

	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Report of the Working Group on Future Reporting (November / December 2024 & January / February 2025)</i></p>	<p>CNL(25)10</p> <p>Agenda item: 6.h)</p>
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***Report of the Working Group on Future Reporting
(November / December 2024 & January / February 2025)***

NASCO HQ, Edinburgh, Scotland and by Video Conference

18-22 November, 10 & 12 December 2024, 7 January, 4 & 5 February 2025

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chair, Dan Kircheis (USA), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Edinburgh. He noted the importance of the work before the Group, given that it will determine the effectiveness of reporting by NASCO's Parties and jurisdictions for the next five years. He stated that the participation of all members of the Implementation Plan (IP) / Annual Progress Report (APR) Review Group in the meeting was beneficial as they would be able to provide useful insight into the issues that arose during the third reporting cycle in addition to the formal suggestions that had been made by the Group through its reports to Council. He also noted that participants not previously involved with the IP / APR Review Group would bring new perspectives valuable to this work.
- 1.2 The Chair reminded the Group that in 2005, Council agreed that 'NASCO will be committed to the measures and agreements it develops and actively review progress with implementation plans', [CNL\(05\)49](#). NASCO has adopted various Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines that address the Organization's principal areas of concern for the management of salmon stocks. Since 2005, each Party / jurisdiction has developed IPs detailing measures to be taken over five-to-six-year periods in relation to three areas: 'Management of Salmon Fisheries'; 'Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat'; and 'Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics'. In 2020, Council noted that it considered NASCO's reporting cycle to be vitally important as a mechanism to strengthen the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and to hold Parties / jurisdictions accountable to them. It agreed that the purpose of the IPs and APRs is to provide a succinct, transparent, fair and balanced approach for reporting on the implementation of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines by the Parties / jurisdictions.
- 1.3 The Chair noted that the third reporting cycle ends in 2025 and Council agreed in 2024, as part of its discussion on the future of NASCO and in the agreement of its Ten-Year Strategy and high-level Action Plan, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), that the next reporting cycle should be developed, and a process to enable that to happen. Council agreed:
- to conduct a fourth reporting cycle;
 - to establish a Future Reporting Working Group (WGFR) to undertake a review of the process; and
 - to agree the 'Terms of Reference for a Future Reporting Working Group', [CNL\(24\)63](#).'
- 1.4 A list of participants is included in Annex 1.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Group adopted its Agenda, WGFR(24)03 (Annex 2).
- 2.2 The Group agreed to discuss the agenda items in the following order: 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

and 11.

3. Review of the Terms of Reference

3.1 The Chair gave a presentation on the Terms of Reference and an outline of the fourth reporting cycle. The Group discussed the Terms of Reference for the meeting, [CNL\(24\)63](#), namely:

‘The Working Group is tasked with:

- a) considering the basis for, and structure of, a fourth reporting cycle that will build on some objective analysis of stressors by each Party / jurisdiction, to enable a reporting cycle that balances simplicity with effectiveness and transparency;*
- b) advising on any changes required to streamline and improve reporting further in the fourth reporting cycle to ensure that reports are meaningful and that unnecessary burden is avoided. Discussion on simplifying accountability by focusing on a limited number of specific outcomes and clear metrics is encouraged;*
- c) considering how best to report to Council regularly a consolidated picture of commitments and delivery progress to make NASCO’s performance in delivering for wild Atlantic salmon more transparent;*
- d) improving existing, or creating new, templates for the preparation of Parties’ / jurisdictions’ IPs and reporting on progress taking into consideration recognised issues with templates and formats in previous reporting cycles;*
- e) proposing a schedule for the development and review of plans and reporting on progress; and*
- f) aligning the reporting process with the Action Plan agreed by the Council in 2024.’*

3.2 The Chair reminded the Group that Council had provided a clear framework within which the Group is expected to operate, through a number of considerations, i.e.

- ‘recognition that progress should be measured clearly against a tangible outcome for wild Atlantic salmon, given the importance of demonstrating progress towards NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. Each outcome would be based on an action that improves conditions for salmon survival and / or its populations through the removal or diminishment of a threat to wild Atlantic salmon;*
- the focus of the fourth reporting cycle needs to be related clearly to reducing stressors to wild Atlantic salmon, with a clear baseline against which progress can be measured;*
- clear guidance that is easy to understand and implement needs to be provided to Parties / jurisdictions to enable timely production of both the IPs and accompanying Annual Progress Reports (APRs); and*
- the fourth reporting cycle may be a departure from earlier reporting cycles, whilst ensuring it remains a transparent mechanism to strengthen implementation of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.’]*

3.3 The Chair advised the Group that its recommendations would be considered first by the Working Group on Future Reporting (WGFON) and again by Council at its 2025 Annual Meeting. He reminded the Group of a number of decisions taken by Council which would

inform the fourth reporting cycle but were not for consideration by the Group, as follows:

- *‘that Parties / jurisdictions carry out a stressor analysis and provide a paper to NASCO by 30 April 2025;*
- *that Parties / jurisdictions, after discussing what constitutes a baseline analysis, carry one out after the 2025 Annual Meeting and provide a paper to NASCO by 30 April 2026;*
- *to update, and consolidate as appropriate, NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, incorporating climate change and other factors (see Annex 1 of ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, CNL(24)71rev) as key elements of the review with the following priority order, which may change:*
 - *habitat: commence 2025; plan to complete 2026;*
 - *aquaculture and disease: commence 2026; plan to complete 2027; and*
 - *fisheries commence 2027; plan to complete 2028; and*
- *as a future action that Parties plan / document the next round of salmon actions – linked to their key stressors.’*

