a very good point.

So, that means that there is probably insufficient co-operation and co-ordination domestically and, therefore, implementation of what is agreed here will be more difficult. But maybe I overlook something, maybe a factor, or if there are delegations that don't agree with this.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Yes, and just to clarify that closing fisheries can also be challenging and complex.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** in France.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** and we have seen that, also, in NASCO, not so long ago. I'm thinking of the northwest of Ireland where there was a fishery. It wasn't something easy, it has economic implications.

On the cost of the measures, I think it's also linked to what we discussed before about the need to raise salmon profile, salmon conservation. Because, suddenly, you're looking at a cost that may not be as high if you have all the elements and if you can put a value on salmon. That is something that I've shared with some colleagues. I think this is one way to do it. We need to be able to put a value on salmon stocks. At the moment, if you look at it just from the point of view of fisheries activities, recreational fisheries and even tourism, but there is also a strong social value for salmon. There's also a cost of losing those populations, a biodiversity cost, and we have not been able to materialise, to really put to decision makers and to say, this is what you will lose.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes. It appeared to me that whales, the species, is an interesting comparison. So, the international community has been able to give high priority to shutting down targeted, industrial, whaling. The main problem at

the moment with whales is not whale harvesting, in my view. These are many other impacts on whales. So, there are comparisons. So, if the international community is able to, or the North Atlantic community is able to, put salmon conservation to a higher political level, it may be easier to get very difficult things done. And, in that sense, I think a comparison with whale conservation is appropriate.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. So, anyone with a question or comment maybe triggered by the recent discussion there?

**Kim Blankenkoper (USA):** I work for the National Marine Fisheries Service in the International Trade and Commerce Office there. Erik, just to return for a second to the recommendation concerning the question of interpreting the Convention to take binding decisions on non-fisheries issues. It's a really interesting idea, very creative, and I was hoping to explore it a bit further. In your experience, how have other organizations reinterpreted their Conventions to confer binding management authority on them? That's not clearly specified in those Conventions.

I ask this because it seems that there could be a pretty substantial domestic legal risk within countries if they move forward in this way. What I mean by that is, when Parties ratify a convention, they do it based on their understanding of the legal obligations they're accepting. The process often involves not only the executive branches of a government, but their legislative branches as well for advice and consent, like we do in the US with our Senate. Then we usually develop or pass domestic laws through our legislative branches, under which we can implement binding decisions that are taken by an RFMO. Those statutes are generally tailored pretty closely to our understanding of the scope of the Convention. In fact, I think this is why most Conventions, in fact, all Conventions, have provisions in them that allow them to be amended if you find that they're not exactly fit for purpose anymore, or they're too old.

So, I'm wondering how interpretive approaches that have been made, in your experience, by other IGOs can be reconciled or address these legal issues and risks. Just to be clear, I'm not talking about the kinds of actions that NASCO may have taken to reinterpret its Convention or its Rules of Procedure with respect to who can serve as an officer in the Organization. Those kinds of things don't really imply the need to take regulatory action at home, and they don't bring, therefore, a legal risk that we'll do something that's outside the scope of our authority and then be sued and not be able to implement a binding decision that we agreed to internationally.

So, I hope that's clear and appreciate your background and experience as a lawyer. I was hopeful that you could just help us understand this creative idea that you've put on the table.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes, Kim, thank you for your intervention. In my presentation, I also mentioned that we are aware that there are various hurdles. The text responds directly to your intervention. I guess, on the one side, I'm a lawyer, and, on the other side, I try to be creative, and this is really to help you. So, I have tried to come up with alternatives for Convention change.

One of the cases I'm familiar with is this action by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, at the time, around 2004 or so, which dealt with the impact of deep-sea bottom fishing on deep water on cold-water corals. It was not a target fishery issue but an impact issue. They did take action despite the fact that the objective of the NEAFC Convention did not provide for that.

So, I acknowledge that it may be difficult to do this. I just identified it as a possibility. If you decide, together, that this is not possible, that's of course totally correct. So, nothing in the report, as such, is binding on the NASCO Parties. We were trying to find solutions, and maybe

that's too creative.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik, and thank you, Kim, also, for bringing that up. I have a small comment on this. I just think that, yes, we see this is really the elephant in the room in terms of our Convention, and the mandate of the Organization. I don't have a perfect solution there, or any solution for the time being. But I would just like to mention, to the Parties, that, very often, when an organization like NASCO doesn't find a way to deal with those issues, someone else does, and we lose control. I've seen that happening in the past in other organizations where some issues weren't looked at. It's only when someone else started to look at it, that we started to find ways. And the problem in this particular case is that we no longer have the time to wait for someone else to come with a solution for those particular problems.

I wanted to mention it because it's really important for all the Parties to take that into account and to go beyond those impediments and try to find ways to address those issues more proactively. Yes, it's not directly another mandate, yes, that brings legal uncertainty, but are there actions that we can find together that would lead to different ways to look at it and different solutions? That's also something we need to think about.

**Cathal Gallagher (European Union):** good afternoon, everyone. Just thinking about the mandatory nature of control of salmon, there's a good example in the EU already where we've handed over conservation legislative control of salmon through the EU directive, where we are obliged to take actions, develop management plans, report on conservation status. And whether, in the EU jurisdictions, that is something that would come back to the jurisdictions or if there is some way NASCO could be involved at the EU level under the Habitats Directive. I think it might be a little bit complex. So, I don't know, Erik, if you had any thoughts around that. I forgot to mention at the start, also, compliments on the report, and we found it very useful and thought-provoking. Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** I don't really understand the question. Could you maybe repeat the essence of it? So, EU is, of course, a member of NASCO.

