



Agenda item 4.5
For adoption

Council

CNL(00)10

***Report on the Activities of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 1999***

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Council**
- 3. North American Commission**
- 4. North-East Atlantic Commission**
- 5. West Greenland Commission**
- 6. Finance and Administration Matters**

Note: This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 1999. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Council and regional Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

***Report on the Activities of
the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 1999***

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Irish Government and the European Union, NASCO held its Sixteenth Annual Meeting in Westport, Ireland. Further progress was made on a number of issues, in particular, on developing our thinking on application of a Precautionary Approach to salmon management in response to the continuing concern about salmon abundance. We also held our first Special Liaison Meeting to review measures to minimise impacts of aquaculture, in which representatives of the salmon farming industry were invited to participate, and a Special Session on habitat issues.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Council was held during the period 7 - 11 June 1999 under the Presidency of Mr Einar Lemche (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) and Vice-Presidency of Mr Ole Tougaard (European Union). Representatives of all the Contracting Parties, one inter-governmental organization, 16 non-governmental organizations and media representatives attended the meetings.

The Precautionary Approach to Salmon Management

- 2.2 At the Fifteenth Annual Meeting, NASCO and its Contracting Parties had agreed to adopt and apply a Precautionary Approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of Atlantic salmon in order to protect the resource and preserve the environments in which it lives. The Council adopted an Action Plan for Application of the Precautionary Approach to Salmon Management under which a Standing Committee on the Precautionary Approach (SCPA) was established. The Council agreed that the SCPA would arrange a meeting on the application of a precautionary approach to salmon fisheries management and report back to the Council at its Seventeenth Annual Meeting.

Unreported Catches

- 2.3 The Secretary presented information provided by the Parties in relation to unreported catches. The returns indicated that all Parties make considerable efforts to obtain detailed and accurate catch statistics from the salmon fisheries but, despite this, catches may be unreported for a number of reasons. Illegal fishing appears to be a particular problem for a number of Parties. The Council recognised a number of discrepancies in the returns by the Parties. It was agreed that in future the Parties would be asked for an estimate of unreported catch for each country, broken down to show the different categories of the unreported catch and indicating whether they result from legal or illegal activities. A timetable for provision of the information was agreed.

By-catch of Atlantic Salmon

- 2.4 At its Fourteenth Annual Meeting the attention of the Council was drawn to the enormous growth of fishing for pelagic species of fish in the North-East Atlantic Commission area, principally for herring and mackerel in ICES Division IIa. The concern had been raised that, even if a very small percentage of the catch in these fisheries is salmon post-smolts, the losses could be significant. Information provided by ICES suggests that the fishery with the greatest potential to catch post-smolts is the trawl fishery for mackerel but there is anecdotal historical information from Iceland suggesting that there was also a by-catch of salmon in the herring purse-seine fishery. The Council was advised of a collaborative project between PINRO, Russia and the Faroese Fisheries Laboratory to investigate by-catch of salmon in herring and mackerel fisheries during 1999. The Council asked that the Contracting Parties make any available information on by-catch available to the Secretariat.

Fishing for Salmon in International Waters

- 2.5 A report was presented describing actions taken in accordance with the Resolution on Fishing for Salmon on the High Seas. There have been no sightings since February 1994 but there have been few surveillance flights over the winter and spring period. The Council asked the Secretary to continue to liaise with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NAFO) and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NEAFC) with a view to obtaining relevant information on sightings and to take action in relation to any future sightings.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.6 Reports on scientific research fishing conducted during 1998 by Canada, EU (Scotland) and Norway were made available to the Council.

Scientific Advice

- 2.7 The representative of ICES presented the report of the Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM) to the Council. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice from ICES to be presented in 2000.

Catch Statistics and their Analysis

- 2.8 The official catch returns by the Parties for 1998 and historical data for the period 1960-1998 were presented.

Measures Taken in Accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention

- 2.9 A report was presented on the returns made under Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention which deal with implementation of the Convention. A summary of the report of the Norwegian Wild Salmon Committee was presented. This Committee had been appointed by Royal Decree to review the overall situation facing the wild salmon stocks in Norway and to present proposals for management strategies and

action programmes. The representative of Norway invited comments from the Parties on the recommendations in this report by 1 October 1999.

Review of International Salmon-Related Literature Published in 1998

- 2.10 The Council took note of a review of the literature concerning Atlantic salmon published during 1998.