- 3.4 The Chair noted that Council had agreed that the stressors (i.e. threats / pressures) and associated baselines referred to in paragraph 3.3 above would be used as the basis for the actions and for reporting on progress annually under the fourth reporting cycle respectively, [CNL\(24\)88](#). He also indicated that the three theme areas in the proposed plans should remain the same as in the third reporting cycle, i.e. Management of Salmon Fisheries; Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat; and Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#). Finally, he reminded the Group that climate change will now underpin / inform all of NASCO’s activities, with all activities needing to reflect adaptation to climate change.
- 3.5 Discussion by the Working Group made it clear that the guidance for the third reporting cycle was often not referred to by the Parties / jurisdictions in the development of their IPs and APRs, including that the individuals completing parts of reports were often being provided only with the reporting templates and not the guidance documents. The Chair, therefore, highlighted that guidance for completing the reporting templates would need to be considered carefully given this observation. He stated that during development of the templates, the Working Group would need to make them as clear as possible so that any guidance would not need to be relied on as much. He also highlighted the need to consider how to streamline the work for the next iteration of the IP / APR Review Group when developing the templates.
- 3.6 The Working Group recognised that it may not be possible to reduce some stressors, and that some would require measures such that the stressor was not increased, rather than reduced. However, the expectation would be that any actions would be urgent and transformative and clearly significant for wild Atlantic salmon.
- 3.7 The Working Group discussed the number of actions for the fourth reporting cycle, given that the IP / APR Review Group had recommended they be limited. The Secretary noted that three actions under each theme had been put forward as a possibility by the Review Group and Council had called for a simplification of accountability through a limited number of specific outcomes – each one to be based on an action. In light of Council’s decision to request that Parties / jurisdictions each carry out a stressor analysis to inform the fourth reporting cycle, the Working Group discussed that where stressors were identified the actions associated with those stressors would need to be prioritised for inclusion in a Party’s / jurisdiction’s plan, to ensure the actions are robust and provide a tangible benefit for salmon.

The Chair suggested that the number of actions or types of actions being reported on could be limited.

- 3.8 The Working Group considered the relationship between NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy, and whether one had primacy. The Chair raised that the principal objective behind the IP / APR process was accountability towards NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and that NASCO's new Action Plan, associated with its Ten-Year Strategy, included revising current and developing new Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The Secretary added that the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines were agreed by all Parties / jurisdictions and should be being used as best practice, with any reporting cycle then allowing a process where Parties / jurisdictions can be assessed in terms of how well they are doing this to improve salmon conservation. She further explained that this process is the gold standard and NASCO now has a Strategic Goal to halt or slow the decline of salmon, which will be achieved by implementing the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines effectively. The Working Group acknowledged that this would have to be clear to the Parties / jurisdictions.
- 3.9 The Working Group discussed streamlining the reporting cycle, for example shortening the IP or equivalent document and not having annual reviews of it. The Group considered that if the IP or equivalent document was based on the top three stressors it was unlikely to change significantly in the timescale of the reporting cycle. The Chair confirmed that the new iteration of the IP / APR Review Group would not be reviewing Parties' / jurisdictions' stressor analyses.
- 3.10 The Working Group considered how to reflect actions by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions (IPRIs). The NGO Co-Chair raised that it has been a requirement for Parties / jurisdictions to describe how NGOs are consulted in developing IPs. He stated that better guidance was needed to engage with NGOs and not just to consult them if their involvement is considered of value. He also raised that NGOs would like to see Parties / jurisdictions include activities that NGOs are doing to help wild Atlantic salmon conservation. The Chair agreed that stakeholders and IPRIs need to be included in the development of IPs and APRs, or the equivalent documents.

4. Review of the Third Reporting Cycle and Consideration of the Recommendations for Changes Identified by the IP / APR Review Group

- 4.1 The Chair asked for general opinions of the third reporting cycle process from members of the Working Group who had been involved in completing and / or reviewing the IPs and APRs. One member of the Working Group who had been involved in completing IPs / APRs stated that for some Parties / jurisdictions, different people would be involved in completing the different sections of the IPs or APRs, many of whom did not have a clear understanding of the process and templates and their relationship to the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. This was partly an internal problem but was contributed to by the template and guidance format. Another member of the Working Group stated that IPs / APRs were sent to different Ministries that had differing commitments to, and which could conflict with, the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. This was discussed as being problematic as all Parties / jurisdictions had agreed to the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The Chair suggested a solution may be to change the way questions are asked.
- 4.2 One member of the Working Group raised that conducting the IP / APR process was useful to show attention was being paid to the work being done and this could then be influential. While the APR was used to provide evidence that the IP was being fulfilled, linking it more directly to actions on the ground was desirable, such as a Red / Amber / Green scoring system.

- 4.3 The Working Group discussed the differences between the IPs and APRs and the review of both. The IPs were described as detailing the actions to be taken by Parties / jurisdictions related to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, and the APRs as detailing the progress made towards achieving those actions.
- 4.4 The Working Group discussed whether feedback from the IP / APR Review Group to Parties / jurisdictions on their IPs / APRs was useful. Some members of the Working Group that had been responsible for completing IPs / APRs stated that feedback had not led to any changes. The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group raised that the Review Group did not have the expertise to advise changes. The Working Group suggested that that could be a missing part of the process, but also that issues could be due to legislation and resources and not having a clear understanding of what a SMART goal is. Other members of the Working Group stated that they found feedback was constructive and it was helpful for agencies to be aware that the IPs / APRs were being read and reviewed.
- 4.5 The level of detail required in the reporting by the Parties / jurisdictions was discussed by the Working Group. The Group suggested that less detail and more simplicity would be desirable, for example, by using check boxes and consistent measures. Another option that was discussed was the possibility of having supplementary documents that contained more detail available for stakeholders. The Working Group highlighted that the actions must show a tangible outcome that improves conditions for salmon survival, for example, if an action is to remove barriers it must be in a catchment where the action will be beneficial to salmon. However, the Working Group also discussed that actions will not always be measurable in terms of the difference they make to salmon and some actions will address other stressors indirectly. For example, while habitat is important and barriers to migration are stressors, climate change is an overriding pressure that also needs addressing, which can be addressed by removing barriers to migration; this then gives salmon access to more habitat. Such an action may not result in a direct increase in fish abundance but will have the potential to deliver a significant benefit. The Group also discussed the difficulty of attributing specific actions to climate change itself. For example, a measurable impact of climate change is increased water temperature; the action of planting trees will increase shade and lower water temperatures. The action is, therefore, mitigating an impact of climate change, but not climate change itself.
- 4.6 A presentation was given to the Group by the Chair of the IP / APR Review Group on the recommendations of the IP / APR Review Group to Council from the third reporting cycle (summarised in Annex 1 of [CNL\(23\)24](#)). He stated that the third reporting cycle had been expected to be a more stringent process than the second reporting cycle, with opportunities to demonstrate commitment to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and with resources assigned to actions. He reported on various issues of concern in the second reporting cycle, many of which were resolved in the third reporting cycle. He called particular attention to the fact that by the end of the third reporting cycle all the Parties / jurisdictions had submitted IPs, which was a considerable improvement from the second reporting cycle. He also shared the Review Group's recommendations going into the third reporting cycle, as a reminder of what had been done at that time.
- 4.7 The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group then shared feedback from the Review Group to Council on the third reporting cycle that was reported from 2019 onwards. In 2023, the Review Group noted that the third reporting cycle increased engagement across NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions and highlighted common challenges for salmon across the North Atlantic, providing a platform for sharing experiences and approaches to address these challenges. The Review Group also indicated that the development of a NASCO standardised risk assessment tool capturing the main threats to wild Atlantic salmon should be considered to inform an assessment of the highest priority threats / challenges to populate

