



## *The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy*

The wild Atlantic salmon is an iconic symbol of resilience and is facing an unprecedented threat to its existence. From the rushing rivers of its birth to the vast expanse of the open ocean, the journey of the wild Atlantic salmon is one of endurance and wonder. However, this journey is now perilously endangered by a combination of human activities causing biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, overfishing and climate change. Climate change is an overarching threat that is both directly impacting the productivity of wild Atlantic salmon and indirectly intensifying the impacts of other stressors across the species' entire life cycle.

The decline of wild Atlantic salmon populations is not merely a concern for conservationists; it is a wake-up call for all of us to recognise the interconnectedness of our actions with the health of our planet. This Strategy proposes the urgent need for collective action to safeguard the future of this extraordinary species.

### **NASCO's Unique Role**

NASCO is uniquely positioned to provide leadership in addressing the range of threats to wild Atlantic salmon and support its conservation and recovery. It is the only inter-governmental organization with regulatory competency for wild Atlantic salmon fisheries and it is the pre-eminent convener of the wild Atlantic salmon community throughout the North Atlantic Ocean, including governments, Indigenous Peoples, the Non-Governmental Organizations, fishers, environmental organizations and other relevant actors.

Key aspects of NASCO's role include:

- compiling and sharing information on wild Atlantic salmon, including its status and the threats it is facing;
- identifying information and research needs and promoting and supporting international co-operation to carry out such research;
- producing authoritative guidelines to inform best management practices to promote the conservation and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon;
- encouraging effective implementation by Parties and jurisdictions of NASCO's binding and non-binding measures through transparent review and reporting processes;
- building and supporting global awareness and understanding of the plight of wild Atlantic salmon and its unique migratory lifecycle; and
- connecting governments, organizations and people across the range of wild Atlantic salmon to educate and encourage effective action to help address the challenges facing the species.

In light of this, NASCO has developed Vision and Mission statements as follows:

### **NASCO's Vision**

The decline of wild Atlantic salmon has reversed and populations are recovering to healthy and resilient levels across their range.

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<sup>1</sup> Correction made to the date in the Action Plan for the future action 'Update fisheries guidelines'.

## **NASCO's Mission**

NASCO will support and promote urgent and transformative actions directed at the protection, conservation and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon throughout the species' range.

## **NASCO's Strategic Goal**

Within the next 10 years, NASCO's goal is to prioritise and drive actions necessary to slow the decline of wild Atlantic salmon populations and demonstrate that restoration is possible.

## **NASCO's Objectives**

### **NASCO will:**

1. Ensure the best evidence-based information is compiled and accessible to address the critical challenges and threats to wild Atlantic salmon at the North Atlantic scale, which are amplified by the climate crisis.
2. Use the information gathered through Objective 1 to ensure that guidance reflecting best management practice is produced and readily available to those seeking to take action to protect wild Atlantic salmon.
3. Actively promote sustainable conservation and management practices by sharing best practice and holding Parties and jurisdictions accountable in implementing NASCO recommendations and guidance.
4. Raise awareness and foster broad collaborative efforts with other international organizations and civil society to encourage decision-makers, the public, private sector and the scientific community to work towards solutions that overcome the challenges wild Atlantic salmon face.
5. Improve its organizational practices and work in an efficient, effective, inclusive, and transparent manner.

## **Linking the Strategy and Action Plan**

While the threats and challenges to wild Atlantic salmon vary widely across jurisdictions, since 2007, when NASCO first implemented its series of reporting cycles, NASCO has identified three major theme areas that affect wild Atlantic salmon throughout their range. They are:

- **management of salmon fisheries:** to promote the diversity and abundance of salmon stocks and maintain all stocks above their conservation limits;
- **protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat:** to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat; and
- **management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics:** to minimise the adverse impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics on the wild stocks of Atlantic salmon, including working with industry stakeholders, where appropriate.

These theme areas were considered and reaffirmed as continuing to be the key pressures for wild Atlantic salmon with all of them exacerbated by the climate change crisis.

The following Action Plan specifies the actions that NASCO has agreed to undertake from 2024 onwards, in order to deliver on its Ten-Year Strategy. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated, annually, by Council.

Within the Action Plan, the actions are grouped under each of the Strategy's five objectives, with an additional section for cross-cutting actions. The theme which each action will




contribute to is also indicated, with all actions reflecting adaptation to climate change. In line with NASCO's remit, most of these actions will guide and enable work related to wild Atlantic salmon conservation and restoration. Those actions that will deliver directly for salmon are shown in bold.

