NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

ORGANISATION POUR LA CONSERVATION DU SAUMON DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD



Agenda item 5.2(a) For decision

Council

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Report on Progress with Application of the Decision Structure for Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries

> 11 Rutland Square Edinburgh EH1 2AS Scotland UK Telephone: (Int+44) 131 228 2551 Fax: (Int+44) 131 228 4384 e-mail: hq@nasco.int website: www.nasco.int

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Report on Progress with Application of the Decision Structure for Management of North Atlantic Salmon Fisheries

Summary

- 1. In response to concern about the status of Atlantic salmon stocks, NASCO and its Contracting Parties agreed to adopt and apply a Precautionary Approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of salmon in order to protect the resource and preserve the environments in which it lives.
- 2. To assist NASCO and the relevant authorities in applying the Precautionary Approach to the management of North Atlantic salmon fisheries, a Decision Structure was adopted on a provisional basis in 2000. After further development and evaluation, a revised Decision Structure was adopted by the Council in 2002 in order to provide a basis for more consistent approaches to the management of exploitation of salmon throughout the North Atlantic region. Application of this Decision Structure by the Parties is intended to assist in safeguarding the abundance and diversity of the resource. It is the Council's request that the Decision Structure be widely applied, without delay, by managers in cooperation with stakeholders on salmon rivers.
- 3. In order to facilitate annual reporting by the Parties on the extent of implementation of the Decision Structure and their experiences on its application, the Council asked the Secretary to develop a simple format for reporting. This format was used on a trial basis for the 2003 returns. The Council is asked to consider if the reporting format is acceptable or if it wishes to make amendments for subsequent years' returns. The information provided by the Parties is attached. At the time of preparation of this report, no return of information was available for Canada, the Faroe Islands and some EU Member States, (Denmark, France and Spain) with salmon interests.

Implementation

4. Progress in implementing the Decision Structure has been reported by the European Union (Ireland and the UK), Norway and Russia. There are no fisheries for Atlantic salmon in the US. In Ireland, consistent with the Decision Structure, conservation limits have been established for each of the 17 salmon fishing districts and catch advice since 2001 has been provided on the basis of the estimated number of returning salmon and the conservation limit requirement. In England and Wales, the previous Decision Structure had been incorporated into Salmon Action Plans (for the Severn Estuary) during 2002 and the application of the new Decision Structure is being considered for future plans. In addition, methods are being developed to provide tools to assess the risks of failing to achieve conservation limits. In Scotland, the applicability of the Decision Structure to mixed and single stock fisheries has been investigated and the Decision Structure has been distributed to managers for their assessment. In Norway, the Decision Structure has been included in revised national guidelines for management of salmon fisheries which will apply to the five-year regulatory regime for salmon fisheries commencing in 2003. In Russia, the Decision Structure was applied to the management of salmon fisheries on the Umba River.

Monitoring

5. Attainment of conservation limits is assessed annually in Ireland and England and Wales. In addition, in England and Wales a detailed assessment of all fishery management measures is undertaken every five years for all principal salmon rivers. In Sweden, an index river is being established on the west coast. In Northern Ireland, microtagging of smolts in the Foyle area is being undertaken and genetic profiling is used to inform stocking methods. In Scotland, new models are being developed to assess the value of catch data to assess abundance and stock dynamics. In Norway, the salmon river categorization system has been revised and applied in a nationwide survey of salmon rivers. This information on stock status will be updated every year. In Russia, the effectiveness of management measures is evaluated on the basis of stock status.

Measures to increase abundance

6. Measures designed to increase abundance have been introduced in the European Union (Ireland, Sweden and the UK), Russia and the USA. A TAC for the commercial fishery in Ireland was applied; new fishery regulations were implemented in Sweden in response to low abundance; the phase-out of mixed-stock fisheries is continuing in England and Wales and reductions in the fishing season introduced; and in Scotland, catch and release fishing continues to be adopted more widely. In Russia, the Umba River commercial fishery has been closed and a programme of stock rebuilding initiated. In the USA, a river-specific hatchery programme and habitat protection and restoration programmes have been initiated. Research is ongoing into the factors contributing to low abundance and considerable effort is being directed to threat identification and abatement.