the IPs for all of NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions. A further point from the report was that for each quantitative action a standard graph should be used, in each year of reporting, to show the annual results and associated trend over the life of each reporting cycle, together with the appropriate baseline and target. This would be useful to give a quick view of progress as the IP / APR review process of the third reporting cycle involved examining a lot of documents. The Review Group had raised that training in the early development phase of a new reporting process is very important, such as a workshop with the authors of any plans. The Review Group had also raised that a timeline for accepting IPs needed to be defined and cross-jurisdictional issues needed to be considered. The Review Group had also discussed what advice they could offer and whether it was their role to do so, and that guidance had been needed on this from Council. The Chair of the Working Group raised that there was a need to show progress through the reporting cycle; however, there did not need to be progress made every year.

- 4.8 The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group suggested consideration be given to the review of resource / effort requirements in the development of any new IP process, such as whether the review process should be an annual / biennial / triennial review process. The Secretary raised that if reporting was not done annually, a separate process would be needed to report catch data annually, a requirement under the Convention.
- 4.9 The Working Group discussed changing aspects of the reporting cycle to a process that was not annual, with the suggestion this could lead to a more considered mid-term review. It was suggested that along with more interaction with Parties / jurisdictions this could move away from a 'pass and fail' process to a more effective process to hold Parties / jurisdictions accountable to adhering to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. A member of the Group suggested that a red / amber / green system would be desirable.
- 4.10 The number and scale of actions, and the role of climate change, within the three themes of Management of Salmon Fisheries, Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat and Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics were discussed by the Working Group. The Chair noted that the stressor analysis might result in Parties / jurisdictions not having priority stressors that align with all three themes. The Secretary added that the process for reporting on the three themes could be separate to the process for reporting on stressors.
- 4.11 The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group raised that the aspiration of the fourth reporting cycle should align with the principle of NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy to slow the decline in populations of wild Atlantic salmon. The Chair of the Working Group raised that the next reporting cycle needed to be an effective process and central to that would be how material was reported, such as through a Special Session, a public-facing press release and / or an online publication such as the NASCO News, to make the reporting more transparent. He added that making the progress of Parties / jurisdictions publicly available would make it more meaningful. The Secretary stated that several Parties/ jurisdictions gave positive feedback to the letters sent to Ministers from NASCO, who should know what actions NASCO is taking but may not.
- 4.12 The Working Group discussed the challenges of planning the framework for the fourth reporting cycle while the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines were in the process of being updated. It indicated that it was useful to know that every Party / jurisdiction operated in a similar way when completing the reporting, with several individuals involved, and therefore a template would need to overcome that domestic complexity to produce something useable and with enhanced accountability. It also raised the need to link back to salmon rivers; for example, NASCO's Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas will provide the number of salmon rivers a Party / jurisdiction has. In each year, reporting could be on the number of

salmon rivers with good water quality, with barriers and / or aquaculture escapes, therefore linking parameters to wild Atlantic salmon, rather than having them as standalone actions, and demonstrating progress towards NASCO's Strategic Goal.

- 4.13 The Working Group raised that as the stressor analysis would be on a national basis, the scale and prioritisation of actions would need careful consideration, to give a bigger picture than has been required in the past. Some of the different approaches towards stressor analysis were discussed, including the use of conservation limits, stock status, genetic integrity and stressors identified by IUCN and ICES. It was discussed that there may be relatively high consistency between Parties / jurisdictions. Members raised that the stressor analysis would make it possible for a Party / jurisdiction to look at big actions that need to be taken to address a particular stressor. For example, by showing what percentage of a Party's / jurisdiction's wild Atlantic salmon stocks are affected by a certain stressor, an action could then be developed to address that percentage of rivers and in turn address the stressor at a population level.
- 4.14 The Working Group discussed whether actions related to the highest priority stressors should be limited to, for example, three per theme. For example, several pressures such as climate change and water quality may come under the same theme of habitat and yet may have different actions associated with each pressure. Careful consideration would need to be given to the option that the top three stressors could all be related to one theme such as habitat, with no actions then related to the other themes such as fisheries or aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics. The Secretary raised that having actions and reporting against the top priority stressors could be one part of the new reporting system, with questions across all three theme areas also occurring in another part of the reporting template to enable metrics to be collected on areas that may not be considered priority stressors.
- 4.15 The Working Group further discussed the complexity of having a wide-ranging stressor such as agricultural pollution that could then have a suite of actions. The Secretary reminded the Group that the new reporting cycle needed to balance simplicity, effectiveness and transparency.
- 4.16 Overall, the positive aspects of the third reporting cycle that should be considered going into the fourth reporting cycle, were: increased engagement across Parties / jurisdictions, and within Parties / jurisdictions, through use of IPs and associated reporting of progress; IPs and APRs highlighted common challenges for salmon and provided a platform to share experiences and approaches to address the challenges; use of and reference to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines to show how actions are improving conditions for salmon; and mandatory actions in key reporting areas. A member of the IP / APR Review Group highlighted that the best IPs were very simple with a limited number of clear actions. Several members of the Working Group who had been involved in their Party's / jurisdiction's IP and / or APR stated that feedback from the Review Group had been helpful in raising awareness within the relevant agencies and ministries of their Party / jurisdiction.

5. Consideration of the Basis for, and Structure of, a Fourth Reporting Cycle, including Alignment of the Reporting Process with the Action Plan agreed by the Council in 2024

- 5.1 The Chair reminded the Group that this Agenda item spoke to four of the tasks in the ToRs, namely ToRs a) to c) and ToR f) – see paragraph 3.1.
- 5.2 The Chair noted that Group members had been invited to make presentations on how the Group might address a particular element of its ToRs or enhance the reporting process for the next reporting cycle.
- 5.3 A presentation on '*EU Eel Regulation, Eel Management Plans and Progress Reporting*' was

given by Alan Walker (UK). In the presentation he reviewed periodic reporting and the evaluation of management plans across approximately 20 countries. Key recommendations included clear, realistic goals, mandatory target setting and transparent reporting mechanisms to track success. He noted the slow reporting process (every three years) compared to the faster annual reviews of salmon, which allow for quicker adjustments. The Group discussed the difficulty of linking specific actions to future eel recruitment, given the long generation time of eels (e.g. 20 years or more).

