

## **Council**

**CNL(04)6**

### *Secretary's Report*

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## Preface

### NASCO at 20 years

*Over 2,000 salmon rivers flow into the North Atlantic and the wild stocks migrate widely. Rational management of the North Atlantic salmon can therefore only be achieved through international cooperation. Since 1984, NASCO has provided that forum for conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of Atlantic salmon. This 20-year period has proved a difficult one, since stock abundance has declined. Environmental changes, particularly at sea, may have very significant impacts on abundance. In this situation, stringent management measures have been required on all factors that might impact on the resource. The milestones in the 20-year period follow:*

- NASCO's Convention prohibited fishing for salmon beyond areas of fisheries jurisdiction and in most parts of the North Atlantic beyond 12 nautical miles, and thereby created a large protected zone free of fisheries in the North Atlantic;
- NASCO successfully addressed the problem of fishing for salmon in international waters by non-Contracting Parties but there is a need for vigilance as market demand for wild salmon could increase;
- NASCO agreements greatly reduced the interception by a Party of salmon originating in the rivers of other Parties. These fisheries accounted for 30% of the total harvest at their peak prior to 1984, but for less than 0.5% of the harvest in 2003;
- These NASCO regulatory measures stimulated management measures in "home water" fisheries which have also greatly reduced harvests. There is a requirement under the Convention which effectively requires the process of 'putting your own house in order' before expecting others to make sacrifices;
- NASCO considerably broadened its base from an organization which focused only on the fisheries to one which is now addressing a very wide range of threats to the resource (see below);
- NASCO stimulated scientific research and advice so as to provide a basis for its actions;
- NASCO introduced a minimum standard for catch statistics, it has analysed the sources of unreported catches on an annual basis, and it has encouraged measures to minimise unreported catch;
- NASCO introduced the concepts of the Precautionary Approach to all of its work so as to give priority to conserving the productive capacity of the resource and avoid irreversible change. In this regard, NASCO developed guidelines/agreements in relation to:
  - management of North Atlantic salmon fisheries;
  - habitat protection and restoration;
  - by-catch;

- stock rebuilding programmes;
  - aquaculture;
  - introductions and transfers;
  - and transgenics.
- 
- NASCO identified all the social and economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon and is now developing guidelines on how to incorporate socio-economic factors in application of the Precautionary Approach without undermining its effectiveness;
  - NASCO took steps to prevent the further spread of the parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*;
  - NASCO developed guidelines for catch and release fishing and for the establishment of gene banks;
  - NASCO stimulated an exchange of statistics and information among the Parties and has established a number of databases related to the salmon and its conservation;
  - recognising that a major factor influencing salmon abundance is increased mortality at sea and that the causes of this are poorly understood, NASCO established an International Atlantic Salmon Research Board in order to stimulate research and links with NGOs and with the private sector on this issue;
  - NASCO established a Liaison Group with the international salmon farming industry with a view to developing agreements on how to minimise impacts of this industry on the wild stocks;
  - NASCO developed its transparency and admitted 30 observer organizations, a very much larger number than most fishery organizations, to its meetings. The contributions they make have been welcomed;
  - NASCO is considered to be a very stable organization financially and one which has made excellent investments for the future;
  - In NASCO, over 100 delegates, all with differing experience and backgrounds in wild salmon, gather annually in a cooperative international spirit to do their best to conserve the wild stocks.

*None of these elements existed prior to NASCO and not many international inter-governmental organizations have come this far in this timescale. Nonetheless, the situation for the wild stocks is still serious and the Organization will now consider how to monitor implementation of its agreements and how it can ensure its effectiveness for the next decade.*

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### *Secretary's Report*

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 It is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NASCO so I have placed a 'NASCO at 20 years' report as a preface to this document. Most of the work of the Organization in 2003/2004 is detailed in the Council papers distributed, which cover a wide range of issues. This report contains only a number of procedural, administrative and financial matters and issues relating to relations with other international bodies.