Amendments

- 7. Only one suggestion has been made so far for the further development of the Decision Structure. The EU (England and Wales) has referred to the fact that the Decision Structure does not address environmental matters influencing carrying capacity and survival.
- 8. In short, it is less than a year since the Decision Structure was adopted, but initial progress has been made by a number of Parties in its implementation, in monitoring effects of management measures and in introducing measures to address failures in abundance. On the basis of the returns, it seems likely that further progress in implementation can be expected over the next few years.

Secretary Edinburgh 2 May, 2003 1. Have any new actions been taken to implement the Decision Structure for the management of salmon fisheries? If "yes" please provide details of these actions and a selection of case studies to illustrate its application.

European Union

Ireland

Consistent with the Decision Structure, Conservation Limits have been established for each of the 17 salmon fishing districts in Ireland and attainment of these CLs has been assessed since 2001. The carcass tagging and logbook scheme aims to provide a means of collecting accurate nominal catch statistics and to develop best management strategies. Accurate catch statistics are now available from the mandatory carcass tagging and logbook scheme. Since 2001, catch advice has been provided in relation to the estimated number of returning salmon and the Conservation Limit requirement. This gives guidance in the establishment of District TACs.

United Kingdom

England and Wales

Method development has continued to provide tools to assess the risks of Conservation Limit failure given different management scenarios. It is intended to trial these during 2003/04. Examination of the Decision Structure has indicated some areas for improvement. The old structure was incorporated into Salmon Action Plans during 2002 (Severn Estuary) and the application of the new version is being considered for future Plans.

Northern Ireland

Data are available for the first time in 2002 from fish counters on the Glendun, Maine and Blackwater rivers. Preliminary conservation limits have been set. Comprehensive fry surveys were conducted in 2002 for these catchments. The NASCO Decision Structure has been applied for the first time in the Foyle Area.

Scotland

Fisheries Research Services have investigated the applicability of the Decision Structure to both mixed stock and single stock fisheries. The Decision Structure has been circulated to District Salmon Fishery Boards, the local managers in Scotland, for their assessment of it as a tool in their management operations.

Norway

In preparation for a 5-year regulatory regime for the salmon fisheries (which takes effect in 2003) the Norwegian authorities have revised the national guidelines for management of salmon fisheries. The Decision Structure has been translated and included in the revised national guidelines. The category system for salmon rivers has also been revised and a new survey of the stocks has been carried out. This survey

has provided much of the information needed to answer the questions in the Decision Structure. Progress on implementation will be reported in 2004.

Russian Federation

A Decision Structure was applied for the management of the salmon fisheries on the Umba River (White Sea basin).

USA

There are no salmon fisheries within US jurisdiction.

Other Parties

No new actions reported by the other Parties or other EU Member States.

2. Have any new programmes been introduced to monitor the effects of management measures and identify information deficiencies? If "yes please provide details.

European Union

Ireland

Attainment of the conservation limits referred to in section 1 above has been assessed since 2001.

Sweden

Activities have been started to establish an index river on the Swedish west coast.

United Kingdom

England and Wales

Compliance of all stocks with Conservation Limits is reviewed annually. Detailed assessments of all fishery management measures are undertaken every 5 years through a programme of Salmon Action Plans for all principal salmon rivers. Information was collected during 2002 for a review (by October 2003) of the national salmon measures introduced in 1999 to protect early-running fish.

Northern Ireland

Microtagging of smolts introduced in the Foyle area. Genetic profiling introduced in the Foyle area to inform stocking protocols.

Scotland

Fisheries Research Services are engaged in the development of new models to assess the value of catch data to assess abundance and stock dynamics for the purpose of supporting conservation and enhancement of the productivity and diversity of the fisheries.