**Cathal Gallagher (European Union):** the EU is a member of NASCO, and jurisdictions inside the EU are obliged under the Habitats Directive to perform conservation tasks, conservation objectives. The Habitats Directive legislation is then handed back to individual jurisdictions who then have to implement measures. So, it's an example of individual jurisdictions handing the conservation powers over through the EU. So, I was just wondering then, if you were looking at it from an individual jurisdiction perspective, how would that work? We've already handed over powers to the EU, and then you would be handing over mandatory conservation efforts to an organization like NASCO as well. Is there any thought around that, or maybe your thoughts around how that is working, because that was the purpose of the Habitats Directive, to direct the conservation of salmon and other species. Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** yes. So, the essence of what you're saying, is that for the EU, it would not really make a big difference. That's what you were saying, because EU member states already have to comply with a body of legally binding, overarching rules. It's an example of States agreeing voluntarily to transform some of their competence to a super national body. The same thing would be for States that are Parties to NASCO but not to the EU.

It is an effort for States to solve problems that can be transboundary or that they contribute jointly to a problem and to make a joint effort to solve that problem by making international organizations stronger. Yes, I agree that this would be the way forward, and this is probably unusual because a lot of these non-fisheries issues are happening on territory.

That is something very sad in international governments, that we can sometimes agree on issues that take place on the high seas, for instance, through the BBNJ agreement, but we have to be honest that most of the pressing problems do not occur in areas beyond national jurisdiction. They occur on land and in areas within the national jurisdiction. States are often unwilling to make international organizations stronger to solve those problems, but this has to happen in one way or another.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Erik. Just a small clarification on that point because it's interesting to draw that parallel, but we also see some other constraints. That's because, when you deal with fisheries, the EU and the Commission also have exclusive competence but not in freshwater. Here, you have a body of legislation which is a Directive or several Directives, in fact, and they are environmental legislation, but it's up to the Party, in that case, the Member States, to decide how they implement them. So, I think it's a reflection of the challenges in pushing national authorities to give up on their right to decide how they manage things in order to do things. So, there's a parallel there, definitely.

**Katrine Kærgaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)):** thank you. So, I just want to try to rephrase my question from before. You have 46 recommendations, and I think we can all be honest and say that we will not be able to implement all 46 recommendations at once. So, if we can pick, let's say, the top five that we'd need to do as fast as possible... We would need to prioritise them. From your point of view, what would be the top five that we need to do as soon as possible? Thank you.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** that's really difficult, Katrine, because they're so wide ranging. I think the intervention made by Paul on someone else's intervention highlighted that there are a number of more scientific-oriented recommendations relating to conservation limits. Philip developed a lot of recommendations relating to aquaculture. That sounds like a high priority, to me.

I focused on different parts of the report. I tried to, in this presentation, bring everything together through the lens of the precautionary approach and that it's really all about the amount of risk that NASCO Parties are prepared to make for loss of biodiversity. So, it's a balancing of costs against conservation burdens.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** I'd like to bring the conversation back to whales. The animal, not the place. When you answered the question, at the end you talked about how political will can get things done, and I think that's a really important point. I think that recommendation about elevating salmon to a higher political level is probably one of the most important ones. Because we keep coming up against this idea that the political will is just not there to get things done, and to me, we need that political will. We need to really be building that political will. That's really important and building political will is not easy. It takes effort. It takes time. It's about more than just meeting a minister once or twice. That will take a strategy. It goes hand in hand with the other recommendation about NASCO taking a role in educating the public about the plight of salmon and what needs to be done. Because, if you want to build political will, you need to be educating the constituents, the people who make the decisions. So, to me, that goes hand in hand.

I think that's a really exciting new role for NASCO, and it's an area where the NGOs can play a really strong role as well. So, I'm really excited about that, and I'm very excited to understand that NASCO sees that as a new focus for the Organization as well.

I just wanted to make that point and bring it back to close that loop on the whales. That's a very good example of what you can do when you have the political will. Without that, with things like aquaculture, we're not going to get anywhere. So, that recommendation, to me, is very important, and it's something we need to put some attention to and figure out exactly what it is



we're talking about when we're talking about elevating to a higher political level.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you very much, Steve. I couldn't agree more. I've said it to some other colleagues. Sometimes, the feeling we operate into a NASCO bubble, and nothing comes out of it. People outside of it don't have the understanding that we have of the problem, and the possible solution, and how we should get there. And it's back to what I was saying, nobody can hear us.

**Ben Wilson (United Kingdom):** I'm indebted to Nigel Milner, who published an evidence report for Natural Resources Wales which has highlighted the extinction risk for salmon in Wales on a number of our rivers. That has highlighted to members of Welsh Government, and not least the salmon species champion, that the plight of salmon rests not only on taking action for salmon but taking action to preserve our rivers. I am highlighting the point around the need for broad consensus and that our role, and NASCO's role, is around that advocacy piece about demonstrating the value of salmon, not just as an economic resource but as an emblem of the importance of the wider freshwater and marine environment as well. Maybe that's the thing we need to be quantifying or valuing just as much as salmon itself but the other benefits that accrue from healthy freshwater and marine ecosystems.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** so, that's, in a sense, then, its role as an indicator species of a healthy environment. I agree.

**Barry Fulham (European Union):** I work for the Irish government. We have an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list on threatened species in the world which looks at conservation status of species ranging from extinct, to threatened, to least concern. It sends out an absurd message that, on IUCN list for the Atlantic salmon, the species is classified as of least concern. Is there a way that NASCO, as an intergovernmental organization, could put pressure on a fellow intergovernmental organization, such as the IUCN, to review that classification so we can transmit a message to the world that the status of salmon is significantly threatened to focus that political will more acutely?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** You're absolutely right, and that's the way the assessments are done, and we have seen some... excuse me for saying it, funny things coming from an IUCN list in the past because they are trying to apply a methodology which is fitting for most stocks, but, in some cases, it's not necessarily adapted. Here we talk about the species, but, when we talk population, and stocks, and that genetic value is lost when we lose a population, that's not reflected in the assessment by IUCN.