#### **2. Status of ratifications of and accessions to the Convention**

- 2.1 There have been no changes to the status of ratifications of and accessions to the Convention since the last notification.

#### **3. Membership of the regional Commissions**

- 3.1 No new applications for membership of any of the Commissions have been received since the last notification.

#### **4. Observers at NASCO's meetings**

- 4.1 Since the last Annual Meeting there has been one new application for observer status to NASCO. It is from Coalition Clean Baltic based in Sweden. It is a network of 27 environmental NGOs in the Baltic Sea region that cooperate to promote, on a non-profit-making basis, the protection of the environment and natural resources of the Baltic Sea area. Protection of the wild Baltic salmon is one of Coalition Clean Baltic's priority activities. The organization seeks to learn more about the management of salmon in the North Atlantic and the possible applicability of the approaches used to the Baltic. Its objectives are compatible with those of NASCO and Coalition Clean Baltic has, therefore, been granted NGO status.
- 4.2 Under the conditions governing attendance at meetings, accreditation will be withdrawn from any organization which has not attended an Annual Meeting for at least three years, and has not been in contact with its relevant official delegation. Following consultation with the Heads of the EU and US delegations, accreditation has, therefore, been withdrawn from the following organizations: American Fisheries Society (USA); Finnish Sport Fishermen's Association (EU (Finland)); International Friends of Wild Salmon (USA). These organizations can, of course, reapply in future.
- 4.3 As reported last year, the conditions governing NGO attendance at NASCO meetings with regard to media contact during these meetings have not been accepted by ASF, WWF (Norway and USA) or Greenpeace. Their NGO accreditation has been suspended by the Council and they have not, therefore, been invited to attend as observers.
- 4.4 The twenty-two organizations listed in Annex 1 have observer status to NASCO.

## **5. Joint meeting of North Atlantic Fisheries Management Organizations**

5.1 The Council has previously recognised that there would be benefits from joint meetings of all the North Atlantic Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (NARFMOs) to examine issues of mutual interest. The third meeting of the Secretariats of the NARFMOs was held at NEAFC Headquarters in London on 21 April 2004. Representatives from the Secretariats of IBSFC, NAFO, NAMMCO, NASCO and NEAFC attended the meeting.

5.2 These meetings are a cost-effective method of communication between the Secretariats. A number of points arose from the meeting and these are contained in Annex 2. In summary, they include the following:

- NARFMO Secretariats can play an important role in collating information on IUU fishing, both by non-Contracting Parties and Contracting Parties. The NARFMOs had previously agreed to share relevant information in relation to IUU fishing by non-Contracting Parties. There is a need to liaise on by-catch, which we will do when we have the data;
- there is confusion concerning the application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and the integration of fisheries and environmental concerns. There is a need for improved liaison between RFBs, such as NASCO, and Regional Seas Organisations, such as OSPAR;
- there is concern among those NARFMOs that receive advice from ICES about a proposal to introduce observers at Working Group and Advisory Committee meetings;
- the NARFMOs wish to encourage transparency through NGO participation. NASCO is seen to be in the lead in this respect. However, there is a primary need to maintain an environment in which negotiations can take place. The NARFMOs felt that statements to the media by NGOs during meetings might be disruptive to negotiations and none of the NARFMOs currently allow it or (apart from NASCO) had experienced such activities.

## **6. Relations with ICES**

6.1 ICES has established a Management Committee on the Advisory Process (MCAP) and all the Client Commissions of ICES were invited to participate in a meeting to discuss aspects of the advisory process, including the financial aspects. A report on this meeting has been presented to the Finance and Administration Committee which will make its recommendations to the Council. In summary, the main points to emerge from the meeting are as follows:

- the present MoU with ICES will be rolled over until the end of 2006. There is an additional payment of a share of the stipend to the ACFM Chairman for 2004, as agreed by the Council last year. The only other adjustment in the payments by NASCO in the period 2004-2006 compared to that in 2003 will

be to reflect inflation in Denmark. This is in accordance with the mandate given to me by the Finance and Administration Committee;