Norway

The national river categorization system for salmon has been revised and applied in a nationwide survey of salmon rivers. The survey was undertaken by the Directorate for Nature Management in cooperation with the county environment protection offices. The information on the state of the stocks will be updated every year. The revised category system is more detailed but compatible with the classification system in the NASCO river database. The terms "lost", "threatened" and "maintained" have the same meaning in the two systems. The NASCO category "Not threatened with loss" comprises several categories in the Norwegian system (4a, 4b, 5a and 5b). In the Norwegian system there is no category for restored stocks. Restored stocks are categorized according to their present state and noted as restored. The form which was applied in the survey provides additional information on human impact factors, restoration and mitigative actions. The overall results of the survey are as follows:

Total number of rivers which have or have had a self-reproducing	454
stock	
1: Lost stocks	49
2: Threatened stocks	25
3.a: Vulnerable stocks – near threatened	29
3.b: Vulnerable stocks - maintained by mitigative actions	20
4.a: Reduced stocks – reduced young fish production	60
4.b: Reduced stocks – reduced number of adults only	5
5.a: Moderate or slightly affected stocks – requiring special concern	201
5.b: Moderate or slightly affected stocks – not requiring special concern	48
X: Uncertain classification	17 :

In addition there are 158 small rivers where salmon are known to occur but which do not have a self-reproducing stock, and 105 small rivers where the existence of a self-reproducing stock is uncertain.

Russian Federation

The effects of management measures are evaluate on the basis of stock status.

Other Parties

No new programmes reported by the other Parties or other EU Member States.

European Union

Ireland

3.

A national aggregated TAC of 219,649 salmon was included in the regulations in 2002, and applied to the commercial salmon fishery in 2002 to limit the catch in this sector.

Sweden

Additional fishery regulations have been implemented in 2002 in response to low abundance of fish in some rivers.

United Kingdom

England and Wales

Mixed stock salmon fisheries: the phase-out of these fisheries in England and Wales is continuing. Taw/Torridge seine net fishery: a new Net Limitation Order was introduced which will phase out this fishery as netsmen retire; the phase-out was accelerated by angling interests who paid compensation to 11 of the 14 netsmen who were willing to retire from the fishery immediately. A new Byelaw was also introduced reducing the fishing season by about one third.

Northern Ireland

Sediment studies under way on River Bush to address spawning gravel degradation.

Scotland

The Salmon Act 1986, as amended by the Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Act 2001, makes provision for the Scottish Ministers, either upon application or by themselves, to introduce regulations for the purpose of salmon conservation. Catch and release in the angling fishery continues to be adopted more widely, with a provisional figure of 41% of rod-caught salmon released in 2002.

Russian Federation

For the Umba River the commercial fishery has been closed and a complex programme has been developed aimed at restoring the stock.

USA

A river-specific hatchery program was initiated in response to low levels of wild salmon abundance and as a measure to help protect remaining genetic diversity. Habitat protection and restoration programs have been implemented in an effort to increase salmon abundance. Research is ongoing to partition mortality by life stage and to attempt to identify factors contributing to low abundance. A great deal of effort at the federal, state and local level has been, and continues to be, directed toward threat identification and abatement.

Other Parties

4.

No new measures reported by the other Parties or other EU Member States.

On the basis of on-going experience gained in applying the Decision Structure, please provide suggestions for its further development so as to further enhance its value and its effectiveness.

European Union

United Kingdom

England and Wales

The structure deals only with exploitation control. In that context it is helpful, but does not offer any advantage over current procedures used in Salmon Action Plans, apart from reference to risks associated with catch control measures and to the establishment of pre-agreed action, which are necessary additions to SAPs. It does not address environmental matters influencing carrying capacity and survival which is, therefore, the area for improvement.

Scotland

The structure forms a useful basis for establishing management models. The views of local managers on the value of the structure at river level will be important in determining the course which further development should take to address management issues in Scotland.

Other Parties

No suggestions provided by the other Parties or other EU Member States.