



Agenda item 4.2
For decision

Council

CNL(00)7

Review of NASCO's Relationship with its Observer Organizations

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Introduction

1. Last year the Council decided that it wished "to review the relationship with its observer organizations, including the question of an observer fee to reflect actual costs." The Secretary was asked to prepare a discussion document on this issue. At this stage, no consultations have been held with our observer organizations.
2. The Rules of Procedure of the Council and three regional Commissions allow for the participation of observers in the meetings of the Organization. These observers have so far been from 4 different categories: States which are not Contracting Parties to NASCO; Inter-Government Organizations (IGOs); Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and the Media. In addition, the public may attend the Opening Session of the Council.
3. There is a trend in international organizations to become more transparent. NASCO has probably moved faster than most organizations to improve transparency and to develop input to our work from observer organizations. Over the years a number of conditions governing the attendance of observers at our meetings have been developed and these are annexed to this paper.

Observers

Observers from Non-Contracting Parties

4. There have been no observers from States which are not Contracting Parties to NASCO since 1986 when the former Soviet Union attended a meeting prior to its accession/ratification of the Convention. No detailed conditions governing the attendance of such States at NASCO meetings have been developed.

NGO Observers

5. NGOs have been able to attend NASCO meetings since 1985. The number of NGOs has increased considerably since then and there are currently 25 organizations with observer status to NASCO, though usually only about half of these attend the Annual Meeting. The Council has welcomed the attendance of NGOs at its meetings, which has been of mutual benefit, and the conditions governing their attendance have been gradually widened to the extent that NGOs can now attend the meetings of both the Council and Commissions and make statements at Special Sessions and at the Opening Session of the Council (Annex 1). The Opening Statements are included as an Annex to the Report of the Council. At sessions which are designated "Special Sessions", NGOs may participate fully and they are consulted on topics they wish to see addressed at such sessions. Special Sessions have been held at three of the last four annual meetings. Similarly, NGOs may participate fully in the Special Liaison Meetings to review the measures taken to minimize impacts of aquaculture on the wild stocks. NGOs may also freely circulate papers to NASCO delegates at the Annual Meetings.

6. In a review of the future issues for NASCO presented to the Council in 1996, the need to further develop the relationship of cooperation and trust between NASCO and its NGOs was recognized so as to benefit the salmon and all involved in its management and exploitation. The Council may wish to give some consideration to the relationship with its NGOs and how this might be enhanced. For example, one possibility might be to consider holding a Liaison Meeting with NGOs, as is the case for the aquaculture industry, in conjunction with the Annual Meeting.

IGO Observers

7. Representatives of ICES have attended all of NASCO's meetings since its inception so as to provide the scientific advice. The North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) and the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) have been invited to attend the Annual Meetings, since 1996, as inter-governmental observers. This is a reciprocal arrangement. Attendance is on the same terms as ICES, i.e. the representatives of NPAFC and IBSFC can attend meetings of the Council and Commissions and may be invited by the President, or the Chairman of a Commission, to make a statement if they so wish.

Media Observers

8. In 1995, the Council agreed that accredited Media would be allowed to attend the Organization's Annual Meetings. The conditions governing attendance of Media representatives at NASCO meetings are contained in Annex 2.

Inter-Sessional Meetings

9. One aspect of observer status that has never been formally resolved is whether or not NGOs, IGOs and the Media may attend inter-sessional meetings of the Council and Commissions and of Working Groups. The approach adopted to date, following consultations with the NASCO President at the time, has been not to invite observers to participate in these inter-sessional meetings unless the Council specifically agrees to such participation, e.g. representatives of ICES and FAO were invited to the Working Group on the Precautionary Approach held in 1998 and NAFO, IBSFC and NPAFC were invited to attend the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Precautionary Approach held earlier this year. It is considered important that such Working Groups are kept to a reasonably small size. The Council may wish to consider whether this procedure should continue or whether they wish to extend the participation by observers to include inter-sessional meetings of the Council and Commissions and NASCO Working Groups. In this regard, we have received a request from one of our NGOs, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, to allow NGOs to attend the Liaison Group Meetings between NASCO and NASFI (Annex 3).

Observer Fees

10. The Council reviewed the pros and cons of charging NGOs an observer fee at its 1995 meeting. Some inter-governmental organizations are considering what financial contribution observers might make. The factors in favour of charging an observer fee are:

- it would recognise that there is a cost to the Organization of providing for observers;
- it might help ensure that those who apply for observer status have some commitment to the relationship with NASCO.

The factors against charging an observer fee are:

- it is desirable to increase the transparency of NASCO's work and encouraging participation by observer organizations might be seen as a very cost-effective way of achieving this;
- some of our NGOs have very little funding and may be excluded if there was an additional cost to their participation;
- the amount that would be raised is likely to be fairly small but introduction of a fee could lead to an element of budgetary uncertainty;
- Secretariat efforts would have to be diverted to recovering the fees and issuing reminders, sending notices of exclusion, etc.

The Council therefore decided that, as the negative aspects of charging NGOs outweighed the potential gains, it would not introduce such fees.

11. If the Council decides it wishes to reconsider charging an observer fee in the future, there would need to be a resolution of which observers are asked to pay such a fee. If the fee only applied to some categories of observers the organizations required to pay may justifiably feel aggrieved. Moreover, if, for example, only NGOs were required to pay a fee, some could quite legitimately claim to be Media representatives and avoid the fee. So far, NASCO attends the meetings of ICES, IBSFC and NPAFC without a charge on a reciprocal arrangement basis, although ICES indicated earlier this year that there might be a charge for attending their Annual Science Conference. (We have raised this with ICES since it is not consistent with the recent MoU but the issue is not yet resolved.)

