

	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Proposed Terms of Reference for the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group</i></p>	<p>CNL(25)25</p> <p>Agenda item 6.h)</p>
---	---	--

Proposed Terms of Reference for the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group

The Group should comprise members and representatives as follows:

- one member from the Western Atlantic;
- one member from the Mid-Atlantic;
- three members from the Eastern Atlantic;
- one representative from NASCO’s accredited NGOs;
- one representative from an accredited IPRI (Indigenous Peoples’ representatives and institutions); and
- one member from the Standing Scientific Committee.

The participants in the Review Group will be appointed by Council specifically to represent NASCO and not their Party or Organization, to act as independent reviewers, seeking to provide a balance of expertise across NASCO’s key theme areas, and other relevant topic areas. To provide continuity, they should be appointed to serve for a period of at least three years. The Chair will be elected from among the members and serve for a term of three years and may be re-elected to serve a second term. The NASCO Secretariat will co-ordinate the Review Group’s work but will not serve as reviewers. The Review Group will review the Conservation Commitments Reports.

Please note: given that all meetings may have a hybrid component, the Chair is expected to attend any meeting in person.

Terms of Reference

Taking into consideration the agreement of Council to conduct a fourth reporting cycle that prioritises actions based on an objective analysis of stressors by each Party / jurisdiction, to enable a reporting cycle balancing simplicity, effectiveness and transparency and to simplify accountability through a limited number of specific outcomes and clear metrics, the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group (CCRRG) will work as follows:

I. Review of Conservation Commitments Reports

1. In April 2026, carry out a detailed and critical review of each of the Conservation Commitments Reports (CCRs) submitted by Parties / jurisdictions to evaluate the quality of the information contained and determine whether it provides a fair and equitable basis for assessing the progress that the Party / jurisdiction will make towards the achievement of NASCO’s Strategic Goal, as follows:
 - a. Are the questions in the ‘Consultation and Engagement’ section of the CCRs answered fully?
 - b. Are the top three stressors identified in the Party’s / jurisdiction’s stressor analysis used as the basis for the CCRs?
 - i. If not, are the justifications provided for the substitutions adequate?
 - c. Are NASCO’s theme areas identified for each stressor?

- d. Is the impact of each stressor on wild Atlantic salmon described clearly?
 - e. Are there no more than three actions per stressor?
 - f. Does each action have a clear and measurable tangible outcome to improve conditions for salmon survival through the removal or diminishment of the identified stressor (i.e. in line with NASCO's Strategic Goal)?
 - g. Does each action have a clear starting point (baseline) against which progress towards the outcome can be measured?
 - h. Are clear interim goals / milestones identified for each action?
 - i. Does each stressor include a quantitative baseline and tangible outcome to enable progress towards the achievement of the Strategic Goal to be measured?
2. As part of the 2026 review process:
 - a. Once the draft CCRs are received by the Review Group, each Party / jurisdiction will make a presentation (virtually) to the Review Group on the rationale for the stressors / actions included in the CCR;
 - b. The Review Group will provide confidential written feedback to each Party / jurisdiction to improve its draft CCR, with the purpose of: enabling it to achieve its stated outcome; demonstrate movement towards the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal; facilitating efficient and effective reporting throughout its lifetime;
 - c. There may be an interview between each Party / jurisdiction and RG to allow for discussion on revisions it undertook, based on written feedback;
 - d. Post-interview, the Review Group will provide feedback to each Party / jurisdiction that will be published, together with the draft CCRs that have been submitted.
 3. Provide feedback to NASCO on the draft CCRs and their reviews in a Special Session of the Council at the 2026 Annual Meeting, using a format that encourages discussion on trends, highlights and challenges. The Special Session should be open to the public / media and broadcast via webinar.
 4. In subsequent years (up to 2030), the modification of CCRs, in the event of an exceptional change in salmon management or stressor or other exceptional circumstance, would be discussed with the Review Group Chair / Secretariat to establish a process / timeline. Any new CCRs would be reviewed following bullets 1.a. to 1.i. above.

II. Biennial Review of Conservation Commitments Reports

1. Starting in April 2028, and then in 2030 and 2032, carry out a detailed and critical review of the progress made on the actions in each of the CCRs submitted by Parties / jurisdictions to ensure that Parties / jurisdictions have provided a clear account of their progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their CCRs, as follows:
 - a. Is progress reported clearly for each action in relation to the achievement of the high-level milestones, and against the relevant baseline specified in the CCR?
 - b. Is the quantitative measure of progress provided both in the reporting year and previous years?
 - c. Are any other significant developments reported under each action both in the reporting year and previous years?
 - d. Is progress reported clearly for removing or reducing the impact of the stressors?

2. As part of the biennial review process highlight at least one interesting (positive) development or challenge in the CCR related to the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal.
3. In 2028, to provide the Review Group with a clear understanding of the progress made for each CCR, where necessary, invite Parties / jurisdictions to attend an 'interview' with the Review Group both to clarify uncertainty in progress in that Party / jurisdiction's CCR and discuss significant developments. Thereafter, provide written feedback to each Party / jurisdiction on a detailed and critical review of the progress made on the actions and any information necessary to improve the reporting of progress.
4. In 2030 and 2032, carry out a detailed and critical review of the progress made on the actions in each of the CCRs submitted by Parties / jurisdictions and provide written feedback to them.
5. In 2028 / 2030 / 2032 – Review Group Chair presents the Review Group's feedback to NASCO on the review of progress against the milestones / baselines in the CCRs in a Special Session of the Council at the Annual Meetings using a format that encourages discussion on trends, highlights and challenges. The Special Session should be open to the public / media and broadcast via webinar.

