



Agenda item 3.4
For decision

Council

CNL(01)8

Review of NASCO's Relationship with its Observer Organizations

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Background

1. There is a trend in international organizations to develop transparency in their work and NASCO has probably moved faster than most fisheries commissions in developing input to its work from observer organizations. Over the years, conditions governing attendance at our meetings have been developed for observers from non-Contracting Parties, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Inter-Government Organizations (IGOs) and the media.
2. Last year the Council reviewed its relationship with its observer organizations and concluded that the participation by observers in its meetings had been of mutual benefit and had enhanced the transparency of international cooperation on salmon conservation and management. The Council agreed:
 - that for the time being it would neither impose observer fees nor invite voluntary contributions from observer organizations;
 - that NGO observer status should apply to all plenary sessions of the Council and Commissions, including inter-sessional meetings, but not to meetings of NASCO's Working Groups or Committees;
 - that, in general, organizations devoted to aquaculture would be admitted under the existing rules for NGO observers;
 - that non-adherence to the conditions by an NGO may lead to suspension of that organization's status for one or more meetings. (This new condition was proposed following the transmission by one NGO of multiple e-mails which had caused serious e-mail congestion problems for some Parties).
3. In addition to the changes detailed above, Norway had proposed that the conditions governing representation by NGOs should be amended so as to allow NGOs to make statements at any time at the discretion of the President or Commission Chairmen. There was no unanimity on this issue and the Council decided that all the conditions for observers should remain on the agenda for its next meeting.

Developments since the Seventeenth Annual Meeting

NGO Statements

4. Following the Seventeenth Annual Meeting, the attached correspondence, on behalf of all the NGOs present in Miramichi, was received, in which it is proposed that two representatives of the NGOs be nominated as spokespersons who could be invited by the President or Commission Chairmen to present the views of the NGOs on a particular agenda issue. The NGOs have also requested that they be permitted to make one joint statement to each Commission in addition to their Opening Statements

to the Council. At present, there are usually no opening statements at meetings of the Commissions by the Contracting Parties.

Eligibility of Aquaculture NGOs

5. With regard to eligibility for observer status the proposed decision to admit organizations devoted to aquaculture, under the rules for Non-Government Organizations, has created some ambiguity. Under the conditions governing attendance by NGOs the Secretary and President must “decide whether the objectives of the Organization applying are compatible with those of NASCO.” The objective of NASCO, as stated in Article 3 of the Convention, is to contribute through consultation and cooperation to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks subject to the Convention taking into account the best scientific evidence available to it. It seems highly unlikely that this would be the stated objective of an organization devoted to aquaculture. The Council had decided last year that the Global Aquaculture Alliance should be eligible for observer status and I therefore wrote to this Organization on 28 June 2000 asking for clarification as to how their objectives could be considered to be compatible with those of NASCO, but I have received no response.
6. At the second Liaison Group meeting between NASCO and the North Atlantic Salmon Farming Industry (see document CNL(01)27), the industry representatives again indicated that they believed that the Liaison Group provided a better forum for cooperation between wild and farm salmon interests than NGO status, and it was recommended that the Chairman and Rapporteur of the Liaison Group be allowed to attend NASCO’s Annual Meetings to report on the Liaison Group’s progress. If the Council decides to accept this proposal from the Liaison Group it may wish to reconsider its position concerning NGO status for aquaculture organizations. In any case most such organizations would probably not be able to show compatibility with the objectives of NASCO. The Special Liaison Meetings on Aquaculture (which industry representatives are invited to attend), and the Liaison Group, with associated attendance at NASCO meetings by the Chairman and Rapporteur of the Group, would appear to provide a more appropriate means of cooperation on issues concerning salmon farming than NGO status.

Action Required

7. The Council is asked to further consider all the conditions governing its relationship with its observers and, in particular, whether it:
 - wishes to permit statements by NGOs during sessions of the Council and/or the Commissions through the nominated representatives, at the discretion of the President and/or Commission Chairmen;
 - wishes to permit Opening Statements by the NGOs at each Commission meeting;
 - wishes to clarify the present situation regarding the “compatibility test” of aquaculture organizations if and when they apply for NGO status, or if it considers that the Special Liaison Meetings on Aquaculture and the Liaison

Group provide a more appropriate means of cooperation on issues concerning salmon farming than granting NGO status to aquaculture organizations.

8. In reviewing these conditions it is worth recalling that the Council has previously recognised that within the NGOs there is considerable experience and expertise on salmon conservation and management which can be drawn on. NASCO's NGOs include organizations actively involved in salmon management, those dedicated to salmon conservation, those involved in wider wildlife and environmental issues and those promoting a particular user group's interests. In addition to considering the proposals made by the NGOs in paragraph 4 above, there may also be benefits from holding a meeting with the NGOs to seek their views as to how they feel they could contribute most effectively to the work of NASCO, so that we can ensure all the expertise and experience available to NASCO is used in the best possible cooperative spirit.

Secretary
Edinburgh
9 April, 2001

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3rd July 2000

Dr Malcom Windsor
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Dear Malcom

NGO Participation at NASCO

Further to the debate during the final Council session in Miramichi prompted by the proposal from Norway, I am writing on behalf of the 14 NGOs present to suggest alternatives that may prove more acceptable to all the Parties.

The NGOs are convinced they have a valuable contribution to make to NASCO and over the past four years have demonstrated their ability to co-ordinate their activity in a responsible and professional way. We trust this is recognised by the parties.

As you know, Norway proposed that NGOs should be permitted to speak during all sessions at the discretion of the President. This proposal was supported by the US but opposed by the EU on the grounds it would give NGOs a greater voice than their member governments.

I would point out that the NGOs represent a completely different constituency, the salmon. Our 10 million members are passionately concerned with the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and wish to be heard in the only inter-governmental body dedicated to this unique species. Our membership is larger than the population of Iceland, Norway and several EU member states.

We recognise, however, that there are flaws in the Norwegian proposal. The idea that up to 24 individual NGOs could be invited to speak by the President at any time would provide a recipe for confusion and prolong debates.

The NGOs therefore propose that their contribution should be channelled through their Chairman or his nominee and one other delegate. These two individuals would be the only NGO representatives permitted to speak during Council sessions and then only at the discretion of the President. We believe this is a sensible compromise aimed at satisfying the concerns of some Parties and hope that it can be thoroughly debated and implemented during the next annual meeting.



NGO participation at NASCO/2

In the meantime, the NGOs are anxious to increase their contribution as soon as possible and suggest the additional proposal that they be permitted to make one joint statement (not exceeding 500 words) to each Commission during their opening sessions. This would be in addition to opening statements to Council which are already permitted.

We hope that this proposal might be considered in the opening Council session of the 18th annual meeting in Galicia.

I very much hope the parties will give detailed consideration to these positive proposals and look forward to your reply in due course.

Yours sincerely

Chris Poupard

C W Poupard
Chairman
NGO Observers at NASCO