- 5.4 The Group discussed the challenge of relating actions to outcomes due to long timeframes and the need for more long-term strategies, such as five- to ten-year plans, with clear priorities and baseline assessments. The importance of measuring the reduction of risks, rather than expecting immediate results, was raised.
- 5.5 The NGO Co-Chair raised several NGO views that they wanted to relate to the Group. The NGO perspectives emphasised the need for actions to address stressors directly, with new actions prioritised over ongoing ones, and clear metrics for evaluating success. He stated that NGOs would like to see actions evaluated by the likelihood they will have positive outcomes for wild Atlantic salmon, rather than for their adherence to NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. He raised this was important as the majority of Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines are out of date and are not due to be updated by the time Parties are doing their IPs or equivalent plans for the fourth reporting cycle. He suggested that in terms of consultation and engagement, NGOs have a lot to offer in developing plans and implementing actions on the ground, with many NGOs already doing applicable work. He stated that NGOs would like to have the opportunity to be involved in both developing and implementing the plans.
- 5.6 A presentation was given by the Chair of the Working Group on reporting metrics. Examples of potential questions and answer formats were given on each of the three themes; Management of Salmon Fisheries (Fisheries), Protection and Restoration of Habitat (Habitat) and Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics (Aquaculture). Under 'Fisheries', the Chair referred to fisheries guided by a regulatory measure, raising that this is reported on elsewhere and therefore may not need to be included in IPs / APRs. He suggested using metrics could lead to an annual one-page progress report per theme, including simple infographics to present data. He emphasised that metrics would only be one element of annual reporting. This would not include reporting on actions linked to jurisdictional-specific stressors. Some of the questions could be part of the IP's established baseline, but alternatively the questions could reside in the annual progress report, which would greatly simplify the IP process.
- 5.7 Livia Goodbrand (Canada) presented Canada's approach, highlighting the importance of shared metrics for reporting. She discussed how regional priorities for salmon conservation would be established, taking into account both scientific and Indigenous perspectives. Canada's approach to stressor assessment would leverage existing assessments rather than seek to develop new tools, reflecting practical resource considerations.
- 5.8 The Group discussed improving the clarity, efficiency, and long-term effectiveness of salmon management reporting, with a focus on reducing risks, prioritising actions, and engaging stakeholders. The Group raised concerns that ranking stressors quantitatively would not show progress adequately, as it would only categorise stressors without assessing their actual impact on salmon populations. The goal should be to reduce stressors and use metrics under each stressor to track real progress. The Chair emphasised the need to examine trends over time and consider both short-term and long-term data. He proposed separating the use of metrics for reporting on Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines versus reporting on stressors, an approach that was supported by the NGO Co-Chair. The Group raised the

need to define what specific metrics would be used and how they would be evaluated, agreeing on the importance of clear, differentiated metrics. The Group agreed there is a need to have clear, measurable key performance indicators linked to specific actions and stressors. A suggestion was made to limit the number of actions to three actions per stressor and ensure they are meaningful for salmon conservation and achievable.

- 5.9 The Group suggested that when reporting on the health of a large number of rivers, categorising them into low, medium, and high risk is insufficient to capture the full picture of salmon health. The Group raised that using categories such as healthy, moderately healthy and unhealthy could be used to reflect stock status based on risk levels, with reporting then prioritising transparency over resolution, which may lead to less detailed but clearer information. The Group discussed ambiguity in terms like ‘slowing the decline’ and whether this would apply to an entire Party / jurisdiction or just specific rivers. There was a consensus that such language needs clearer definition. The Group discussed the importance of clear question wording and the involvement of experts in the reporting process. The Group stressed that the link between standard metrics and their actual benefit to salmon must be clear. It was noted that while a written strategy, if implemented, could improve salmon conditions, it might not immediately show measurable results, raising the need for new, more effective metrics.
- 5.10 There was considerable discussion about the definition and evaluation of habitat, especially in terms of ‘restored’ versus ‘potential’ habitat. The Chair suggested focusing on performance indicators that could track habitat restoration, while other members of the Group cautioned against complicating the system with too many categories. Additionally, there was debate over fisheries management, particularly around catch and release practices, and whether all fishing activities should be considered when evaluating stock health. The Group also discussed aquaculture, particularly its impact on wild salmon through issues like sea lice, as a significant concern. However, some felt that too much focus was being placed on aquaculture in the third reporting cycle compared to other challenges like habitat degradation. There was also a discussion on how to define and report on aquaculture when considering both marine and freshwater operations.
- 5.11 The Group discussed whether the stressor analysis should be the focus, with some members questioning its usefulness in guiding specific actions. There was a consensus on focusing on measurable actions for stressors, though a challenge remained in defining what constitutes significant actions. The Group emphasised that the review process should be clear and transparent, with actions linked clearly to outcomes, and proposed a focus on evaluating progress every two years. The Group discussed the importance of ensuring actions are achievable and properly resourced, with the possibility of rejecting actions that lack support or feasibility. The Group raised that a scenario could exist where the top priority stressor in a Party’s / jurisdiction’s stressor analysis cannot be addressed, in a way that makes enough of a difference to the decline in wild Atlantic salmon and agreed that this would be highlighted in the proposed documentation. The Secretary informed the Working Group that a Special Session of Council would be held in 2025 to discuss such scenarios. The Working Group raised that it had the opportunity to drive the ambition of the session and start it with the expectation that Parties / jurisdictions will carry out actions to create the biggest impacts possible.
- 5.12 The Group discussed the importance of engaging IPRIs, relevant stakeholders, including NGOs, industry and other groups deemed relevant by the Parties / jurisdictions, in the development and delivery of conservation plans. The Group acknowledged the need for a clear process for stakeholder consultation, including formal and informal methods. However, it was acknowledged that the consultation was an issue for the Parties / jurisdictions and not for the Group to prescribe.