- ICES announced that its aim is, in future, to work towards providing advice on an ecosystem basis but it is not at all clear how, or if, this will affect the advice to NASCO. It might be argued that NASCO is already working at an ecosystem level with its work on by-catch, predator-related mortality, habitat protection and restoration, aquaculture, introductions and transfers, etc.;
- ICES intends to change some of the phraseology it uses in providing advice. The term “safe biological limit” has sometimes been interpreted to mean “close to extinction” and ICES intends to grade its advice into more categories where the data is robust enough to support such an approach;
- ICES intends to make observer status at some of its Working Groups (not the North Atlantic Salmon Working Group), and at ACFM meetings, available to NGOs and other stakeholders. The Client Commissions expressed concern at this policy since ICES is contracted to give advice that is independent and free from political influence. The Client Commissions agreed to keep a close eye on this.

## **7. Proposed ICES/NASCO Symposium in 2005**

7.1 Last year the Council agreed to co-convene with ICES a Symposium on the scientific and management aspects of interactions between cultured and wild salmon. The Secretary was asked to liaise with ICES on the arrangements. Since the Bath Symposium on this subject in 1997, there have been major advances in scientific understanding of the interactions between wild and cultured salmon and their management. A Steering Group has been appointed and has held its first meeting to plan for the Symposium entitled “Interactions between aquaculture and wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fish species: Science and Management, Challenges and Solutions”. The objectives of the Symposium are:

- to summarise available knowledge on the interactions between aquaculture and wild stocks of Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species;
- to identify gaps in current understanding of interactions and develop recommendations on future research priorities;
- to review progress in managing interactions of aquaculture, the challenges that remain and possible solutions;
- to make recommendations for additional measures, including cooperative ventures between the various stakeholders, to ensure that aquaculture practices are sustainable and consistent with the Precautionary Approach.

7.2 The Steering Group had proposed that the Symposium be held during 4-7 October 2005 in Bergen, Norway. However, the dates proposed were not convenient for ICES and it is now proposed that the Symposium be held later in October. However, following the meeting with ISFA in Boston (see CNL(04)20) it has also been proposed that the Joint Workshop, postponed in 2004, now be held in conjunction with the AquaNor exhibition in Trondheim in August 2005. Although the Symposium and the Workshop are quite different in scope, this would be very close to

the Symposium and in the light of this the Council might wish to suggest to the industry that the workshop be held in conjunction with the 2005 or 2006 Liaison Group meeting. Alternatively the ICES/NASCO Symposium could be delayed but ICES has indicated that this would be difficult for them.

## **8. Initiatives within FAO of relevance to NASCO**

- 8.1 At its 2001 Annual Meeting the Council asked to be informed of initiatives within FAO of relevance to NASCO. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meets biennially in February and there was no meeting in 2004. The report of the Twenty-Fifth Session of COFI held in 2003 is available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)). Similarly, there was no meeting in 2004 of the FAO and Non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) which meets biennially in conjunction with the COFI meeting.
- 8.2 The Sub-Committee on Aquaculture held its second meeting in Trondheim, Norway, from 7-11 August 2003. The NASCO Secretariat was not represented at the meeting and at the time of preparing this document the report of the meeting was not available on the FAO website.
- 8.3 The Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (“the Compliance Agreement”) entered into force on 24 April 2003 following the deposit of 25 instruments of acceptance. This Agreement may be a useful initiative complementing actions that may be taken by NASCO to address any future problems of fishing for salmon in international waters by non-Contracting Parties.
- 8.4 A report of the actions being taken by NASCO consistent with FAO’s International Plan of Action (IPOA) on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing was sent to FAO on 2 July 2001, and updated information was presented at the Third Meeting of the FAO and non-FAO Regional Fishery Bodies held in 2003.
- 8.5 In summary, much of the work of FAO is devoted towards developing countries, often in tropical or sub-tropical zones, so FAO’s output is often not relevant to NASCO’s work. Nevertheless, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the IPOA on IUU Fishing, the Compliance Agreement and FAO’s initiatives in relation to the ecosystem approach to fisheries management have a bearing on our work. Meetings of COFI and the Regional Fishery Bodies are held biennially and it is likely that more detailed reports on issues of relevance to NASCO will be made in the years in which these meetings are held.