So, can NASCO engage with IUCN? That's a very good question. I personally think that we should most definitely try to argue for that point. We may have a number of populations still there, but, in some other cases, we're losing this population, and we're losing thousands of years of evolution, and there's no coming back. That's part of the advocacy. That's part, again, of trying to make people understand about salmon.

**Erik Molenaar (Chair of the External Performance Review Panel):** so, you're from Ireland? So, the Netherlands is a member of IUCN. Is Ireland a member of IUCN? A lot of the NASCO Parties are also members of IUCN and, therefore, have direct access to calling for such a re-assessment of that status or looking at a different type of assessment for salmon.

**Paul Knight (Wildfish):** thanks, Mr President. My own organization, WildFish, that used to be Salmon and Trout Conservation, has commissioned IUCN over the last year to look at wild salmon populations, and they've reported, and we're about to come out with a press release. They have put Atlantic salmon in the UK on their red list. I believe the rest of the Northern Hemisphere is on their amber list. But we have done that work, and it cost an awful lot of money for a very small organization like ourselves.

But, certainly, the UK is on their red list and, hopefully, that'll help NASCO Parties and the wider salmon world to get more political pressure to protect the species. As we've all been saying, there are populations that are on the verge of extinction, and we just can't let that happen. So, hopefully, it's going to help, but that work has been done. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Paul. Yes, and I recalled engaging before with IUCN on different issues, and it is true that they make you pay for the assessment.

**Alan Walker (United Kingdom):** I'd just like to note a point of clarification there, that the IUCN red list...the whole list is red, but being on the list doesn't mean anything in itself. A species or a stock can be on the list and be in a perfectly great state. The listing itself has different categories, like endangered, or critically endangered, or of least concern. So, just to say, having a species on the red list doesn't mean it's red, but I'm sure, Paul, in the press release, it'll explain the actual categorisation of the salmon. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you. Just to recap, thanks to Erik Molenaar for being here today to present the outcome of the Performance Review and for answering all the questions. And thank you all for your questions. I think it was valuable. We see some interesting trends there in terms of the expectations. There seems to be some consensus for the need for NASCO to shift gear and to change its approach in terms of trying to bring salmon as a big conservation issue. We heard about educating people and to make sure also that we get to the point that politicians are going to rally behind the salmon cause. We also had a discussion on the current limits of the Convention. Something that has been discussed many times. How do we change that; how do we get around that? For me those are the main messages today. I should also add we operate now in a different system – climate change is really starting to materialise in a big way for salmon. We have been talking about climate change for twenty years but now we are really seeing the changes so this is going to be the crucial element to everything we decide to do. The precautionary approach as well. So, we will close the meeting. Thank you very much for your participation.

## CNL(23)89

***Question and Answer Session held during the Special Session of the Council:  
Evaluation of Implementation Plans / Annual Progress Reports Under the  
Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)***

The presentation is available here: [Presentation on the IPs / APRs from the Chair of the Review Group](#)

**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** I'm Dave Meerberg, Atlantic Salmon Federation. Thanks, Cathal, for explaining again to us, you explain each year very well, and I believe in a year previous or two I may have made the comment, and I haven't seen there's been any change, but it just is really surprising to me. When I look at the Implementation Plans (IPs) this year for example, I see five IPs for Spain. For very, very small parts of Spain that have one or two rivers.

I see an IP for EU or UK – Northern Ireland, and then I look and I see an IP for Canada. And I think I've commented before, that, at least for Canada, because there's very different rules and regulations applied in the different provinces of Atlantic Canada, and different jurisdictions are in control of some of those things, I would certainly recommend that the Canadian IP and APR process in the future should at least be broken down by four or five different regions. Or provinces, or however Canada would wish to approach it.

But it just seems you must have had to spend a fair bit of time in each one of those five EU – Spain IPs, and yet it doesn't seem that if you're spending equivalent amounts of time on one item, like one part of Spain... If you're spending that amount of time on Canada. Canada's much more complex than that.

**Cathal Gallagher (Chair of the IP / APR Review Group):** I don't want to come in too much for Canada, but I suppose that's a very good point, and maybe that's something that could be considered in the next cycle. Spain is broken up that way, and the reason is, of course, that Spain has individual government jurisdictions in those areas that have responsibility for fish.

I know that that's the same in Canada from reading the Plan, and I know it's difficult for colleagues in Canada to even collate a national plan because all of that is very different. I don't know if anyone from Canada would like to comment on that? Doug?

**Doug Bliss (Canada):** thank you very much, and Dave, as always, thank you for your question. Yes, so, I do want to first thank all the members of the Committee who go through this. It's a fairly significant process every year, it takes a lot of time and energy of the NASCO Secretariat, Party members and everyone to not only put Plans together but for the meeting, I think it was a five-day meeting and preparations.

I think as we have moved on in the whole IP process, we have found that there's certainly improvements. Cathal, in your Committee's report you talked about moving forward in terms of developing measurable metrics that you can report on things of this nature. So, I think comments like Dave's and yours are all very important elements to our discussion about the fourth reporting cycle and should be considered.

So, maybe I'll just read something as well, and I think it really speaks to Dave's question, actually. Canada is a large and complex country. You've learned about that complexity, for

example, in the ways in which we share jurisdictions, and our sheer size, throughout this year's meeting. And while we in Canada accept that we can and need to do better for Atlantic salmon and indeed for our reporting and our measures. Canada also recognises that some of the Review Group's dissatisfactions with our actions relate more to our difficulty in collating and reporting data across five provinces and well over 800 to 900 rivers. Canada recognises the need for introspection. We hope to enhance our ability to track and report in our progress reviews as part of our larger domestic effort to build a more cohesive, co-ordinated narrative around our conservation and restoration effort of our Atlantic salmon through the wild Atlantic salmon conservation strategy. Thank you.