Impacts of Aquaculture on Wild Salmon Stocks

Special Liaison Meeting to Review Measures to Minimise Impacts of Aquaculture on the Wild Stocks

- 2.11 The Council held a Special Liaison Meeting at which there were presentations by Canada and Norway on the measures they have taken to minimise the impacts of salmon aquaculture on the wild stocks. A separate report of this meeting has been prepared. The Council confirmed that there would be a second Special Liaison Meeting on Aquaculture at the 2000 meeting with presentations by the European Union.

Returns Made in Accordance with the Oslo Resolution

- 2.12 The returns made in accordance with Article 5 of the Oslo Resolution were presented. The new reporting procedure adopted in 1998 had resulted in more comprehensive returns. The Council asked the Secretary to review the format for returns so as to identify any ambiguity and to make any necessary improvements.

Pros and Cons of the Use of Sterile Salmon in Aquaculture

- 2.13 The Council considered a report on the use of sterile salmon in aquaculture. The Council agreed that, in line with the Oslo Resolution, there was a need for further research in order to assess the possible contribution sterile salmon might make to containment and for further development work to determine if their use in aquaculture would be practical. The Council agreed that this issue might be raised at the Wild and Farmed Salmon Liaison Group at a future date, and that the Secretariat should prepare a background paper considering the wider aspects associated with the use of sterile salmon in aquaculture.

Report of the Second Meeting of the Wild and Farmed Salmon Liaison Group

- 2.14 The Secretary presented a report of the second meeting of the Liaison Group between NASCO and the International Salmon Farmers' Association (ISFA). He felt that little progress had been made on the development of guidelines on physical containment measures and husbandry practices. However, he had received an encouraging letter from a representative of the ISFA, inviting the President and Secretary to a meeting in Norway. The Council agreed that NASCO would initiate a fresh start in the process of liaison with the aquaculture industry so as to develop closer, more open and broader cooperation. The industry throughout the North Atlantic should participate. This did not mean that the Council did not wish to maintain its links with ISFA. It was agreed that the Secretary should meet with the ISFA and that following this

meeting the aim would be to organise a new liaison meeting early in the year 2000 to focus on the development of guidelines on physical containment and husbandry practices.

Transgenic Salmon

- 2.15 At its Fourteenth Annual Meeting the Council had adopted NASCO Guidelines for Action on Transgenic Salmon, designed to prevent impacts on the wild stocks. Under these guidelines the Parties agreed to advise the Council of any proposal to permit the rearing of transgenic salmonids, providing details of proposed containment and other measures to safeguard the wild stocks.

Implementation of the Oslo Resolution

- 2.16 The Council adopted an Agreement on Implementation of the Oslo Resolution based on the recommendations of a Working Group which had reported to the Council at its Fifteenth Annual Meeting.

Special Session on Habitat Issues

- 2.17 The Council held a Special Session on Habitat Issues which included a Review of Freshwater Habitat Issues in Relation to Atlantic Salmon and reports from North America and Europe on measures to conserve, restore and enhance habitat. A separate report of this Special Session has been prepared.

Other Issues

- 2.18 At the request of the North American Commission the Council asked the Secretary to write to the French authorities expressing concern about the increased level of salmon catches at St Pierre et Miquelon in 1998 (see paragraph 3.4 below).
- 2.19 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities. (See sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.20 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below). The Secretary was asked to prepare a discussion paper on how issues raised by Iceland on the calculation of the contributions might be resolved without amending the Convention.
- 2.21 The Council agreed to hold its Seventeenth Annual Meeting in Miramichi, Canada. The Council agreed to hold its Eighteenth Annual Meeting from 4 - 8 June 2001 either in Edinburgh or elsewhere at the invitation of a Party.
- 2.22 The Council agreed to the establishment of a NASCO website and asked the Secretary to examine the work required and costs involved in making the Organization's database suitable for and available on the website.
- 2.23 The Council agreed to reprint the NASCO Handbook in its present form and to prepare a separate collation of the Organization's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines in A5 ring binder format.

- 2.24 The Council decided that at its next meeting it would review the relationship with its observer organizations including the question of an observer fee to reflect actual costs.
- 2.25 The Council asked the Secretary to continue to liaise with NPAFC and IBSFC so as to progress the arrangements for a joint meeting to include sessions on the scientific aspects and on the application of a Precautionary Approach to salmon management. The Council recognised that there could also be benefits from a joint meeting of all the North Atlantic Fisheries Commissions (i.e. NASCO, ICCAT, NEAFC and NAFO). The Head of the EU delegation and the Secretary were asked to liaise with these Organizations on this matter.
- 2.26 The winner of the \$2,500 Grand Prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Børge Tronstad, Mandal, Norway.
- 2.27 The Council adopted a report to the Parties on the activities of the Organization in 1998. The Council agreed to publish a Report on its activities in 1998/99.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Westport, Ireland during the period 7-11 June 1999 under the Chairmanship of Dr Ray Owen (USA).

