



## *MoU with the OSPAR Commission*

### **Purpose**

This paper provides information on work being carried out by OSPAR that may be of interest to NASCO Parties.

### **Decision**

- no decisions are required.

### **Background**

The operation of the [MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission](#) (5 August 2013) continues to work well. In 2019, the FAC agreed that the Secretary should continue to liaise with OSPAR on issues of mutual interest and bring relevant information to its attention.

The following issues may be of interest, with more information on each provided below:

1. OSPAR Quality Status Assessment 2023;
2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon;
3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon; and
4. Extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic.

### **1. OSPAR Quality Status Assessment 2023**

OSPAR's vision is captured in its North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 (NEAES 2030), which all OSPAR Contracting Parties have committed to implement. The NEAES 2030 tackles head-on the three main challenges in the OSPAR Maritime Area: loss of biodiversity, pollution, and resilience to climate change. OSPAR relies on scientific assessments, the most current of which is summarised in OSPAR's Quality Status Assessment, published in 2023 '[QSR 2023](#)'. The QSR 2023 reflects the work of the Contracting Parties, scientists, experts and their institutions, and the OSPAR Secretariat, to assess the status of various components of the North-East Atlantic and examine how conditions have changed since the last QSR (2010). The OSPAR Contracting Parties have progressively invested in more sophisticated monitoring and analysis of changes to the North-East Atlantic, both to support science-based decision making and to move towards a better understanding of the effectiveness of management and policy responses. The resulting QSR 2023 is a holistic assessment of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic produced in collaboration with over 400 scientists and policy experts from across the region, providing a foundation for effective science-based policy.

Some of the key findings from the QSR 2023 that may be of interest to NASCO are:

- collective trends point to declining biodiversity and continued habitat degradation across many parts of the OSPAR Maritime Area, even as measures to achieve clean, biodiverse and productive seas have been taken by the OSPAR Contracting Parties. Two things are clear: 1) additional measures are required in order to change a trajectory of nature decline to one of nature recovery, and 2) the existing measures need to be more effective;
- increased discharges from the rapidly growing aquaculture sector have been reported and it is likely that medicines are included among the substances being discharged;
- plankton, the base of the marine food web, are impacted in pelagic habitats;

- the continuation of the long-term trends in plankton communities apparent from the current assessment period is expected to impact marine food webs and the ecosystem services delivered by pelagic habitats;
- the state of marine food webs is of great concern;
- the effects of climate change are clearly measurable; and
- ocean acidification puts marine ecosystems at further risk.

## 2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon

During the 2021 meeting, [FAC\(21\)12](#), the FAC discussed the OSPAR status assessment of salmon. The purpose of the OSPAR status assessment was to provide a ‘light-touch’ overview of whether there was any change in the status of salmon or the main threats to it. The assessment was to be used as a basis for discussions in OSPAR on what further management action might be needed.

The FAC expressed concern relating to the actions OSPAR appeared to be taking in relation to Atlantic salmon. In particular, it was concerned that responsibilities and related tasks that fall under NASCO’s authority and competence might be inappropriately duplicated by OSPAR, which could create contradictory information, and possibly bring the two organization’s roles and responsibilities into conflict. Consequently:

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

Two workshops to develop the OSPAR status assessment of salmon took place on 23 June 2021 and 23 September 2021. As requested in the NASCO President’s letter, the assessment used data from the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS). The following experts were involved in one or both workshops:

L. Beaulaton (France); P. Fiske (Norway); P.R. Almeida, C. Mateus, S. Silva and C. M. Alexandre (Portugal); I. A. Bergendahl (Sweden); D. Ensing (ICES WGNAS Chairman), C. Bean, I. Davidson, J. Gillson, N. Hanson, L. Talks, A. Walker and S. Walton (United Kingdom); and E. Hatfield (NASCO Secretariat).

The [OSPAR Status Assessment 2022 - Atlantic salmon](#) has been completed as a contribution to the Quality Status Report 2023. That report also includes a thematic assessment on fish (both sensitive and commercial fish species); it was published in autumn 2023. ICG-POSH (OSPAR's Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Protection of Species and Habitats) will continue to explore next steps and implementation needs based on findings in the status assessments.

## 3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon

In 2021, the FAC was informed about the OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on furthering the protection and conservation of the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR maritime area which became effective on 24 June 2016. The recommendation reflected comments and edits provided by NASCO, although NASCO did not endorse or take a policy position on the recommendation. Under the recommendation, the Contracting Parties of the OSPAR Commission are to report on the implementation of the Recommendation by 31 December 2019 and every six years thereafter. Once the Contracting Parties to OSPAR make their reports to the OSPAR Secretariat, NASCO will receive, per the terms of the MoU, any relevant information from OSPAR.

A review of the implementation of this recommendation was undertaken in 2019 and OSPAR has completed the analysis of the information that Contracting Parties had reported, as a contribution to the Quality Status Report 2023, as the '[Overview Assessment](#) of Implementation of OSPAR Recommendations for Protection and Conservation of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats'.