- 5.13 The Group considered the data required to track progress, such as salmon abundance and diversity metrics. It was noted that some jurisdictions lack access to such data, and the need for clarity in reporting progress and setting targets was highlighted. The possibility of using ICES data on spawners and returns was raised, as well as ensuring that Parties / jurisdictions are aligned on what data they can provide.
- 5.14 The high-level Action Plan within ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), stipulates that the fourth reporting cycle be developed to ‘plan domestic actions and demonstrate progress’ under the themes ‘Management of Salmon Fisheries’, ‘Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat’ and ‘Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers, and Transgenics’ with all actions reflecting adaptation to climate change. To address this requirement the Group agreed on the use of ‘Performance Indicators’ (PIs), to replace Implementation Plans, which would consist mainly of metrics to be reported annually under the three themes. Included in this reporting would be the catch statistics data and information from the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas. The PIs would not be reviewed, but the information would be published annually by the Secretariat, with NASCO being able to use them to determine the assessment of adherence with / movement towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The information would also be able to be used for NASCO’s communication and outreach.
- 5.15 NASCO’s high-level Action Plan also stipulates that Parties / jurisdictions plan / document a fourth round of salmon actions linked to their key stressors. To address this requirement each Party / jurisdiction is required to carry out a stressor analysis initially, which the Group suggested is then used to detail three top stressors against which Parties / jurisdictions specify actions to address those stressors. The three highest-priority stressors and associated actions of each Party / jurisdiction would form a ‘Conservation Commitment Report’ (CCR) specific to each Party / jurisdiction. The NASCO theme area each stressor relates to would be identified. There would be a minimum of one and a maximum of three actions per stressor, all of which would need to be urgent and transformative and clearly significant for wild Atlantic salmon, with a clear and tangible outcome, also to be reported on annually alongside the PIs. The CCRs would be reviewed biennially by the Review Group, which would include an initial interview with each Party / jurisdiction to discuss its draft CCR, and the option of subsequent interviews as required to clarify any uncertainties in progress or address significant outcomes. The interviews will help ensure that there is clarity and understanding between the principle authors of the CCRs and the Review Group and enhance meaningful feedback to the Parties / jurisdictions. The CCRs will enable an understanding of the achievement of NASCO’s Strategic Goal by the Parties / jurisdictions.
- 5.16 Finally, the Group proposed that, in 2033, each Party / jurisdiction would produce a final report on the progress made in their CCRs across the fourth reporting cycle. This aims to aid Council in its understanding and discussion of the success of NASCO’s Ten-Year Strategy, specifically the achievement of its Strategic Goal, and to understand progress made towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. Each report would be an overall summary of progress and an analysis of each Party’s / jurisdiction’s progress towards the achievement of NASCO’s Strategic Goal. These individual reports would then be reviewed by the CCR Review Group to produce an overview report to Council on the success of the fourth reporting cycle in achieving NASCO’s Strategic Goal. The Review Group’s 2033 report would incorporate an overview of the Performance Indicators across the fourth reporting cycle demonstrating the movement of Parties / jurisdictions towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines; this overview would be compiled by the Secretariat. These reports would be presented to Council in a day-long Special Session where the Review Group would present its final report and each Party / jurisdiction would present its overall summary and analysis of its progress towards the

achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal / NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The Group agreed to recommend this approach, as described above, to Council (see Annex 3).

6. Review of the 'Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress', [CNL\(18\)49](#), the 'Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans', [CNL\(20\)55](#), and the templates for the preparation of IPs, [CNL\(18\)50](#), and APRs, [CNL\(18\)51](#)¹

- 6.1 The Secretary presented a review of the guidance documents for the third reporting cycle, namely the 'Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress', [CNL\(18\)49](#), and the 'Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans', [CNL\(20\)55](#). The NGO Co-Chair presented his overview of the templates for the preparation of IPs, [CNL\(18\)50](#), and APRs, [CNL\(18\)51](#).
- 6.2 The Chair asked members of the IP / APR Review Group to provide an overview of what they felt worked well or had been problematic in the third reporting cycle guidance documents. Members of the IP / APR Review Group raised that the fourth reporting cycle guidance documents should be streamlined and more focused. They stated that a lot of general information would be in the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas and therefore would not be required elsewhere.
- 6.3 The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group raised that the Review Group did not go back to Parties / jurisdictions to ask for clarity over actions in the third reporting cycle, that some Parties / jurisdictions had asked to meet for a one-to-one discussion and a Special Session had been held; however, there was no capacity to engage more. The NGO Co-Chair raised that it would be good to have the opportunity to go back to Parties / jurisdictions for clarification. The Working Group considered that direct engagement may not be feasible annually; however, consideration could be given to direct engagement with the Parties / jurisdictions every two or three years. Seeking clarification when reviewing the plans of Parties / jurisdictions at the beginning of the reporting cycle may incur more time at the start of the cycle but would work out to be a quicker process in the end. Members of the Working Group raised that answers given in the IP during the third reporting cycle were often hard to understand, suggesting that the guidance documents had not been consulted.
- 6.4 Those members of the Working Group with responsibility for preparing the third round of IPs were asked for their feedback on the guidance documents for the third reporting cycle. The process of going through over six documents in preparation including the Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and the guidance documents was deemed an excessive amount of work to provide the information in the IPs. Instructions were at times conflicting and unclear, for example, asking for a report on a single year and also for the trend across years.
- 6.5 It was recognised that the progress of quantitative actions can be more easily assessed, both against the proposed outcome and, in the fourth reporting cycle, towards the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal. However, there may be instances where qualitative actions are appropriate, as long as progress can be demonstrated. The Group discussed how to measure progress towards a qualitative action and that a change was needed to move away from a system trying to report on everything that a Party / jurisdiction is going to do, to a simple system where only three actions are going to be reported on quantitatively under each of three stressors. The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group raised that many of the actions happening in the third reporting cycle have not been focused on wild Atlantic salmon and a

¹ Please note, the discussion under this agenda item was taken before discussion under agenda item 5.

push for new actions with a wild Atlantic salmon focus is needed.