III. Review of the Fourth Reporting Cycle in 2033

1. In April 2033, carry out a detailed and critical review of the success of the fourth reporting cycle, based on the final reports from each Party / jurisdiction, as measured in terms of the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal by NASCO's Parties / jurisdictions as the period covered by NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy and Action Plan comes to an end. Success will be measured by an analysis of whether each CCR had driven through the actions necessary to slow the decline of wild Atlantic salmon populations and demonstrate that restoration is possible, as follows:
 - a. Have the goals / milestones identified for each action been met?
 - b. Has the expected tangible outcome for each action been achieved?
 - i. If no, at least has clear progress against the expected tangible outcome for each action been made over the duration of the CCR?
 - c. Does the Review Group consider that the actions have been urgent and transformative?
 - d. Does the Review Group consider that the impact of each of the identified stressors in the CCR has been reduced or removed?
 - e. Is it clear that the conditions for salmon survival in {Party / jurisdiction} have improved over the duration of the CCR?
2. Provide feedback to NASCO on the success of the fourth reporting cycle against NASCO's Strategic Goal in a Special Session of the Council at the 2033 Annual Meeting using a format that encourages discussion on trends, highlights and challenges. The Special Session should be open to the public / media and broadcast via webinar.

The Review Group will report in line with the agreed schedule, i.e. 'Schedule for the Fourth Reporting Cycle (2026-2032)', CNL(25)XX.

Council reserves the right to review and revise these Terms of Reference.

Working Methods

A. Conservation Commitments Reports Review

The Review Group will assess its composition and expertise and determine whether to review the CCRs by individual CCR or by each CCR theme area. The Chair / Secretary will assign a ‘guiding reviewer’ for each CCR or CCR theme area from among the Review Group participants, including stakeholders and IPRIIs. In the review meeting, the main tasks of the guiding reviewer are to:

- develop the initial assessment of the assigned CCR or CCR theme area in advance of the meeting, based on the criteria 1.a. to 1.i. under ‘I. Review of Conservation Commitments Reports’ in the Terms of Reference;
- lead discussion of the assigned CCRs or CCR theme areas;
- when needed, develop clear guidance for the Party / jurisdiction on how to improve descriptions of stressors or actions (or other components of the CCR) in consultation with the Review Group; and
- lead discussion of that guidance.

The process for the interviews with Parties / jurisdictions will be led by the Review Group Chair.

The Review Group will work in accordance with the Terms of Reference under ‘I. Review of Conservation Commitments Reports’.

B. Reporting on Progress

The Chair / Secretary will assign a ‘guiding reviewer’ for each CCR or CCR theme area from among the Review Group participants, including stakeholders and IPRIIs. The main tasks of the guiding reviewer are to:

- develop the initial assessment of progress against the actions in the assigned CCR in advance of the review meeting, including an assessment of progress against the baselines in each of the actions in the CCR and the reporting on the progress made towards the achievement of the high-level milestones in the relevant year;
- lead discussion of progress made in the assigned CCR or CCR theme area at the review meeting;
- when needed, and in consultation with the Review Group at the review meeting, develop clear guidance for the Party / jurisdiction on how to improve any shortcomings in reporting in each case and develop written feedback to each Party / jurisdiction to explain these shortcomings and what kind of information is required to improve the reporting of progress for the CCR to enable demonstration of movement towards the achievement of NASCO’s Strategic Goal; and
- lead discussion of that guidance at the review meeting.

In 2028, the process for the interviews with Parties / jurisdictions will be led by the Review Group Chair.

The Review Group will work in accordance with the Terms of Reference under ‘II. Biennial Reporting on Conservation Commitments Reports’.

C. Review of the Fourth Reporting Cycle in 2033

The Chair / Secretary will assign a ‘guiding reviewer’ for each final report from among the Review Group participants, including stakeholders and IPRIIs. The main tasks of the guiding reviewer are to:

- develop the initial assessment of the Party's / jurisdiction's final report towards achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal to slow the decline of wild Atlantic salmon populations and demonstrate that restoration is possible, in advance of the final review meeting;
- lead discussion on their assigned final reports at the final review meeting;

The Review Group will develop its analysis and overview of the success of the fourth reporting cycle, based on the final reports from each Party / jurisdiction, as measured in terms of the achievement of NASCO's Strategic Goal by Parties / jurisdictions as the period covered by NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy and Action Plan comes to an end.

The Review Group will work in accordance with the Terms of Reference under 'III. Review of the Fourth Reporting Cycle in 2033'.

Ground Rules

- the Review Group will limit its assessments to the information presented in the CCRs and their reports on progress for the fourth reporting cycle. Links or attached reports will not be reviewed;
- to avoid the perception of bias during the CCR review, the review of individual CCRs will not involve participants from a country whose CCR is being reviewed or the NGO / IPRI participant if they have been involved in that particular CCR in any way;
- the guiding reviewers will remain anonymous in the meeting report. In the event that one or more members of the Review Group do not agree with a particular aspect or aspects of the review, then the meeting report may indicate that there are dissenting views;
- following the completion of all the initial evaluations, the Review Group will re-examine each assessment to ensure consistency;
- the Review Group recognises that the extent of the salmon stocks and the resources available to manage them varies markedly between Parties / jurisdictions. However, the Review Group bases its reviews on an assessment of the anticipated tangible outcomes and reported progress against each action by each Party / jurisdiction to ensure equality of reviews across all of the CCRs;
- the Review Group recognises that in some Parties / jurisdictions the responsibility for the conservation and management of salmon stocks may be multifaceted. Nonetheless, Parties / jurisdictions have committed to NASCO's Strategic Goal and it should, therefore, be possible for reporting authorities to summarise in the CCRs the management actions that are expected to be taken by the appropriate bodies in the coming years, regardless of who is responsible for delivery. Such issues of delivery are not, therefore, taken into account in reviewing the reports.