Review of the 1998 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 1998 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES.

Review of the 1999 Salmon Management Measures

- 3.3 The US referred to the State of Maine Conservation Plan which includes measures to minimise impacts of aquaculture, forestry, agriculture and recreational fishing. The State of Maine is further restricting water withdrawals, closing the catch and release fishery in certain rivers and is promulgating regulations for a code of containment for the aquaculture industry. The removal of the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River in Maine was scheduled for July 1999. The 1999 Canadian Salmon Management Plan introduced a new approach in Newfoundland based on a river classification system and the development of new conservation thresholds for rivers in Quebec. The US commended Canada on its recent conservation action and on the early release of the 1999 salmon management plan.

St Pierre et Miquelon Salmon Fisheries

- 3.4 The Commission reviewed the catch statistics for salmon at St Pierre et Miquelon in 1998. Concern was expressed about the continuing mixed stock salmon fishery and the increase in catch in 1998 which was 55% higher than the catch in 1997. This increase was attributed to an increase in the number of licences issued and more salmon moving through St Pierre et Miquelon coastal waters. The Commission

agreed that, in view of the precarious state of North American salmon stocks, the advice from ICES for in-river exploitation only, and the measures taken by Canada and the US to address conservation problems, the Council should be requested to write to the French authorities advising them of the serious concerns caused by the continuing fishery.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.5 The Commission received a report on the activities of its Scientific Working Group (SWG) on Salmonid Introductions and Transfers. During the year there had been some deviations from the NAC Protocols specifically related to shipments of European origin strains of Atlantic salmon and shipments of rainbow trout. The Commission supported the establishment of a database of aquaculture escapees in North American Commission rivers, and asked the SWG to liaise with states and provinces to review proposals on containment and recapture methods and to include examples of risk assessment methods in the draft revised Protocols in consultation with appropriate experts, industry, states and provinces. This modification to the Protocols is to occur during the interim while comprehensive comments and recommendations are developed by the Parties. The Parties agreed to discuss changes to the draft revised Protocols prior to sending them to the SWG. The SWG was asked to continue examining the feasibility of field testing a genetic technique to determine the proportion of river populations which are of aquaculture origin, their continent of origin and stock origin. Canada renewed its commitment to provide the US and the SWG with a copy of a report on the epidemiology of Infectious Salmon Anaemia in the Bay of Fundy when it is received from the consultants. With regard to the continued use of 'Landcatch' salmon in marine aquaculture in Maine, the US indicated that it was making progress by reducing the potential for interaction between farmed and wild salmon through development of a 'code of containment'. Canada indicated that, as previously advised, the 'Landcatch' salmon held in quarantine in Canada had all died and therefore were never moved to cages.

Other Issues

- 3.6 The Commission agreed to adopt the decisions of the Council on the Precautionary Approach.
- 3.7 The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Clarence Pye, Lethbridge, Newfoundland.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Westport, Ireland during the period 7-11 June 1999 under the Chairmanship of Mr Vladimir Moskalenko (Russian Federation).

Review of the 1998 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission reviewed the 1998 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. During January-April 1998 a research fishery had been conducted at Faroes and the total catch amounted to 5.8t including discards.

Introductions and Transfers

- 4.3 In 1997 the Commission had adopted a Resolution to Protect Wild Salmon Stocks from Introductions and Transfers. The Commission adopted a format for reporting actions taken in accordance with this Resolution. A document was tabled by the European Union summarising recent measures taken in accordance with the Resolution.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.4 Reports on recent salmon conservation measures were presented by Norway, the European Union (United Kingdom), the European Union (Ireland) and Iceland. A joint statement was tabled by the European Union and Norway concerning the Tana and Neiden rivers.
- 4.5 The Commission adopted a Regulatory Measure for Fishing of Salmon in the Faroe Islands for the calendar year 2000. Under this measure, the total nominal catch in 2000 shall not exceed 300 tonnes; areas with salmon below 60cm in length will be closed for salmon fishing at short notice; the number of boats licensed shall not exceed 8; the salmon fishing season will be limited to 120 days between 20 January and 30 April and 1 November and 20 December; and subject to the maximum annual catch the total allowable number of fishing days for salmon shall be set at 800. The quota was agreed as an interim measure leading towards a quota based on a predictive biological model as soon as such scientific advice is available.
- 4.6 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that in the event that there is a salmon fishery, the Faroe Islands will allocate no more than 260 tonnes and will further seek to work towards adapting the size of the quota to be a reflection of the homewater catches.