**Cathal Gallagher (Chair of the IP / APR Review Group):** thanks, Doug. And I know we're tight for time, so if there are any other questions for the process or the IP Review Group?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** I also wanted to thank the Review Group for all the work over the years. We know that this is a process that has improved, but the efforts going in are really, really serious. It's also very important and very difficult for the Parties. We know that we have some jurisdictions who find it difficult to provide an IP, although there's very good work going on the ground, and I think people should keep that in mind.

So, I think it's important now to open the floor for discussions on specific questions that you may have. You may have particular considerations, things that you want clarifications for and so on. So, the floor is open. So, Niall, please.

**Niall Greene (Salmon Watch Ireland):** well, at first, I'd like to start off by associating myself with the comments about the work of the Review Group. They brought great rigour and process and indeed, objectivity to us. The amount of work involved is quite humongous. I was on the Review Group for years, some years ago, and I was very pleased to get off it. Sitting in judge and jury on the work of the jurisdictions is tough work.

People in NASCO are probably at this stage a bit fed up with hearing NGOs from Ireland banging on about salmon farming. But the truth of the matter is that we have no national forum within which the kind of issues we have can be thrashed out. Even not resolved, just thrashed out, just consulted on, and that results in quite a lot of recourse through the courts on environmental issues and so on. So, I'll keep any comments I have to make as short as possible, and I have quite a few questions.

The first question I have is only, I fear, somewhat tangentially concerned with the APRs. But in the past few weeks there has been an article published by Barry and others, describing a project in which they tracked smolts from the northeast of the Republic of Ireland, going up the Irish Sea and into the North Channel. And the research, to a fairly high degree of confidence, confirms a routing that people suspected was the one the smolts were taking. It appears to take them quite close, because the North Channel is a very narrow channel, to concentrations of salmon farms in Scotland. Concentrations of salmon farms, and concentrations of sea lice, obviously. So, the potential for smolts from Ireland to be interfered with in that journey by salmon farming in another jurisdiction, I think raises some serious questions. Not so much under the Habitats Directive because the UK is no longer subject to that Directive, but it raises law of the sea issues about the migration of fish.

So, this is a short-notice question about EU and UK, but I wonder if there are any initial thoughts by either delegation on that subject? Ireland, by international standards, has a tiny, almost miniscule salmon farming industry, which is declining. But even the small number of farms that we have still in existence, they're virtually all sited in a way which causes them to interfere with the migration of wild salmonids. It is an extraordinary feature of the Irish system that there is no salmon farm in Ireland that has ever been subjected to the rigours of modern environmental evaluation, the application of the best scientific advice available, and so on.

Because the licences which they initially had and which should have been coming up over the past 20 years for review and extension or denial have been the subject of a temporary piece of legislation introduced about 20 years ago, which allowed their existing licence to continue beyond its expiry date if they simply notified the minister that that's what they would like. So, as a result, no rigorous assessment has been made of the impact of those farms. So, the first question I have is whether the Irish authorities now have any plans to regularise that situation.

I then have a few questions arising from the APR, from Section 3.3, and the first is in relation to Action A1, which promises a revised sea lice protocol, but no indication as to when that's going to be issued. Also under A1 it's stated that no breaches of trigger levels have occurred with sea lice since July '22. Now, selecting July '22 as your baseline very conveniently ignores the critical period that led up to that July '22, March, April and May, and nowadays part of June. So, perhaps we could be enlightened about why that particular dateline was chosen and not, perhaps, a more critical one that would show that many individual farms certainly exceeded in '22 and may even have exceeded in '23.

Action A2 promises a new protocol on escapees, and the same question arises. When are we going to get it? Action A2 also refers to the fact that there were no officially reported escapes during 2022. I don't think I'm being mischievous by suggesting that implies that there may have been unreported escapes, and I'd welcome a comment on that. Irish salmon farms have increasingly gone over to the use of fish as a means of cleaning lice, lumpsuckers and wrasse. The lumpsuckers come from breeding stations, but hundreds of thousands of the wrasse are being collected in the wild and then transported into farms with no obvious environmental assessment of what impact that has on the areas where the fish were gathered and where they are being planted.

As I said, the Irish industry is very small. A tiny, open-cage industry, and I should say in parentheses here that in Salmon Watch we're not opposed to salmon farming. We're opposed to open-cage salmon farming. But there's a growing acceptance in all circles, of sea lice and escapee damage. There are significant and growing disease problems, which are being exacerbated by climate change. High mortality and up to 40% of the smolt implant dying in the course of their maturing, and that raises many issues, including animal welfare issues.

There's declining employment in the sector, and of course there's rigorous opposition from NGOs to new licences and that is gumming up the system, including leading to legal actions. So, it's a wonder why Ireland continues with open-cage farming when it could be devoting its energies to closed containment. That's the conclusion of what I wanted to say, Mr President.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Niall. Yes, indeed, those issues I just recall have been raised in the past and they keep coming back. This is important, because this is also one of the areas of the IPs and APRs which is systematically highlighted by the Review Group as problematic for the Parties. So, I was wondering if the EU could provide some replies?

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you, Niall, for the questions. Also, to acknowledge the work of Cathal and the Review Group, it is a truly amazing collaborative effort which keeps people like me on my toes. As does Niall.

So, in relation to the first question, I think as Niall has pointed out, this report, Barry *et al*, is relatively recent. I think our initial review of it, my own from a policy perspective and Inland Fisheries Ireland from a technical perspective, is that we need a little more time to consider it comprehensively. But we are alive to the potential threat to Irish smolts, and indeed smolts emanating from other parts – the UK in particular. At certain points, as it transitions along the Scottish coast and past, effectively, a narrow corridor, there is quite a bit of aquaculture. So, our initial view is that there was a high level of confidence in the sample size. Despite the fact that it's small in relation to the indications that are coming from the report. We would like to

suggest that we would liaise closely with our colleagues in UK – Scotland, when we've had the opportunity to examine the report in more detail. And obviously we'd be happy to keep Niall and the NGO Group advised of that liaison.

