

North-East Atlantic Commission

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*Report on Progress in Applying the Decision Structure for Implementing the
Precautionary Approach to Management of Salmon Fisheries in Norway*

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The decision structure has been analysed and tested theoretically by a Working Group with members from management and research institutions. The Working Group has encountered what they see as some inconsistencies and unclear terms in the decision structure outlined in paper CNL(00)18 Annex 4, and suggests that it should be revised by the SCPA.

The Working Group has concentrated on exploring different methods for estimating spawning stocks and conservation limits, and on procedures for setting management targets. Different approaches are needed for different types of datasets. In Norway the river Orkla has been chosen for this exercise. The data from this river cover almost all life history stages. Calculations of spawning stock based on smolt counts, presmolt-density, adult counts and catch-statistics yielded similar results, indicating that the spawning stock and the CL can be estimated for rivers where only limited datasets are available.

This year an improved system for classifying salmon rivers is being tested on a national scale in Norway. The classification-system, which includes elements from the decision structure, will allow for more detailed pre-agreed management actions.

At this stage in the process we have a few comments on the decision structure.

- The purpose of the decision structure, which is attainment of the management target (MT), should be more clearly emphasised. General terms like *satisfactory abundance and diversity* should be substituted by MT.
- Since different age-groups of salmon interbreed and share in a single gene pool, and there is large variation between years in the proportion of different age groups, conservation limits (CL) should not necessarily be age-specific. The age-composition of a stock reflects its life history traits and should therefore be integrated in the decision structure as an indicator of diversity.
- The definition of CL focuses on the size of the spawning stock. Since data on spawning stocks can be difficult to obtain in many rivers, the Working Group suggests that alternative approaches in the decision structure should be applied. The Working Group agreed that a question in the decision structure about the relationship between recruitment and *the productive capacity of the resource* (defined in CNL(00)18, page 3) could be such an alternative and could be useful in cases where data on spawning stocks are not available.