Aquaculture Industry

12. NASCO devotes increasing time and effort to the question of impacts of salmon aquaculture on the wild stocks. The Council has taken steps to try to improve transparency by involving the salmon aquaculture industry closely in its deliberations and decisions, through participation in Working Groups, Special Sessions and now the Special Liaison Meetings and the Liaison Group. Although the salmon farming industry does not have observer status, it could be argued that if observers are to be charged a fee to reflect actual costs to NASCO, the salmon farming industry should also be charged. Certainly there are costs involved in the Liaison Group meetings and the Special Liaison Meetings, and these can be significantly higher than the costs associated with observers attending our meetings. However, it could equally be argued that it would be counter-productive to introduce a fee when the aim of these meetings with the salmon farming industry is to enhance cooperation.

Costs

13. The Council has asked that actual costs be used as a basis in considering an observer fee. We estimate that these costs total in the region of £2,000 per annum. This does not include additional meeting room costs as, so far, we have not had to have a bigger room to allow for observer participation. Some of the costs are incurred irrespective of whether or not observers attend the Annual Meeting. The NGOs are the most numerous observers.

Summary

14. There is a great deal of interest in all North Atlantic countries in the wild salmon stocks, and many organizations exist to work for their conservation. NASCO has moved steadily to improve the transparency of its work and the transparency of international cooperation on the salmon management process has certainly been enhanced through the participation of observers in NASCO's meetings. Our observer colleagues, whether they be from IGOs, NGOs or the Media, and our colleagues from the aquaculture industry, having seen the complexities and problems, have gained a better understanding of the positions of the Parties. The Council, for its part, has learnt much more about the concerns of the user groups, stakeholders and of the aquaculture industry.
15. There have been no significant problems associated with this growing transparency and generally it might be considered to have had a very favourable effect on the work of the Organization. Given the relatively small costs and the mutual benefits to observers and NASCO from their participation, the drawbacks of introducing such a fee may outweigh the benefits. This was the conclusion of the Council in 1995 when it last reviewed this issue. However, if the Council decided that it wished to consider introducing an observer fee, one possibility might be to invite voluntary contributions which could go into an Education Fund (see Secretary's Report, CNL(00)6, paragraph 11).
16. The Council is asked to consider its relationship with its observers and consider what action to take, in particular with regard to:
 - (a) the possibility of changes to the general conditions governing observers at NASCO;
 - (b) participation by observers in inter-sessional meetings and Working Groups;
 - (c) participation by observers in the Liaison Group between NASFI and NASCO;
 - (d) the question of whether an observer fee might be imposed and to whom it would apply;
 - (e) the possibility of voluntary contributions to, e.g., an Education Fund.

Secretary
Edinburgh
17 April, 2000

Conditions for NGO Representation

The conditions governing attendance at NASCO meetings are as follows:

- 1) that the Secretary, in consultation with the President, shall decide whether the objectives of the organization applying are compatible with those of NASCO;
- 2) that the non-government organization shall apply not less than 15 days before the meeting of the Council;
- 3) that no more than two representatives of the non-government organization shall be allowed to attend the meeting;
- 4) that the representatives of the non-government organization shall not be permitted to make any statements of any kind at the meetings except, at the discretion of the President, during the Opening Session and at sessions that are defined "Special Sessions" by the Council;
- 5) that the non-government organization shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Secretary that it has, as an organization, a legitimate interest in the proceedings;
- 6) that the non-government organization shall comply with any other conditions imposed by the Council or by the Secretary.

Conditions for Media Representation

The following criteria govern media attendance at the meetings of the Council and three regional Commissions:

- 1) Media representatives shall register with the NASCO Secretariat on arrival at the meeting and provide a Press card or a letter of authorisation or other documentation from the appropriate company;
- 2) No more than two representatives of a particular publication or company shall be allowed to attend the meeting;
- 3) Media representatives shall not be permitted to make statements at the meetings;
- 4) The use of cameras and/or recording equipment is permitted for the Opening Session of the Council but at other sessions only with the agreement of the Council or relevant Commission;
- 5) At the discretion of the President and Secretary a Press Conference may be held at the close of the Annual Meeting;
- 6) Media representatives shall comply with these and with any other conditions imposed by the Council or by the Secretary.

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R. William Taylor
President

ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION

March 2, 2000

Malcolm Windsor
NASCO
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Scotland UK

Dear Malcolm:

I was pleased to learn of the agreement between the North Atlantic Salmon Farming Industry (NASFI) and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) to work together to develop recommendations on wild salmon conservation and sustainable salmon farming practices.

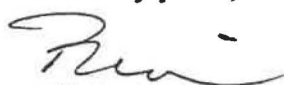
The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) has a long and distinguished history of working to ensure the conservation and wise management of wild Atlantic salmon throughout the North Atlantic and undertaking and promoting research and regulation in support of sustainable salmon aquaculture. We have long held the view that these two objectives are not mutually exclusive, in fact we believe that both wild salmon conservation and sustainable aquaculture practices depends on a healthy environment. We believe that wild salmon conservation interests and the aquaculture industry have much to offer each other and much to gain from collaboration.

As you know, representatives of the aquaculture industry attend and observe NASCO meetings as members of the delegations of the contracting parties. Their attendance has been welcome and constructive.

I urge NASCO to take steps to ensure that wild salmon conservation interests are encouraged to participate in the meetings between NASCO and NASFI. It is through open and transparent dialogue that effective conservation and management actions for the benefit of both wild salmon and the salmon farming industry will be achieved.

I look forward to your positive reply.

Sincerely yours,


Bill Taylor

cc: Jacque Robichaud
Andy Rosenberg