- 6.6 The Chair of the Working Group raised that the role of a future version of the IP / APR Review Group would be to shine a light on actions and increase transparency. He added that there could be two ways to show progress, such as the removal of dams which is immediate progress and a short-term metric, versus a change in population distribution that results from the dam-removal, which is then a long-term metric. He further added that in the last round of IPs, Parties / jurisdictions had identified rivers and their conservation status, and suggested this could be taken a step further to tie the stressor analysis specifically to those rivers. Members of the Working Group stated that specifying certain rivers or watersheds as a priority was something their Parties / jurisdictions were actively thinking about due to resources becoming limited.
- 6.7 Members of the Group were asked to consider which aspects of the guidance documents for the third reporting cycle were consistent with the framework / ToRs for the fourth reporting cycle and could, therefore, be carried forward into the fourth reporting cycle. The Group was also asked to consider what would be done in terms of outreach and whether or not information could easily be used. The Group suggested retaining sections under 'Fisheries', 'Habitat' and 'Aquaculture', and streamlining them with initial questions requiring a yes / no answer and if yes then further questions would need to be answered. The Group raised that much of the first section of the IP template could be streamlined, including removing the request for maps of aquaculture facilities, which were not relevant for many IPs. Changing the way questions were asked and requiring metrics could help streamline the reporting.
- 6.8 The NGO Co-Chair raised concerns that there was no guidance at all as to what would be expected from engagement or consultation with the NGOs, it was just a simple question that had appeared in the Implementation Plan. The Group discussed the use of a check box in each section to indicate whether consultation had been conducted with NGOs and Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions (IPRIs). Members of the Group flagged that the question was important for accountability and a blanket question would not show that the process of consultation had been effective. It was raised that the turnaround time for consultation with NGOs and IPRIs could be time consuming.
- 6.9 The Working Group discussed the need for clarity between Parties / jurisdictions that reported no threat to salmon in a particular theme area (e.g. Fisheries or Aquaculture) in cases where the activities did occur, versus no threat to salmon as the activity did not occur within that Party / jurisdiction. The example was given of a Party / jurisdiction with no aquaculture, in which case the information would be needed that aquaculture was not a threat / challenge because it was not present.
- 6.10 The Chair of the Working Group raised that the IP templates in their current form have strengths and weaknesses. He highlighted that going forward the Group must ensure that the questions being asked are leading to the relevant information, with pointed quantitative and yes / no questions being desirable. He also raised that if asking for a narrative in a question, the Group must ensure that there was no other way to ask the question.
- 6.11 The Group discussed the APR templates, [CNL\(18\)51](#). The Secretary reminded members that the catch data in Section 2.2 of the current APR template are required annually under the Convention and if not being reported annually through the IP / APR process data needed to be captured separately. The Chair of the IP / APR Review Group raised that the catch data would be referred to at times by the Review Group, such as if looking at management actions that might be changes to catch, to gain a picture of the fishery.
- 6.12 The Group raised that some of the APR templates were not completed as required, indicating that instructions were not being read and there was a lack of understanding of SMART

actions. This was apparent even where drop-down limited options were being provided, with the wrong options being selected. The Group suggested that it could be due to the use of tick boxes and / or the use of open questions.

- 6.13 Some of the Group's members raised concerns that it was being expected to develop new templates before Parties / jurisdictions had completed their stressor analyses. The Chair responded that the new templates would be ready for the next Annual Meeting which would give the Parties / jurisdictions a chance to see what is expected from the stressor analyses. The Group raised further concerns on the use of the term 'baseline analysis' with the view that a baseline was something to be set for each action and not 'analysed', suggesting use of alternative wording such as baseline 'assessment' or baseline 'exercise'. The need to define what such a baseline exercise would involve was raised. The Secretary suggested the Group could provide information for the Council on their understanding of what a baseline exercise would entail. The Group discussed making a recommendation to Council on how to proceed with the baseline exercise (see Annex 3).
- 6.14 Overall, the Group agreed that the fourth reporting cycle would need to improve the clarity and utility of the reporting process, simplifying templates, and ensuring that the actions taken were truly addressing the priority threats to salmon populations. The Group noted that questions with metrics had been useful. The Group suggested that incorporating guidance into the templates would have a higher probability of those completing the templates to then read the guidance, than if it was in a separate document. The Group noted that information on engagement with NGOs, other stakeholders and IPRI's was important for accountability and questions on it should be retained and improved in the templates for the fourth reporting cycle.

7. Preparation of Proposed Guidelines for the Fourth Reporting Cycle to Balance Simplicity with Effectiveness and Transparency of Reporting

- 7.1 The Chair opened the floor for discussions on the content, general format and schedule for the proposed plans to be included in the guidelines for the fourth reporting cycle.
- 7.2 The Group discussed the overarching questions and considered the use of concise text in a preamble section of the reporting documents to move away from having separate guidelines. The Group agreed that information about Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines would be integrated into the preamble.
- 7.3 The Group raised the need to clarify terminology in habitat-related questions around barriers to salmon migration, especially regarding the inclusion of culverts. The discussion also covered the need for better definitions of 'pristine' habitats and how to account for man-made barriers like dams and their mitigation. The Group also raised the need for clarity around how aquaculture-related questions regarding sea lice monitoring on wild salmon, particularly in areas near salmon farms, are addressed, with an emphasis on understanding and reporting the impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon. The Group agreed that questions about escape events and introgression should be more clearly defined and separated into two distinct questions. The Group recognised the need to address escapes from both freshwater and marine facilities.
- 7.4 The Group discussed the necessity of establish a starting point against which progress can be measured (i.e. the baseline) for stressors (like habitat degradation or aquaculture impacts) and how this should be incorporated into the CCR. The Group agreed that rather than focusing on baseline data for every stressor, efforts should focus on setting baselines for actions related to priority stressors.
- 7.5 The Chair opened the floor for discussions on the content, general format and schedule for the reporting of annual progress under the new proposed plans to be included in the

guidelines for the fourth reporting cycle. The Group suggested that rather than having two documents, with one for the Implementation Plan and one for the progress reports, a single document could be available each year to be updated. The Group further suggested that information previously entered could be greyed out and not available for editing, with the relevant annual data then added in. The Group discussed using a completely new approach in the form of a web-based template and indicated that a recommendation should be made to Council for the Secretariat to work with a developer to produce one, using the ‘consultancy’ budget (see Annex 3).

