



Agenda item 5.2(e)
For decision

Council

CNL(03)19

***Future Actions in Relation to Application of the
Precautionary Approach***

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Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on the Precautionary Approach (SCPA) has now held four meetings. The report of the most recent of these meetings on application of the Precautionary Approach to aquaculture, introductions and transfers, and transgenics is presented in document CNL(03)17. A Technical Workshop has been held to develop a framework for assessing social and economic values related to wild Atlantic salmon. A report of this Workshop is presented in document CNL(03)18. A summary of the actions taken to date, in accordance with the Action Plan for Application of the Precautionary Approach, is presented below.

Management of Fisheries for North Atlantic Salmon

2. At its 2000 Annual Meeting the Council provisionally adopted a Decision Structure to aid NASCO and the relevant authorities in implementing the Precautionary Approach to the management of North Atlantic salmon fisheries (SCPA(00)13). At the 2001 Annual Meeting the Parties reported to the Council on their initial experiences in applying the Decision Structure and, following a detailed evaluation and further development by the SCPA, the Council adopted a revised Decision Structure at its 2002 Annual Meeting. The intention was that this Decision Structure be widely and immediately applied by managers in cooperation with stakeholders. The Parties were asked to report back to the Council on an annual basis on their experiences in applying the Decision Structure and on the extent of its implementation. The Secretary was asked to develop a simple format for these returns. This format was submitted to the Parties, for use on a trial basis, in January 2003. Details of the returns will be presented in document CNL(03)14. An Introduction describing the background to the Decision Structure's development and its proposed use was prepared by the Secretariat following the last Annual Meeting and made available to the Parties in a bound document with the Decision Structure, which was placed on the Organization's website. This document was also translated into French. In short, the work in applying the Precautionary Approach to management of fisheries for North Atlantic salmon has been done subject to application of the Decision Structure, review, on an on-going basis, of its implementation, and acceptance of the format for reporting. Such reviews may give rise to modification to the Decision Structure but probably not major changes.

Habitat Protection and Restoration

3. At its 2001 Annual Meeting the Council adopted a NASCO Plan of Action for the Application of the Precautionary Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat (CNL(01)51). It was agreed that the Parties should report back to the Council on the steps taken to develop and implement habitat protection and restoration plans as envisaged under the Plan of Action. Last year a Special

Session was held with reports by the Parties on the steps being taken to develop and implement habitat protection and restoration plans. The report of this Special Session will be presented in document CNL(03)15. The Council asked the Secretary to develop a simple reporting format for annual returns by the Parties on progress in developing and implementing habitat plans. This format was issued to the Parties for use on a trial basis in January 2003. Details of the returns will be presented in document CNL(03)16. In short, this work has also been done, subject to acceptance of the format for reporting and review, on an on-going basis, of the development and implementation of habitat protection and restoration plans. However, the SCPA had previously asked the Council to decide if the establishment of a database of the inventories of salmon rivers established by the Contracting Parties, in accordance with the Plan of Action, might be held by the Secretariat, as is presently the case for the existing rivers database. In this regard the US has developed an Access database based on the structure of the Inventory proposed in the Plan of Action, and is willing to make a brief presentation on this database to the Council at the Twentieth Annual Meeting.

Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics

4. A meeting of the SCPA on application of the Precautionary Approach to aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics was held in Williamsburg, Virginia during 10-12 March 2003. The report of the meeting is contained in document CNL(03)17. The SCPA has proposed that all NASCO's existing agreements in relation to aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics be consolidated into one 'umbrella' resolution (which might be known as the "Williamsburg Resolution") which includes sections on risk assessments, appropriate placement of the burden of proof and implementation. This draft Resolution has been made available to the salmon farming industry through the Liaison Group. The industry has agreed to consider its response at the next meeting of ISFA in May. The SCPA has asked the Parties to complete consultations with stakeholders prior to the Twentieth Annual Meeting. The Council will be asked to adopt this Resolution or to take such other action as it considers appropriate. The SCPA asked the Secretary to re-develop the existing reporting procedures so as to reflect the new structure of the Resolution and its annexes. Development of a new reporting procedure will be undertaken, in consultation with the Parties, once the Resolution has been adopted. This is a complex document covering many areas and once the Resolution and a reporting format are agreed, progress in implementation will need to be reviewed annually by the Council.