Implementation reporting on Recommendations for OSPAR listed habitats and species was required in 2013, 2016, and 2019. The implementation reporting round in 2019 was the first time in OSPAR history that implementation reporting was completed for all 50 Recommendations on the protection and conservation of species and habitats. The next implementation reporting is anticipated in 2025. The implementation reporting effort covered 668 national and collective actions.

On the reporting on bony fish, OSPAR stated that:

*There was stronger evidence of national measures being adopted for diadromous species, in particular Atlantic salmon, noting synergies with the EU Water Framework Directive and tangible engineering solutions. The management measures identified for diadromous fish included a focus on water quality, control of hazardous substances, and engineering solutions to remove barriers between marine and freshwater environments and to facilitate safe passage where barriers cannot be removed. There are a number of examples provided, with some of the measures implemented for eels included in the highlight section below. With regard to the introduction of national legislation, nine Contracting Parties reported national legislation was in place for the protection and conservation of the Atlantic salmon, along with detailed management actions to address the key threats through its lifecycle, coordination in research and monitoring. Seven Contracting Parties reported using legislation to protect Sea lamprey; with two Contracting Parties using legislation to protect the habitat of Sea lamprey. Seven Contracting Parties use legislation to protect Allis shad with two Contracting Parties deciding to focus on protecting Allis shad habitat rather than the species, by seeking to improve water quality and reduce eutrophication. Four Contracting Parties use national legislation to protect the European sturgeon. One Contracting Party stated that keeping non-native sturgeon is regulated and requires their removal to prevent non-native populations being established in the wild. For those Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States, legislation within the EU MSFD, EU Habitats Directive, EU WFD was identified as relevant for these species. Restoration/recovery/re-stocking or re-introduction actions were also reported by a number of Contracting Parties concerning diadromous species including the European eel, Allis shad and Atlantic salmon, including measures to prevent the degradation of spawning habitats and the restoration of migration routes.*

Appendix 1, Table 3a (below) shows the reporting status for the OSPAR Contracting Parties that reported on various bony fish species, including salmon.

**Table 3a Bony Fish-** Overview of the occurrence of listed bony fish species across the OSPAR Maritime Area and where they are found to be under threat or in decline across the OSPAR Maritime Area with a summary of implementation reporting by Contracting Party for 2019.

Region	I			II								III			IV			V		
	G L (D K)	IS	N O	N O	SE	D K	DE	NL	BE	FR	U K	U K	IE	FR	FR	ES	PT	PT	IE	U K
Allis Shad (2015/4)		-	/	/	/V	L, A Ex	L, A, N	L, A Ex	/Ex	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L	L, A, N	L, A, N	?	X	X	L	L, A, N
Cod (2014/14)		-	L	L	L, A, N	R	L, A, N	A, N	L	R	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, N	R	R	-	-	-	L, A, N	L, A, N
European Eel (2014/15)		L, A	L, A	L, A	L, A, N	L, A	L, A, N	L, A, N	L	A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A	A, N	A, N	L, A, N			L, A	L, A, N
Long-Snouted Seahorse (2012/3)		/	/	/	/	/	/	A	A	N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L	N	N	A	X	X	L	L, A, N
Orange Roughy (2010/7)		X	L	L	-	/	-	-	-	-	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A	-	-	A	X	X	L, A	L, A, N
Salmon (2016/3)		L, A	L, A	L, A	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	A	/	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	X	X	L, A	L, A, N
Sea Lamprey (2015/3)		/	L, A	L, A	L, A, N	L, A	L, A, N	L, A, N	/	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A	L, A, N	L, A, N	A, N				
Short-Snouted Seahorse (2012/2)		/	/	/	/	/	/	A	A	N	L, A, N	L, A, N	L	N	N	L	X	X	L	L, A, N
Sturgeon (2014/1)		-	/	/	/	/	L, A, N V	X	/	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A, N	-	L, A, N	L, A, N	L, A	X	X	-	L, A, N
Bluefin Tuna*																				
Houting																				

**Key: presence of species / habitats and where they are under threat**

	Species is known to occur
	Species occurs and is in decline or under threat
V	Vagrant/Sporadic
	Absent
Ex	Extinct

**Key: reporting/ implementation status (source ICG-POSH 20/4/Inf.1)**

-	CP not required to report
/	Reported as not applicable
X	No report submitted
R	Reservation in place
A	Administrative action as means of implementation
N	Negotiated action as means of implementation
L	Legislative action as means of implementation
?	Means not clearly indicated in reporting

#### 4. Extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic

A discussion began in OSPAR in 2018 on the possibility of establishing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean. [OSPAR Decision 2021/01](#) relates to the

establishment of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area. The Decision entered into force on 19 April 2022. Further information is available on the OSPAR's [NACES MPA webpage](#).

The site is located in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of the OSPAR Maritime Area. It represents a marine area of near pristine open ocean habitat that provides an important feeding ground for many species of seabirds. Its conservation vision is 'Maintenance and, where appropriate, restoration of seabird populations and the integrity of the various ecosystems and their processes that support those populations of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount MPA (NACES MPA).' NASCO contributed to the analysis relating to the establishment of the MPA.

In 2023, OSPAR Contracting Parties agreed to extend the NACES MPA to include the seabed and a number of additional species and habitats, such as coral gardens and deep-sea sharks.

Secretary  
Edinburgh  
24 May 2024