So, I'm sure I can rely on our colleagues in UK – Scotland, to participate in that when we've had a chance, and indeed they've had a chance to review the report in a more comprehensive fashion. Unless UK – Scotland want to add anything there?

**Alexander Kinninmonth (United Kingdom):** thanks very much. I'm Alex Kinninmonth from the Scottish Government, the UK delegation. Well, while I've got the microphone, I'll also add thanks to Cathal and the Review Group for all their work. Yes, on this specific point, as Denis has pointed out, scientists from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate have been partners in the research project that's been mentioned there. And yes, we're considering the findings and we're committed to liaise with our colleagues in Ireland and across the rest of the UK on those findings. But just to be clear that the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers take the issue of declining salmon populations extremely seriously.

There's a lot of information in our IP and APR, and I do encourage you to look at that, but just last week, the Scottish Government's main environmental regulator, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, opened a consultation. It will take place over the next 14 weeks, and that's on proposals for a new Sea Lice Risk Assessment Framework that would apply an evidence-based sea lice exposure threshold during the critical migration period to salmon farms. That will apply in over 120 wild salmonid detection zones on Scotland's west coast and Western Isles. The west coast and islands are the only areas where salmon farming is permitted under National Planning Policy. So, as I say, that 14-week consultation will take place, and we'll look to see the implementation of that framework by the end of this year in a phased way on new and expanding farms, but also existing farms.

That is part of a really important programme of work which reflects Scottish Ministers' commitment to better protect our wildlife and the wildlife of our neighbours, critically in these circumstances, and the environment. It really will see a significant change in the approach of how we manage interactions between wild and farmed fish in Scotland. Thank you.

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thanks, I look forward to working with Alex and liaising with Alex. I don't want to ignore the other questions that Niall has asked. I am Ireland's, I suppose, leading policy maker for wild fish, not for aquaculture. But two of our colleagues from the department and agency responsible for the development and regulation of aquaculture are online and they'll be in a position to respond.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** Ultan Waldron is my name, I'm head of Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in Ireland, and I have responsibility for the processing of licence applications for aquaculture. I am joined by my colleague, Neil Ruane, from the Marine Institute, so I might ask Neil to supplement some of the more technical questions. Just firstly, I welcome the opportunity to address you, the findings in the report and the review. We'd certainly be interested in engaging further on that.

I would ask if there's any guidance from the Review Group as to how one does actually achieve a satisfactory status? There's a couple of colours on the map, we'd obviously always like to be in the green, but there's three in particular that we'd like to further engage on, if there's any guidance from the NASCO Committee in that space we would welcome it.

In response to some of the questions: there are a number of salmon farm applications on hand with us at the moment and they're currently going through the environmental assessment processes that Niall mentioned. We were faced with quite a challenge a number of years ago

in terms of a backlog which meant the priority in numbers terms were concentrated on other parts of the aquaculture backlog to licence those.

So, we are looking at the salmon farm questions. As Niall mentioned it is quite a small number that we're looking at. I think we've got about just over 30 on hand to process. They will be subject to the full rigours of the environmental assessment and will comply with all EU as well as national legislation in terms of the environmental assessment process.

In terms of consulting and engaging with the sector, each of those applications is subject to a statutory as well as a public period of consultation. So, everybody has an opportunity to provide input into the licencing process in the country, and those factors are taken into consideration. Ultimately, we are guided by the science, so if the appropriate assessments or the environmental assessments dictate that a licence cannot be issued, well, then that's the result. And that has been the case in the past for other licence applications. They get refused where the science says no, amongst other factors which the minister of the day has to consider when a licence is being put forward for consideration.

I think that's the main questions that were asked of me. As Denis says, he has responsibility for the wild fish stocks. So, I don't know if Neil wants to add anything to that, and if I need to clarify anything further, please don't hesitate to ask further questions.

**Neil Ruane (European Union):** thank you, Ultan. Yes, just some small comments in relation to sea lice. I'm Neil Ruane, I'm the manager for the Aquaculture Section here at the Marine Institute in Ireland, and we oversee the running of the national sea lice monitoring program in the country. Just some comments then, in relations to sea lice. July of last year was not meant to be a baseline, it was just a simple statement of fact in the report for last year, that since July of 2022 until the end of that year, within that reporting period there were no breaches of our national sea lice trigger levels. Obviously, in the graph in the report, you could see that we had 93% of inspections below trigger levels. Therefore, there were some breaches prior to that time. All of that information is available in our Annual Sea Lice Report for 2022, which is available on the Marine Institute website.

In relation to upcoming actions, we do have plans to revise the National Sea Lice Pest Management Strategy in Ireland, and this is linked in with the National Aquaculture Strategy, which is due to be published soon. As far as I'm aware, that had been prepared primarily by BIM in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, and that will have a number of action points for the next cycle of that plan. Some of those points will include sea lice monitoring, and ensuring that, as best we can, that the programme that we operate is operated under the best information, the best scientific evidence available to us at the time. I think that's all I have for the moment, thank you.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** if I could just add one additional point, just in terms of transparency about the licencing process. Last year we launched, and this is in conjunction with our colleagues in the Marine Institute and with certain mapping with the assistance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, we launched an online viewer. So, anybody can view any of the licence sites around Ireland and click on them, it will give certain information. We are trying to get more information onto that site, but it'll tell you where the site's located, what they're licenced for and the species that they're licenced to farm, whether that is salmon farming, mussels, oysters, etc. So, that's publicly available to anybody who wants to gain access to it. It's called [AQUAMIS](#).

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Ultan and Neil. Just before we go there were two additional questions, I think. One regarding a new protocol on escapees, and one regarding the use of wild wrasse. Do you have any information on those?