- 7.6 The Chair opened the floor for discussion of the evaluation process for the fourth reporting cycle, including the composition of any Review Group, its Terms of Reference, the proposed schedule etc. The Group considered how to review and assess the progress of the actions in a Party’s / jurisdiction’s CCR. Concerns were raised about how to deal with actions that fail to meet their targets and whether an overall pass / fail system should be implemented for the CCRs. As an alternative to the pass / fail system implemented in earlier reporting cycles, the Group proposed a number of mitigations. Firstly, that the Review Group meet with individual Parties / jurisdictions at the start of the reporting process, and, as needed biennially, when updates had been submitted, to provide important dialogue to lead to satisfactory and effective CCRs. Secondly, the Group proposed that a workshop / webinar be held early in the development process, to go through the reporting documents and schedule with the members of Parties / jurisdictions that would be responsible for completing the documents. The webinar could have a workshop format with explanation of the reporting requirements and process, including how Parties / jurisdictions should use their stressor analysis and baselines to inform their actions, with the opportunity to ask questions of the Secretariat and Review Group. A recording of the webinar would then be available for reference.
- 7.7 The Chair opened the floor for discussions to check that the proposed process and schedule aligned with the high-level Action Plan, CNL(24)71rev, agreed by Council in 2024. The Group agreed on the use of ‘Performance Indicators’ (PIs), with each Party / jurisdiction also having an individual ‘Conservation Commitments Report’ (CCR) to detail their priority stressors and associated actions. The PIs would consist mainly of metrics to be reported annually under the theme headings of ‘Management of Salmon Fisheries’, ‘Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat’ and ‘Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers, and Transgenics’. The CCRs would identify the three highest-priority stressors. If any of the top stressors from the stressor analysis are not identified in its CCR, the Party / jurisdiction must provide a justification as to why. For each stressor, the Party / jurisdiction must relate the stressor to one of the three theme areas, and then identify a minimum of one and a maximum of three actions per stressor which should give due consideration to climate change. The action(s) for each stressor would need to be urgent and transformative and clearly significant for wild Atlantic salmon, with a clear and tangible outcome, all to be reported on annually. The Review Group would meet biennially to review the CCRs, with the review process including the option of an ‘interview’ in 2028 to enable a dialogue with each Party / jurisdiction if needed for clarification of progress and significant outcomes. The PIs would not be reviewed, but the information would be published annually by the Secretariat, with NASCO being able to use them to determine the assessment of adherence with / movement towards the achievement of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The information would also be able to be used for NASCO’s communication and outreach. The CCRs will enable an understanding of the achievement of NASCO’s Strategic Goal by the Parties / jurisdictions.

8. Preparation of Proposed Content / Format for Fourth Reporting Cycle Templates

- 8.1 The Chair reminded the Group that this Agenda item addressed three of the tasks in the ToRs, namely ToRs d), e) and f) – see paragraph 3.1.
- 8.2 The Chair opened the floor for discussion on the proposed content and format of the templates for the fourth reporting cycle. The Group discussed a streamlined template for reporting on Performance Indicators alongside a refined process for addressing the stressors, i.e. the Conservation Commitment Reports. The Group considered ways in which the results of the reports and review could be shared, for example through a Special Session at NASCO's Annual Meetings. The Chair proposed a biennial one-page report could summarise progress for each Party / jurisdiction on their Performance Indicators and Conservation Commitments Report. The Group discussed the use of a scorecard that could be produced from the Performance Indicators, to be summarised for Council to demonstrate each Party's / jurisdiction's performance against NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and used by the Secretariat for communication and outreach purposes.
- 8.3 The Group agreed that the stressors should be listed with clarity on their significance to wild Atlantic salmon, and the actions must show clearly how they address these stressors. The Group further agreed that actions would need to specify the affected populations or areas (e.g. rivers) and be linked to measurable outcomes like temperature reductions or tree planting.
- 8.4 The Group discussed the importance of interim milestones for tracking progress, such as quantitative goals like the number of trees planted or staffing hires. The Group indicated these milestones should align with review schedules and be part of the CCR templates. The Group suggested there should be a measurable baseline (e.g. summer peak temperature) to gauge the impact of actions over time, with clear expectations for change and progress towards specific goals.
- 8.5 The Group agreed that a review group – the name Conservation Commitments Report Review Group was proposed – would evaluate the progress of action plans biennially, i.e. every two years. The Review Group would be consistent, with members serving for at least three years, and the Chair would be elected from within its membership. The Group discussed the importance of NGO feedback and an increased role to ensure a balanced input. The Group agreed 'Proposed Terms of Reference for the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group' (WGFR(24)12 – see Annex W). The Group discussed and agreed a proposed schedule, provided in document WGFR(24)11 – see Annex X). Reporting on Performance Indicators would begin in 2027, while Conservation Commitments Reports were being implemented. The first CCR reporting would then be in 2028. From 2028, Parties / jurisdictions would be required to report on both Performance Indicators and CCRs annually. The Review Group would meet biennially from 2028 to 2032, to review the CCRs, with Parties / jurisdictions required to be available for an interview with the Review Group to discuss their CCR, if required, for clarification of its progress. The Group developed, discussed and agreed streamlined templates for the proposed Performance Indicators and CCR reporting templates, developed as discussion documents WGFR(24)09 (see Annex Y) and WGFR(24)10 (see Annex Z) respectively. These documents will form the basis for the web-based reporting.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 The Group also discussed the Special Sessions in which progress towards the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal (through reporting on CCRs) / NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines (through reporting on PIs) would be presented and discussed.

- 9.2 The Group recognised that attendance at these Special Sessions is currently only open to delegates attending NASCO's Annual Meetings and that all attendees may address the floor during the Sessions.
- 9.3 However, the Group felt, quite strongly, that an increase in the engagement of the crucial work being done for salmon conservation by NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions and accredited Observers was required, using a format that encourages discussion on trends, highlights and challenges. To enable this, the Group suggested that Special Sessions might be opened up to attendees other than NASCO delegates, such as the media, local salmon associations and even the general public, and broadcast via webinar. It was noted that wider engagement is unable to be done under the current rules.
- 9.4 The Group also felt that the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group should have an input into the structure and format of the Special Sessions relating to delivery of feedback on the fourth reporting cycle, as noted above.

10. Report of the Meeting

- 10.1 The Group agreed the report of its meeting.

11. Close of Meeting

- 11.1 The Chair thanked participants for their hard work in developing these proposals, which form part of a process of great importance to NASCO. He then closed the meeting.