# Action Plan

Objective	Timing	Action	Themes			Status	Commentary	Link to recommendations in CNL(24)14	
			Fisheries	Habitat	AIT				
<b>(1) Understand &amp; share</b>	2024	Share pink salmon knowledge			x	✔	TBSS took place at 2024 AM	T7	
	Ongoing	Monitor pink salmon			x	🔄	Pink Salmon Working Group ToRs adopted at 2024 AM	T7	
	Ongoing	Continue to manage G. salaris risk			x	🔄	GS Working Group ongoing & will review all GS recommendations	EPR27, T7	
	2024/25	Parties do / share stressor analysis to direct future action	x	x	x	🔄	Will start after 2024 AM	EPR16, TBSS2(2), TBSS2(5), IP14	
	2025/26	Parties do / share baseline analysis to inform progress on actions	x	x	x	🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM	TBSS2(2), TBSS2(5)	
	2025	Publish study on aquaculture impacts on wild salmon			x	🔄	Work in progress, first draft due autumn 2024	n/a	
	<b>Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas (WASA)</b>								
	2024/25	Parties populate Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas (WASA) to give global picture of state of salmon	x	x	x	🔄	Will start after 2024 AM	WGFON	
	2026	Publish 'State of North Atlantic Salmon' report based on WASA data	x	x	x	🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM	WGFON	
<b>(2) Guide</b>	2024	Agree Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas (WASA) data needs	x	x	x	✔	Agreed at 2024 AM	WGFON	
	<b>Delivery by Theme-based / Expert Working Groups</b>								
	2024	Update Stocking Guidelines			x	🔄	Stocking Guidelines agreed at 2024 AM; stock re-building guidelines to be reviewed after 2024 AM	n/a	
	2025/26	Update habitat restoration guidelines		x		🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM, based on discussion of Annex 1	several	
	2026/27	Update aquaculture guidelines			x	🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM, based on discussion of Annex 1	several	
2027/28	Update fisheries guidelines	x			🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM, based on discussion of Annex 1	several		
<b>(3) Deliver</b>	<b>Delivery through Commissions</b>								
	2024	Agree continued closure of Faroese salmon fishery	x			✔	Agreed at 2024 AM	n/a	
	Ongoing	Monitor West Greenland & Labrador fisheries & domestic mixed stock fisheries	x			🔄	Through Commissions	n/a	
	2026	Negotiate new regulatory measure for West Greenland fishery	x			🕒	Future action	n/a	
	<b>Delivery by Parties</b>								
	Ongoing	Parties / jurisdictions deliver domestic actions for salmon	x	x	x	🔄	As committed in current Implementation Plans; new plans to be developed for 2026 onwards	n/a	
	2024/25	Develop fourth reporting cycle, for Parties / jurisdictions to plan domestic actions and demonstrate progress	x	x	x	🔄	ToRs for Future Reporting Working Group agreed at 2024 AM	IP24, TBSS2(2), IP13, IP14, WGFON	
	2025/26	Parties / jurisdictions plan / document fourth round of salmon actions – linked to their key	x	x	x	🕒	Future action, subject to design by Future Reporting Working Group	EPR16, TBSS2(2), TBSS2(5), IP14	
2027+	Parties / jurisdictions report on delivery progress	x	x	x	🕒	Future action, subject to design by Future Reporting Working Group	IP24, TBSS2(2), IP13, IP14, WGFON		
2027+	Monitor delivery of salmon actions, by Parties / jurisdictions	x	x	x	🕒	Future action, subject to design by Future Reporting Working Group	IP24, TBSS2(2), IP13, IP14, WGFON		
<b>(4) Collaboration</b>	2024	Agree to allow Indigenous observers at NASCO	x	x	x	✔	Agreed at 2024 AM	T5, IYS4	
	2024+	Parties to make stronger links with other RFMOs and IGOs and report back annually	x	x	x	✔	Agreed at 2024 AM	EPR38, IY2	
	2024/25	Develop communications & outreach strategy (e.g. running symposia, public & political engagement, industry engagement, certification agencies, improvement to website, etc.)	x	x	x	🔄	Development agreed at 2024 AM	EPR34, EPR35, EPR46, T6, T11, WGFONx6	
	2025	ICES deliver simplified fisheries advice	x			🔄	Work in progress	n/a	
	2027	Review observer process	x	x	x	🕒	Future action; agreed at 2024 AM	EPR32, T5, IYS4	
<b>(5) Organisational excellence</b>	2024	Agree fair & transparent remuneration of NASCO staff				✔	Agreed at 2024 AM	n/a	
	2025	Agree modernised Terms & Conditions for NASCO staff				🔄	Work in progress	n/a	
	2025	Present position paper on changing NASCO Convention				🔄	WGFON to develop paper for discussion at 2025 AM; agreed at 2024 AM	EPR42, EPR43	
	2025	Publish NASCO Secretariat environmental policy				🔄	Work in progress; Secretariat to complete	EPR41	
<b>Cross cutting</b>	2024/25	Review & prioritise outstanding recommendations, for inclusion in 2025 Action Plan	x	x	x	🔄	Will start after 2024 AM, by sub-group of WGFON		