## **9. Fishing for salmon in international waters**

- 9.1 At its Ninth Annual Meeting the Council unanimously adopted the “Resolution on Fishing for Salmon on the High Seas.” This brief report details the actions taken in accordance with this Resolution. In the period 1 April 2003 - 31 March 2004 a total of 3 airborne surveillance flights over the area of international waters north of the Faroe Islands, where salmon fishing by non-Contracting Parties is known to have taken place in the past, were undertaken by Norwegian (1 flight) and Icelandic (2 flights) Coastguards. This is a reduction from the number of surveillance flights in 2002 (26 flights) and 2003 (16 flights).

- 9.2 There have been no sightings of vessels fishing for salmon in international waters since 1994. There were, however, no flights over the area in the period from 23 September 2003 to 31 March 2004, i.e. a period of six months, when salmon fishing would have occurred. No new information from ports about vessels known to fish for salmon in international waters or about landings and transshipments has been obtained since last year's report.
- 9.3 After a number of incidents in the period 1989-1994 there does not now appear to be a problem. However, it has to be recognised that surveillance of the area is limited during the winter months and it is possible that we may not know if fishing is still being conducted. We are aware of a large increase in the price of wild salmon, at least at certain times of the year. It is possible that the recent adverse publicity for farmed salmon may increase the demand for wild salmon. We will continue to liaise with NEAFC and other NARFMOs on this issue through the meetings of the Secretariats. A major problem may be linked to the by-catch of salmon post-smolts in the pelagic fisheries in the same area. This issue is considered separately under Council agenda item 6.6.
- 9.4 A brief report on the FAO Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas is presented in section 8.

## **10. Tag Return Incentive Scheme**

- 10.1 Under the Tag Return Incentive Scheme a total of four prizes is awarded annually (a Grand Prize of \$2,500 and one prize in each of the three Commissions of \$1,500). These awards are well publicised and this has led to benefits to the Organization in terms of awareness among fishermen of NASCO's work. There is also evidence that the prizes have increased the return of tags, which was the main objective of the Scheme.
- 10.2 The draw will be made by the auditors to NASCO in accordance with the Rules of the Scheme. The winner of the \$2,500 Grand Prize will be announced by the President at the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Council. The winners of the \$1,500 prizes will be announced by the Chairman of each of the Commissions.

## **11. Review of international salmon-related literature published in 2003**

- 11.1 For a number of years, the Secretariat collated salmon-related press cuttings and scientific articles through a search of relevant computer databases. Last year, in order to save on costs, the unedited material, as downloaded, was made available on CD rather than in paper form. We have used this arrangement again for this year's compilation and the information is available on CD from the Secretariat.

## **12. The Organization's financial affairs**

### **Audited accounts for 2003**

- 12.1 In accordance with Financial Rule 11, the report of the Auditors for the Financial Year 1 January - 31 December 2003 was submitted to Heads of Delegations and members of the Finance and Administration Committee on 9 February 2004. The Finance and Administration Committee will consider the audited accounts at its meeting and will submit its recommendations to the Council. The Council will then be asked to adopt the audited accounts for 2003 or take such other actions as it decides.

### **2005 Budget**

- 12.2 In accordance with Article 16 of the Convention and Financial Rule 3.5, the 2005 Draft and 2006 Forecast Budgets will be submitted to the Parties. The Finance and Administration Committee will consider the draft budget in detail and will submit its recommendations to the Council. The Council will then be asked to adopt a budget for 2005.