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** the protocol on escapees, we haven't had any reports of escapees, not in my time and certainly right before that. So, there is a strict design protocol there for any operators that is agreed with their marine engineers who operate in that space.

I wasn't aware there was an issue with the actual protocol, and certainly we encourage any members of the public, or NGOs or for that matter our colleagues in the IFAs to contact us with reports of any escapes. But there hasn't been any reported to us.

**Neil Ruane (European Union):** yes, we do have plans to develop a protocol for reporting of escapes to outline the procedure and the protocol, because there are different stipulations depending on the age of each company's aquacultural licence and when it was granted. We would like to bring all the available information together into one protocol so that it's clear for everyone what is required to report, and to who. Also, we will be reaching out with our colleagues, not only in the department, but also in Inland Fisheries Ireland for any information or any additional stipulations they would like to see included in that protocol.

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** the additional question was on the use of lump sucker or wrasse. I can only say to Niall, if he wanted to supply additional information through Denis to ourselves, we can certainly engage in that. Because it's taking fish from the wild, so that's not under our competence. So, I would need to follow-up on that separately, if that's okay?

**Denis Maher (European Union):** thank you, and just to say thank you to you, Ultan, and to Neil for coming on the call. I think from an NGO point of view, if there's anything more specific you want to raise with me, I will liaise with you internally at home, and I'll keep in touch.

**Noel Carr (Federation of Irish Salmon Sea Anglers):** Noel Carr from Federation of Irish Salmon Sea Anglers. Thanks Niall and Ultan for addressing this. Our concern is about the responsibility for the organic label and the production in Ireland for issuing the organic signal. Do you, under your Head of Agriculture Department, have responsibility for that and monitoring that, and especially the stock that comes in from Scotland at the moment at Donegal, Rinmore? Because that's where quite a lot of the product goes back organically labelled. Thanks.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Noel. Neil, do you want to answer?

**Ultan Waldron (European Union):** no, just within the division answer it's just unfortunate that we're having a national conversation at an international forum. I'm happy to provide answers to those questions, but in terms of organic farming, no, we are not responsible, or myself personally responsible, it's just for the licencing of the actual production, the certification or the processing.

I know definitely there is a role from organic certification, and BIM will be involved in the marketing side of it. But I think if you could give me some more specific details I will certainly ensure that an answer is provided to you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** very good. Thank you, gentlemen, and we'll move on now. Are there any other questions regarding other APRs? Steve, please, go ahead.

**Steve Sutton (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Steve Sutton, I have a question for Canada on their Annual Progress Report. In the Canadian APR there's a very brief mention of the development of a tool for identifying European introgression. I believe that relates to a paper published last year by scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, describing a discovery of genetic material in a population of wild salmon in southern Newfoundland. The discovery was of European genes in a population of salmon in southern Newfoundland. The scientists concluded that that genetic material could only have come from the recent use of European salmon in an aquaculture facility, and the subsequent escape of those salmon and interbreeding



of those salmon with the wild population. That, of course, would be an unauthorised use of European genetic strain in the industry.

That would be the second time that European genetics have been discovered in wild salmon in Canada. The first was here in the Bay of Fundy several years ago when European genetics were discovered in the gene-banking programme for the endangered inner Bay of Fundy salmon population. So, it seems we have a problem here in Canada with the unauthorised introduction and use of European strain salmon in the aquaculture industry. The development of a tool to identify that genetic material in wild populations will be useful, but obviously there's other questions.

In particular, what is Canada doing to identify the source of those fish? What is Canada doing to make sure those fish are not still in the water? What is Canada going to do to make sure those fish don't go into the water in the future? Is there any member of the Canadian delegation here who can shed some light on that situation. What's going to be done to make sure we don't continue to have those European strain fish in use in the aquaculture industry here in Canada?

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** Thank you, Steve.

**Doug Bliss (Canada):** so, thank you very much for the question from the Atlantic Salmon Federation. I think Livia Goodbrand might be able to help us out on that one.

**Livia Goodbrand (Canada):** thank you, Steve. Yes, we're aware of the report and we are tracking this file. There's actually a Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) meeting going on in parallel with the NASCO meeting, so they are deliberating on these very questions. And until we get that report finalised, I don't think we can really answer. That's the point of the CSAS process, and I trust that it is rigorous. I know that they've invited many different external participants, including international participants. So, unfortunately, we'll have to await the results of that review and report. Thank you.

*Additional response received by correspondence from Canada 7 July 2023:*

- *DFO is aware of the presence of European genes in wild and farmed salmon in Atlantic Canada.*
- *The use of reproductively-viable European salmon in net-pen aquaculture has never been permitted in Atlantic Canada, though some controlled work has been permitted in land-based facilities. It is expected that some European genetic presence has been unintentionally introduced into aquaculture, and European genes have been inadvertently released into the wild from farm escapes.*
- *DFO is working closely with provincial authorities and the industry to address this issue. We are reviewing several additional management measures. This includes stronger protocols and measures to reduce the risk of aquaculture salmon escaping and consideration of genetic screening approaches.*
- *DFO also continues to research mitigation measures to better protect wild Atlantic salmon. For example, DFO is working with provinces to review regulatory requirements of net pens to further mitigate escapes.*
- *Additionally, a DFO Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) process is currently underway, to assess the risk posed to wild Atlantic Salmon population abundance and diversity by direct genetic interaction with escapes from East Coast Atlantic Salmon aquaculture. This process will also consider potential mitigation options to address potential risks.*

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Canada.

**Dave Meerburg (Atlantic Salmon Federation):** Dave Meerberg, Atlantic Salmon Federation. I guess, Livia, I'd like to follow up on that, then. I find it a little bit surprising that DFO is saying they're holding off on doing anything about this until they get the result of a further scientific study on what the implications are of introgression into the wild populations. I believe what Steve asked, is that DFO seems to be aware there must be European-strain fish being used in the aquaculture industry, you've known that for a couple of years. Why aren't you out there looking at the industry and finding out where it came from?