# Action Plan Key

## Key

Action	<p><b>bold actions - deliver directly for salmon</b></p> <p><i>italic actions - enable the delivery of actions that will help salmon</i></p> <p>black actions - already agreed</p> <p>amber actions - to be agreed by Council at XXXX Annual Meeting (AM)</p>
Themes	<p>This section has been used to indicate to which of NASCO's three key theme areas the action relates</p> <p><b>Fisheries:</b> management of salmon fisheries to promote the diversity and abundance of salmon stocks and maintain all stocks at sustainable levels</p> <p><b>Habitat:</b> protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat: to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat</p> <p><b>AITT:</b> management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics: to minimise the possible adverse impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics on the wild stocks of Atlantic salmon, including working with industry stakeholders, where appropriate</p>
Status	<p> Complete</p> <p> Work in progress</p> <p> Future action</p>

***Prioritisation of Revision of Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines***

Cross-cutting Directions and Assignments for all Revisions / Updates:

- all to include updated knowledge, science, and best practices (EPR45)
- all to specifically incorporate responding to climate change as a key element of guidelines (EPR9, TBSS1(3))
- all to incorporate social, economic factors and local and indigenous knowledge as an element of the guidelines (T3 + Guidelines for incorporating social and economic factors in decisions under the Precautionary Approach (CNL(04)57))
- all to incorporate the precautionary approach (CNL(98)46)
- all to incorporate all relevant international agreements, guidelines, and best practices such as the agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
- all to consider all identified documents and whether they can be merged, revised, or redrafted based on developments since they were agreed.

Text	Recommendation	Action	Timeline	Comments
<p><b>Stocking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines on the Use of Stock Rebuilding Programmes in the Context of the Precautionary Management of Salmon Stocks (CNL(04)55)</li> <li>• Recommendation on gene banking</li> </ul>	<p>EPR4 T2 EPR23</p>	<p>Revision</p>	<p>2024-2025</p>	<p>WG already established. Stocking Guidelines agreed at the 2024 Annual Meeting. Updated ToRs for Stocking Guidelines WG agreed at the 2024 Annual Meeting. Work to continue on CNL(04)55 and EPR23 for delivery at 2025 Annual Meeting</p>
<p><b>Habitat:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guidelines for the Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Atlantic Salmon Habitat</a></li> </ul>	<p>T3</p>	<p>Revision</p>	<p>2025-2026</p>	<p>WG to be established via ToRs at 2025 Annual Meeting. Revision to be agreed at 2026 Annual Meeting</p>

<p><b>Aquaculture and disease:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance on Best Management Practices to Address Impacts of Sea Lice and Escaped Farmed Salmon on Wild Salmon Stocks (<a href="#">SLG(09)5</a>)</li> <li>Guidelines on Containment of Farm Salmon (<a href="#">CNL(01)53</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>EPR19 EPR20 EPR28</p>	<p>Revision</p>	<p>2026-2027</p>	<p>WG to be established via ToRs at 2026 Annual Meeting. Revision to be agreed at 2027 Annual Meeting</p>
<p><b>Management of salmon fisheries in the light of rapid change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management of Salmon Fisheries (<a href="#">CNL(09)43</a>)</li> <li><a href="#">Guidelines on Catch and Release</a></li> <li>Minimum Standard for Catch Statistics (<a href="#">CNL(93)51</a>)</li> <li>Decision Structure For Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries (<a href="#">CNL31.332 / 2002</a>)</li> </ul>	<p>EPR14</p>	<p>Revision</p>	<p>2027-2028</p>	<p>WG to be established via ToRs at 2027 Annual Meeting. Revision to be agreed at 2028 Annual Meeting</p>
<p><b>NASCO Handbook of Basic Texts</b></p>	<p>EPR33</p>		<p>Continuously</p>	<p>Secretariat to continue to update the ‘Officers’ and other relevant sections of the Handbook online each year after the Annual Meeting</p>