### **Receipt of contributions for 2004**

- 12.3 In accordance with Financial Rule 5.5, the Secretary will report on the receipt of contributions and on any arrears.

## **13. Headquarters Property**

- 13.1 NASCO's Headquarters is a listed Georgian building constructed in about 1820 and it has proved to be an excellent investment. First, there is no rent payment for the space occupied by the Secretariat. Second, the rest of the accommodation is rented out at a significant profit. Third, the value of the property has increased by about £1 million (an average increase of about £60,000 per annum). As with all Georgian buildings, maintenance costs tend to be higher than for modern buildings. In 2003 we completed a major refurbishment of the roof and stonework and are currently undertaking a refurbishment of the internal common areas. This is quite a costly effort but, fortunately, we have good tenants who have a long-term full-repairing lease so they pay half the costs.

Secretary  
Edinburgh  
11 May, 2004

**NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS WITH OBSERVER STATUS TO NASCO**

Association of Icelandic Angling Clubs	(based in Iceland)
Association Internationale de Défense du Saumon Atlantique	(based in France)
Association of Salmon Fishery Boards	(based in the UK)
Atlantic Salmon Federation	(based in Canada) *
Atlantic Salmon Federation	(based in USA) *
Atlantic Salmon Trust	(based in the UK)
Coalition Clean Baltic	(based in Sweden)
Coomhola Salmon Trust Limited	(based in Ireland)
European Anglers Alliance	(based in the Netherlands)
Faroes Sportsfishing Association	(based in the Faroe Islands)
Federation of Icelandic River Owners	(based in Iceland)
Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea-Trout Anglers	(based in Ireland)
Fédération Québécoise pour le Saumon Atlantique	(based in Canada)
Fondation Saumon	(based in France)
Greenpeace International	(based in the Netherlands) *
Institute of Fisheries Management	(based in the UK)
National Anglers Representative Association	(based in Ireland)
Norges Bondelag (Norwegian Farmers Union)	(based in Norway)
Norges Jeger og Fiskerforbund (Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers)	(based in Norway)
Norske Lakseelver (Norwegian Salmon Rivers)	(based in Norway)
Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland	(based in the UK)
Salmon and Trout Association	(based in the UK)
Sami Parlamenta	(based in Finland)
Scottish Anglers National Association	(based in the UK)
Ulster Angling Federation Limited	(based in the UK)
World Wide Fund for Nature (Norway)	(based in Norway) *
World Wildlife Fund (US)	(based in USA) *

**Note:** The NGO accreditation of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, Greenpeace International, World Wide Fund For Nature (Norway) and World Wildlife Fund (US) has been suspended by the Council.



***Points Arising from the Third Meeting of the Secretariats of the North Atlantic Regional Fisheries Management Organizations***

The Third Meeting of the Secretariats of the North Atlantic Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (NARFMOs) was held at NEAFC Headquarters, London, on 21 April 2004. The following Organizations were represented:

International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC)  
North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)  
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)  
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)  
North-east Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) was unable to be represented. The following points emerged from the meeting.

**1. Practical cooperation on IUU fishing and other matters**

Progress was reported by most Organizations present in addressing IUU fishing by non-Contracting Parties (NCPs) (NAMMCO does not address IUU issues) but there is still concern about the level of unreported catches by Contracting Parties and a need to address this. It was recognised that the NARFMO Secretariats can play an important role in collating information on IUU fishing by NCPs and in drawing their Organizations' concerns about IUU fishing to the attention of those countries whose vessels are involved. The Secretariats can also play an important role in collating information on unreported catches by Contracting Parties.

The Group expressed concern that none of the NARFMOs had been invited to participate in an OECD Workshop on the economic aspects of IUU fishing held on 19 and 20 April 2004, particularly as OECD had recognised the important role RFBs can play in addressing IUU fishing. The Group asked the Chairman to write to OECD to express the NARFMOs' concern, given their competence and experience in addressing this issue, that they had not been invited to participate in the Workshop.