Members of the Working Group on Future Reporting

Hlynur Bárðarson	Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Iceland
Helge Dyrendal	Norwegian Environment Agency
Cathal Gallagher	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Livia Goodbrand	Fisheries and Oceans, Canada
Dan Kircheis	NOAA Federal, USA (Working Group Chair)
Michael Millane	Inland Fisheries Ireland
Rebekka Nygaard Bak	Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, Greenland
Steve Sutton	Atlantic Salmon Federation, Canada (participated in November 2024)
Alan Walker	Cefas, England
Ben Wilson	Natural Resources Wales (part-time participation)

WGFR(24)03

***Working Group on Future Reporting under
Implementation Plans and Evaluation of these Reports***

NASCO HQ, Edinburgh, UK

18-22 November, 10 & 12 December 2024, 7 January, 4 & 5 February 2025

Agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Review of the Terms of Reference
4. Review of the Third Reporting Cycle and Consideration of the Recommendations for Changes Identified by the IP / APR Review Group
5. Consideration of the Basis for, and Structure of, a Fourth Reporting Cycle, including Alignment of the Reporting Process with the Action Plan agreed by the Council in 2024
6. Review of the ‘Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of NASCO Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’, CNL(18)49, the ‘Enhanced Guidance for the Review of Implementation Plans’, CNL(20)55, and the templates for the preparation of IPs, CNL(18)50, and APRs, CNL(18)51
7. Preparation of Proposed Guidelines for the Fourth Reporting Cycle to Balance Simplicity with Effectiveness and Transparency of Reporting
8. Preparation of Proposed Content / Format for Fourth Reporting Cycle Templates
9. Any Other Business
10. Report of the Meeting
11. Close of Meeting

Recommendations to Council for WGFON's Consideration

Recommendation 1.

The high-level Action Plan within ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), stipulates that the fourth reporting cycle be developed to ‘plan domestic actions and demonstrate progress’ under the themes of ‘Management of Salmon Fisheries’, ‘Protection and Restoration of Salmon Habitat’ and ‘Management of Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics’. To address this requirement the Group agreed on the use of ‘Performance Indicators’ (PIs), to replace Implementation Plans, which would consist mainly of metrics to be reported annually under the three themes. Included in this reporting would be the catch statistics data and information from the Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas. NASCO’s high-level Action Plan also stipulates that Parties / jurisdictions plan / document a fourth round of salmon actions linked to their key stressors. To address this requirement each Party / jurisdiction is required to carry out a stressor analysis initially, which the Group suggested is then used to detail three top stressors against which Parties / jurisdictions specify actions to address those stressors. The three highest-priority stressors and associated actions of each Party / jurisdiction will form a ‘Conservation Commitments Report’ (CCR) specific to each Party / jurisdiction with urgent and transformative actions to slow the decline and demonstrate the potential for restoration, in line with NASCO’s Strategic Goal.

The Working Group recommends that:

1. Council agrees the basis of the fourth reporting cycle to be:

- **the use of metrics called ‘Performance Indicators’ (PIs), to be reported annually by each Party / jurisdiction under NASCO’s three themes, and**
- **an individual ‘Conservation Commitments Report’ developed by each Party / jurisdiction, to be reported on annually and reviewed biennially, consisting of their three top-priority (unless otherwise justified) stressors as identified in their stressor analysis and a minimum of one and maximum of three actions per stressor to address those stressors.**

Recommendation 2.

The Working Group discussed the baseline analyses discussed by Council in 2024 and agreed that setting baselines would be a necessary part of each Party’s / jurisdiction’s Conservation Commitments Report process. The Group raised concerns that having a separate baseline analysis process would hold up the development of Parties’ / jurisdictions’ Conservation Commitments Report, while the rate of salmon decline merited urgent action with minimal delay. The Group noted that, to show progress in an action, a starting point (baseline) is required against which to measure the progress. The Group suggested a baseline was not needed for each stressor, which would be a time-consuming exercise, but instead baselines should be devised for the actions that are going to be in Parties’ / jurisdictions’ Conservation Commitments Reports.

The Working Group recommends that:

- 2. Council agrees that each action proposed in the Conservation Commitments Reports requires a starting point, in order to measure its progress, rather than a baseline analysis (as agreed by Council in 2024) associated with each stressor.**

Recommendation 3.

The Group suggested that where two Word documents had been used in the third reporting cycle, one with an initial plan (IPs) and one with reported progress (APRs), a single web-based document

(template) should be developed for each Party's / jurisdiction's Performance Indicators (PI) and for each Conservation Commitments Report (CCR). In each template, sections for each relevant year would be made available to be updated, in the applicable year. However, information entered previously would be greyed out and not available for editing, with just the relevant annual data then able to be added in.

The Working Group recommends that:

- 3. Council charges the Secretariat to work with a developer to design web-based templates for the PIs and CCRs, using funds held in the 'consultancy' budget.**

Recommendation 4.

Finally, the Group proposed that the fourth reporting cycle should align with NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy², as this will provide Council with the special opportunity to understand the Strategy's success, specifically the achievement of its Strategic Goal, and to understand progress made towards the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

Therefore, in 2033, each Party / jurisdiction would produce a final report on the progress made in their Conservation Commitments Reports across the fourth reporting cycle towards the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal; i.e. where each Party / jurisdiction has been successful in slowing the decline of wild Atlantic salmon.

These individual final reports would then be reviewed by the Conservation Commitments Report Review Group, to produce a report to Council specifically on: i) the success of each of the Parties / jurisdictions in achieving their goals; and ii) the overall success of NASCO's Strategic Goal to slow the decline of wild Atlantic salmon and demonstrate that restoration is possible. Additionally the report to Council will include a critique of the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, as measured in the Performance Indicators overview (to be compiled by the Secretariat). These reports would be presented to Council in a day-long Special Session where the Review Group would present its final report and each Party / jurisdiction would present its overall summary and analysis of its progress towards the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal / NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.

The Working Group recommends that:

4. Council agrees to:

- a final report by each Party / jurisdiction, in 2033, on the success of each Party's / jurisdiction's achievement of each stated tangible outcome to support NASCO's Strategic Goal**
- a final review and summary, in 2033, of these final reports by the Conservation Commitments Report Review Group;**
- a final report, in 2033, on the progress demonstrated by the Performance Indicators across the fourth reporting cycle – to be produced by the Secretariat; and**
- an all-day Special Session at the 2033 Annual Meeting to discuss the success of NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy in achieving its Strategic Goal and advancing progress towards the achievement of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.**

² This increases the duration of the fourth reporting cycle by one year compared to the previous reporting cycles