It's got nothing to do with what answers are going to come from the scientific process, it's following up on what you should be looking at as a big concern. It's a concern of European strain fish in Canadian aquaculture that's not allowed by NASCO. So, it's a violation of NASCO's guidelines, and it should be followed up on, not put off to wait for some further scientific answer.

**Livia Goodbrand (Canada):** thank you. This is my understanding, and it may not be perfect. Part of the reason that they're meeting to discuss the science still, as opposed to taking action, is we don't really understand, based on the data we have, when and where those introgressions happened. Once those European genes get into the population, it's difficult to say what their source was or when that interaction occurred. So, I think part of the science that's left to be done is around increasing our understanding.

Yes, the European genes are there, we don't know if those are continuing to be added into the population's genetic structure, or if this was a problem that may have happened 10, 20 years ago. My understanding is that we need to find a resolution to understand when and how this happened, and if it's continuing to happen, before we can really determine how to move next. That's my understanding, but it really is imperfect and that's why I'm waiting on CSAS.

I just thought you'd have the process to go sample the industries, sample the smolts they're producing, sample the fish in the cages and see if you can find where they're coming from. I think it's a good idea, and I'm sure it's something that there's a lot of different ways to build a sampling programme. I expect that's something that's being worked on. Happy to take further questions or comments including if anybody from the Canadian delegation has a better understanding. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Livia. Nigel, please?

**Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management):** thank you very much, Nigel Milner here from the NGO group. This is a question on behalf of the Norwegian salmon rivers, so I guess it's aimed to the Norwegian delegation. It's a bit of a hybrid question, because it also refers to NASCO generally. In the IP there's a statement that the Director of Fisheries will investigate episodes of strayed and farmed salmon in fjords and rivers, and where possible track fish back to the farm of origin and use that information to optimise control regimes. We would like to know if they feel, in their view, that the Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries has not carried out what they regard as a clear order from Government – to implement a common tracking system for all farmed salmon. This was set to be a priority in 2022, but the work has still not been done.

So, firstly, why hasn't that been done? That's to the Norwegian delegation. Secondly, to ask NASCO to stress to all relevant governments and their agencies the importance of complying with all agreed efforts to protect wild salmon. Thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** thank you, Nigel, and someone from Norwegian delegation?

**Raoul Bierach (Norway):** at this point I want to ask Guro Mathiesen, who's online, to comment on this question because she's an expert on it. Thank you.

**Guro Mathiesen (Norway):** thank you. Hi, I'm Guro Mathiesen from the Department of

Trade, Industry and Fisheries in Norway, and we put great emphasis on reducing the challenges for escape incidences. Norway is positively inclined towards establishing a tracking system and providing a demonstration it is appropriate and efficient. Different methods are under evaluation in Norway, and the Directorate of Fisheries is currently considering where and how we may track the farmed salmon. So, that's where we are at this point in time, we're considering how we may track farmed salmon.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** okay, thank you, thank you very much. Nigel, is that okay?

**Nigel Milner (Institute of Fisheries Management):** yes, thank you.

**Arnaud Peyronnet (President):** We have reached the end of the Session today; thank you again to the Review Group and to all the Parties for the questions.

***Press Release***

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)  
Fortieth Annual Meeting,  
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada  
5 – 8 June 2023

**Climate Change, Other Threats to Wild Atlantic Salmon Clear  
North Atlantic Countries Taking Action. Commit to Doing More**

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), the international body responsible for promoting the recovery, conservation, and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon, closed its Fortieth Annual Meeting today. Delegates gathered in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, on the banks of the Petitcodiac River, where Atlantic salmon are actively being restored. Countries from around the North Atlantic discussed the alarming effects climate change will have – and is already having – on Atlantic salmon and ways to improve the climate resiliency of the stocks. NASCO also welcomed Indigenous peoples from across the North Atlantic to share their perspectives on the importance of this species to their social and cultural lives and to explore how they could participate more fully in the work of NASCO.

According to information presented during a Special Session held by NASCO on climate change and Atlantic salmon, the warming environment will be devastating for this species, and its effects are already becoming evident. The Special Session highlighted actions that NASCO Parties are taking in their own waters to mitigate those effects, but more is urgently needed at the national and international levels to address this existential threat. Already many Atlantic salmon stocks are threatened with extinction; the climate crisis is increasing the urgency to take meaningful action to ensure the future of this iconic species. Today, NASCO Parties expressed their unwavering commitment to Atlantic salmon by agreeing to consider climate change and its impacts in a systematic manner in all aspects of its work. This commitment was part of a broader NASCO initiative to reform and refocus the work of the organisation – based on the results of a third performance review conducted by independent experts – to meet the most important challenges facing Atlantic salmon today and into the future.

*‘Atlantic salmon is a magnificent species that we must not fail to recover and conserve.’* said NASCO President Arnaud Peyronnet. *‘This is a pivotal time for NASCO and for the species it manages. Atlantic salmon face many stressors during their complex life cycle, and these are being exacerbated by climate change. The renewed commitment made to salmon by all Parties during this NASCO Annual Meeting, however, is cause for hope.’*

A Special Session was also held to invite the perspectives of Indigenous peoples on wild Atlantic salmon. A series of presentations informed NASCO about the fundamental importance of salmon to Indigenous peoples around the North Atlantic, about the roles, successes, and challenges of Indigenous peoples in salmon conservation and management, and about the value they could bring through strengthened engagement in NASCO’s work. The successful session led to a commitment by NASCO to enhance the engagement of Indigenous peoples in the work of the Organization going forward. Said the NASCO President, ‘Indigenous peoples bring

unique and important perspectives to the table. Ensuring these groups can participate meaningfully in NASCO is essential. Our Organization is stronger when all voices concerned with Atlantic salmon are heard.’