It was noted that the fishing industry in some countries is taking measures to counter IUU fishing by, for example, increasing traceability of products.

NAFO and NEAFC agreed to exchange information on vessel monitoring systems.

**2. Ecosystem approach to fisheries management and integration of fisheries and environmental concerns**

FAO, UNEP, CITES, GESAMP, RSOs and RFBs are all giving consideration to integration of fisheries and environmental concerns, although there is no common position. The Group agreed that, in view of the increasing number of meetings on this and other relevant issues it would continue to share information on meetings attended. In this regard, Secretariat presence at relevant meetings was considered desirable as they could consider the interests of the Organization as a whole.

The Group recognised that there is considerable confusion concerning the application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and its implications for RFBs. In this regard, initiatives within IBSFC (the Baltic Sea Regional Project) and NAMMCO (a Working Group on Enhancing Ecosystem-Based Management) were described to the Group and progress will be reported at subsequent meetings.

The need for improved liaison between RFBs and Regional Seas Organizations (RSOs) was recognised. It was agreed that the proposal to invite a representative of UNEP to attend the next meeting of RFBs, hosted biennially by FAO, might be a useful opportunity to initiate a more comprehensive dialogue between RFBs and RSOs.

### **3. Scientific advice and management**

The three NARFMOs (NASCO, NEAFC and IBSFC) which obtain their scientific advice from ICES reported on changes being introduced by ICES to the advisory process. There is support for these changes but there is concern about a proposal from ICES to introduce NGO observers to Working Group and Advisory Committee meetings. The Group agreed that it was generally not desirable to put any external pressures on the meetings at which the scientific advice used by RFBs is developed. However, transparency of the process should involve clear presentation of the data and methods used in the assessment. There may also be benefits from involving independent experts in reviewing the scientific advice.

The Group agreed that it might be useful for NAFO to attend future client commission meetings with ICES and the Chairman agreed to take this up with ICES.

### **4. Internet website and public education**

The Group recognised the important role the NARFMOs websites can play in communicating the work of each Organization to the public. Consideration might also be given to establishing a website for the NARFMOs with links to each Organization's website.

The Group agreed that the FAO FIRMS and FIGIS databases might also be useful mechanisms for disseminating information on the work of RFBs, but that further information would be required from FAO on the scope of information sought and the resources required in providing it.

### **5. Transparency**

The Group discussed the conditions governing attendance by the media and NGOs at their individual meetings. All Organizations have procedures in place to limit media attendance to the opening session and, in some cases, the closing session, but attendance at other sessions is not allowed.

Different approaches have been adopted with regard to NGO participation at meetings of each individual NARFMO. The NARFMOs wish to encourage transparency through NGO participation was recognised but there is a primary need to maintain an environment in which, sometimes delicate, negotiations can take place. The Group felt that statements to the media by NGOs during the process of meetings of RFBs might be disruptive to negotiations and, although different approaches have been adopted, none of the NARFMOs present currently allowed or had experienced (apart from NASCO) such activities.

Admittance of observers to plenary sessions can lead to an increase in private meetings held outside the plenary sessions and thus a reduction in transparency.

The Group agreed to exchange information on any changes to their conditions governing observers.

#### **6. Fourth Meeting of Regional Fishery Bodies, Rome 2005**

The Group agreed to hold its next meeting on 16 March 2005 immediately following the fourth FAO meeting of RFBs in Rome on 14-15 March 2005. The NARFMOs had previously indicated their wish to see a more thematic approach to the agenda and would respond individually when the draft agenda is issued. The Group welcomed the indication from FAO at the last RFB meeting that it is willing to serve as a contact between RFBs and CITES and UNEP.

#### **7. Any other business**

The Group welcomed and agreed to update the web-based calendar of meetings developed by NEAFC.

The Group received reports on, and discussed, a number of other issues, including stock rebuilding programmes, incorporating socio-economic factors in management decisions concerning fishery resources, dispute settlement procedures and financial partnerships with the private sector.