Social and Economic Aspects of the Precautionary Approach

5. The SCPA had previously recognized that the true social and economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon are presently unknown and that there is a need to include social and economic factors under a Precautionary Approach without negating its effectiveness. Last year the Council agreed Terms of Reference for a meeting of the SCPA on how social and economic factors can be taken into account in applying the Precautionary Approach. These Terms of Reference proposed, as an initial step, the development of an internationally agreed framework or template for assessing social and economic values of Atlantic salmon. The work in developing this framework was

undertaken by a Technical Workshop of the Contracting Parties which met in Edinburgh during 21-24 January 2003. The report of this Workshop is contained in document CNL(03)18. Before the SCPA meets to consider how social and economic factors can be incorporated into the Precautionary Approach, the Technical Workshop has suggested that the first step might be to build a more comprehensive overview of the economic and social values of Atlantic salmon.

Remaining Elements of the Action Plan for Application of a Precautionary Approach

6. NASCO has made a major effort over the last four years to develop its thinking on applying the Precautionary Approach. Thanks to excellent cooperation the major tasks in the Action Plan are now well underway and being addressed by the SCPA and the Council. The remaining tasks to be considered in the original Action Plan are by-catch of salmon and stock rebuilding programmes.
7. The Council has referred the issue of by-catch to the new International Cooperative Salmon Research Board and in this regard there have been some interesting research developments since the Board's Inaugural Meeting (see document CNL(03)21). In addition, the Council has asked that ICES validate the methodology and further refine the estimates of by-catch of salmon post-smolts in pelagic trawl fisheries for mackerel and provide estimates of by-catch for other pelagic fisheries that may catch salmon. The advice from ICES for 2003 will be presented in document CNL(03)8. In addition, Iceland has provided some interesting information on by-catch of salmon in herring fisheries in document CNL(03)27.
8. A stock rebuilding programme has been defined by the Council as an array of management measures including habitat improvement, exploitation control and stocking designed to restore a stock above its conservation limit. Both the Decision Structure and the Habitat Plan of Action include elements relevant to stock rebuilding programmes. The Council had previously recognized that there may be benefits from the development of internationally agreed guidelines on stocking and the draft "Williamsburg Resolution" contains draft guidelines on stocking developed by the SCPA. The Council may, therefore, wish to consider if stock rebuilding programmes are adequately addressed under the existing Precautionary Approach measures or if there should be an additional effort focused on this issue.
9. The remaining task to be completed by the SCPA is to consider how social and economic aspects can be taken into account in applying the Precautionary Approach. However, there may be merit in allowing some time for the Parties to examine fully what information exists on social and economic values of salmon, and perhaps to commission new studies using the proposed template, before proceeding with a meeting of the SCPA to address the remaining Terms of Reference not addressed by the Technical Workshop. There may need to be a desk study to compile such information (see document CNL(03)18). The Council may wish to return to this issue at its Twenty-First Annual Meeting.

Conclusion

10. After four years of sustained activity in developing our thinking on application of the Precautionary Approach, we should now be able to enter a phase of consolidation where the emphasis will be on transparent and detailed annual reporting on the extent of implementation of the various agreements. These reports will also give the opportunity to review how well these agreements work and whether they need amending in the light of experience. For the first time since 1997, there may be no need to hold an inter-sessional meeting of the SCPA before the next Annual Meeting. One issue not addressed in the original Action Plan that has been raised at previous Annual Meetings is whether consideration should be given by the SCPA to predator-related mortality of salmon under a Precautionary Approach. Another approach to considering this issue proposed by the Council might be to hold a Special Session on this subject.
11. The Council is asked to consider the future actions it wishes to take in relation to the Precautionary Approach, including any arrangements for future meetings of the SCPA.

Secretary
Edinburgh
7 April, 2003