Other Issues

- 4.7 The Commission agreed to adopt the decisions of the Council on the Precautionary Approach.
- 4.8 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Gordon Henry, Aberdeen, Scotland.

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Westport, Ireland during the period 7-11 June 1999 under the Chairmanship of Mr Andrew Thomson (EU).

Review of the 1998 Fishery and Scientific Advice from ICES

- 5.2 The Commission reviewed the 1998 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. The Greenland Home Rule Government had set a quota of 20 tonnes for the West Greenland fishery and had scheduled the season to begin on 16 August 1998. The fishery was closed on 31 December 1998 with a reported catch of 11,059 kg. In 1998 all commercial catches were required to be reported to the Greenland Fisheries Control Authority (GFCA) and all recreational catches reported soon after landing, but not necessarily daily. Additionally, all salmon sales were required to be reported and only licensed salmon fishermen were permitted to sell their catch. There was a general prohibition on sales and exports of salmon outside Greenland in 1998. The Commission discussed an article in an angling magazine claiming that wild salmon from Greenland had been on sale in Switzerland during 1998/99. However, the Commission was advised that "Greenland salmon" may mean salmon from Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Swiss Government statistics indicated that there had been no imports of salmon from Greenland within the last two years. The salmon in question was believed to be ranched salmon from Iceland. There were also reports that wild salmon from Greenland was available in restaurants in Denmark. This salmon was, in fact, farmed salmon from Norway. The Secretary indicated that, following consultations with the President, a response had been sent to the magazine concerned.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.3 The Commission adopted a multi-year regulatory measure for fishing of salmon at West Greenland. Under this measure the catch at West Greenland in 1999 and in 2000 will be restricted to that amount used for internal consumption in Greenland, which in the past has been estimated at 20 tonnes. There will be no commercial export of salmon. The Parties commended Greenland for the improvements in its monitoring and reporting procedures.

Other Issues

- 5.4 The Commission agreed to adopt the decisions of the Council on the Precautionary Approach.
- 5.5 The Chairman announced that the winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Mr Berthel Jakobsen, Arsuk, Greenland.

6. Finance And Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Council under the Chairmanship of Dr Jean-Pierre Plé (USA).

Review of the Annual Payment to ICES

- 6.2 The Secretary summarised the continuing consultations with ICES. The main issues for NASCO were the need for: stability in the contributions; equity between

Commissions; a mutually agreed position on what is to be allocated to NASCO; control of costs through proper consultation; and the advice to be provided on a timely basis. ICES wishes to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with each Commission detailing the services the client Commissions can expect and the financial arrangements. The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of an MoU and a Schedule of payments. However, the Committee stressed the need for long-term stability at the end of the transition period covered by the MoU which should be achieved through continuation of a fixed rate payment adjusted only to take account of inflation in Denmark. Given assurances from ICES on stability there was support for a longer-term MoU after the present three-year transition period. The Committee also stressed the urgent need to address the issue of the timeliness of the advice.

Methods of Calculating the Contributions to NASCO

- 6.3 Concerns were expressed by Iceland about the methods used to calculate the contributions to NASCO, since there have been major changes to salmon fisheries which have had an impact on the catches used to calculate the contributions, e.g. growth of 'catch and release' angling, continuing high levels of unreported catches, reduction in the number of NASCO Parties. It was proposed by Iceland that a Working Group be established to review these concerns. The Committee recognised that there have been major changes to salmon management in recent years but concern was expressed that there had been no time to consider the Icelandic proposal and that there could be implications for the NASCO Convention. It was proposed that Iceland might wish to raise these issues with Heads of Delegations.

Consideration of the 2000 Draft Budget

- 6.4 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the Draft 2000 Budget and Schedule of Contributions.

Other Issues

- 6.5 The Committee recommended to the Council the adoption of the audited accounts for 1998 and the re-appointment of the auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers, for the 1999 accounts.
- 6.6 The Secretary was asked to prepare a note on the Stabilisation Fund and the level to which it might need to be built.

Secretary
Edinburgh
17 April 2000