NASCO also established a new Working Group aimed at addressing the threat to Atlantic salmon posed by the spread of invasive Pacific pink salmon across the Atlantic. Outputs from this important body will be considered in 2024.

Finally, NASCO welcomed the news that Iceland is taking steps to rejoin the organization. ‘I am so pleased that Iceland, a founding member of this Organization, will again take its rightful place in NASCO. Iceland’s participation will strengthen our Organization further,’ said President Peyronnet. Iceland participated in the 2023 NASCO Annual Meeting as an observer.

Non-member France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) also attended NASCO as an observer. France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) conducts a fishery that harvests wild Atlantic salmon originating from the rivers of NASCO members. NASCO has urged France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) to join the Organization for many years in light of its ongoing fishing interests. It did so again in 2023. To-date, France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) has declined the invitation, but it is taking steps to ensure transparency in the fishery and conduct sufficient sampling.

The Fortieth Annual Meeting of NASCO was held during 5 – 8 June 2023 in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. The Forty First Annual Meeting will be held in Westport, Ireland, from 3 – 7 June 2024.

#### **Notes for Editors:**

NASCO is an intergovernmental organization formed by a treaty in 1984 and is based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Its objectives are to promote the conservation, enhancement, restoration and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon stocks, which do not recognise national boundaries. It is the only inter-governmental organisation with this mandate which it implements through international consultation, negotiation, and co-operation.

The Parties to the Convention are: Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. There are 46 non-governmental observers accredited to the Organization.

The 2023 Annual Meeting was convened in a hybrid format, with 92 participants joining in-person and 34 joining remotely. The participants included scientists, policy makers and representatives of inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations who met to discuss the status of wild Atlantic salmon and to consider management issues.

For further information contact: Dr Emma Hatfield, Secretary NASCO

Tel: +44 (0)131 228 2551

Email: [hq@nasco.int](mailto:hq@nasco.int) Website: [www.nasco.int](http://www.nasco.int)

***Closing Statement to Council submitted by the United States***

The United States would like to thank the Secretariat and the Parties to NASCO for a very productive week working together to improve the conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon. We would especially like to thank Canada for providing a wonderful meeting venue and arranging for the wonderful social events and tours that provided opportunities for important professional networking and relationship building.

Notably, 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the organization's convention. As noted during the meeting, this anniversary serves as an important opportunity for the Parties to reflect on the progress of the organization in addressing overfishing as well as to chart a course for its future. In particular, we are pleased that this year, we have agreed terms of reference for the Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON). This initiative provides an important and timely opportunity for NASCO and its Parties to renew their commitment to ensuring future generations have healthy stocks of wild Atlantic salmon in their waters. Further, we are delighted that NASCO, through its 2023 Special Session on Climate Change, has jump started a conversation on the most consequential issue facing Atlantic salmon of our time. During that session, real progress was made in understanding the impacts of climate change on Atlantic salmon and in sharing information regarding effective steps Parties are taking to help mitigate those impacts. While we are at the beginning of this conversation, NASCO should be commended for its commitment to incorporate climate change considerations into all of its work going forward. We also greatly appreciated the open and heartfelt exchange offered by the participants of the "Special Session of the Council: Indigenous Perspectives on Atlantic Salmon." We eagerly look forward to participating in and contributing to the process that the FAC is undertaking intersessionally and are committed to working internally in the United States with our indigenous groups and others on this very important issue.

In the United States, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, under which U.S. populations of Atlantic salmon are designated as endangered. The Endangered Species Act is among the world's most powerful legal instruments in protecting species at risk of extinction. The United States would like to take the opportunity presented by this auspicious moment to renew its unwavering commitment to the recovery and conservation of this iconic species both in U.S. waters and throughout its range.

Each year, the APR process takes a critical look at the progress being made by Parties to implement key NASCO instruments. However, it is just as important to take a broader view on these matters and to assess how well the organization and its members are doing at meeting the Convention objective. As we have openly acknowledged, dams remain a significant challenge to Atlantic salmon restoration in the United States and, therefore, we have focused our efforts and resources on making these facilities as invisible to Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fishes as possible. Throughout the U.S. range of Atlantic salmon, numerous large-scale mainstem and tributary dams have been removed. For other hydro-electric dams, we have imposed measures that require industry to achieve downstream and upstream passage rates for Atlantic salmon at levels previously not considered feasible.

Each year, the United States takes domestic actions that go above and beyond the specific agreements, guidelines, and decisions adopted by NASCO in support of our overarching goal of helping to create an environment where Atlantic salmon can thrive. In 2022 alone, the United States invested over 6.1 million dollars (USD) in support of connectivity projects in Maine that benefit Atlantic salmon and their ecosystems. This work has been accomplished via partnerships with numerous federal and state governments, tribal nations, and our NGO

partners. As reinforced numerous times during NASCO's climate change special session, removing dams and other barriers remains one of the most important actions that we can take domestically to address the negative impacts of climate change on the productivity of Atlantic salmon.

While Atlantic salmon populations continue to be precariously low, the cumulative number of returns to the Penobscot River this year are at the highest for this date for the last forty-five years of record. Moreover, we have observed significant and continually increasing abundance and distribution of river herring and other sea-run fish in response to increased connectivity and improved ecosystem function across many of our watersheds. For example, river herring returns have increased from just 2,000 individuals in 2011 to over **5.2 million** in 2023 on the Penobscot River. We recognize that this information must be interpreted carefully, but it makes us optimistic that the work we are doing both domestically and internationally *is* making a difference.

Finally, we would like to thank the President for his leadership in establishing the WGFON process that will ensure that NASCO remains relevant and at the forefront of the restoration and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon. While the work ahead is significant, we are very optimistic that we will be successful, and we look forward to working with the Parties, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders on this process.