

	<p style="text-align: center;">Finance and Administration Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>MoU with the OSPAR Commission</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FAC(25)05</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agenda item: 6</p>
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MoU with the OSPAR Commission

Purpose

This paper provides information on work being carried out by OSPAR that may be of interest to NASCO Parties.

Decision

- no decisions are required.

Background

The operation of the [MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission](#) (5 August 2013) continues to work well. In 2019, the FAC agreed that the Secretary should continue to liaise with OSPAR on issues of mutual interest and bring relevant information to its attention.

The following issues may be of interest, with more information on each provided below:

1. OSPAR Quality Status Assessment 2023.
2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon.
3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon.
4. Extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic. and
5. Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee.

1. OSPAR Quality Status Assessment 2023

After the publication of the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2023, OSPAR has started planning for the next regional assessment. The intention of the OSPAR Contracting Parties is that there will be an 'Intermediate Assessment' in 2029, which will update the indicator assessments and some of the feeder reports that focus on cross cutting aspects of the status of the marine environment (e.g. on offshore renewables and marine geoengineering). The Biodiversity Committee will continue to develop the existing indicators and it is proposed that new indicators will be included on marine turtles and marine bird bycatch. The OSPAR Committee meetings in spring 2026 will decide on exactly which indicator assessments and feeder reports will be included in the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2029, but it is not envisaged that it will include Status Assessments, rather, that the Status Assessments will be published, as they become ready and once per year following the OSPAR Commission meeting in June.

A process to investigate further the findings in the QSR 2023, that increased discharges from the rapidly growing aquaculture sector have been reported and it is likely that medicines are included among the substances being discharged, is addressed in section 5 below.

2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon

OSPAR plans to update its Status Assessment for Atlantic salmon in 2027, so that it can be agreed by the biodiversity Committee in spring 2028. OSPAR has not yet identified a lead for this status assessment; last time the status was assessed in 2022, it was led by France.

OSPAR was grateful for the contribution of the NASCO experts in the preparation of the last Status Assessment and the OSPAR Secretariat would be interested to know whether members of NASCO would be willing to engage in a similar process when the next Status Assessment is prepared; this would likely be late 2026 / early 2027.

3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon

In 2021, the FAC was informed about the OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on furthering the protection and conservation of the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR maritime area which became effective on 24 June 2016. The recommendation reflected comments and edits provided by NASCO, although NASCO did not endorse or take a policy position on the recommendation. Under the recommendation, the Contracting Parties of the OSPAR Commission are to report on the implementation of the Recommendation by 31 December 2019 and every six years thereafter. Once the Contracting Parties to OSPAR make their reports to the OSPAR Secretariat, NASCO will receive, per the terms of the MoU, any relevant information from OSPAR.

There is no specific update on the next steps and implementation needs arising from the Status Assessment of Salmon, however, as outlined in the previous note, [FAC\(24\)07](#), the next implementation report is anticipated in 2025 and OSPAR will be issuing a call soon to all its Contracting Parties to report on their implementation on all relevant Recommendations on OSPAR Listed T&D species, including salmon. This call is planned to close in October, and at its November meeting the ‘Intersessional Correspondence Group on the implementation follow up of measures for the Protection of Species and Habitats’ (ICG-POSH) will discuss the reporting response, preliminary outcomes and plans for preparing the full implementation report.

4. Extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic

A discussion began in OSPAR in 2018 on the possibility of establishing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean. [OSPAR Decision 2021/01](#) relates to the establishment of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area. The Decision entered into force on 19 April 2022. Further information is available on the OSPAR’s [NACES MPA webpage](#).

The site is located in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of the OSPAR Maritime Area. It represents a marine area of near pristine open ocean habitat that provides an important feeding ground for many species of seabirds. Its conservation vision is ‘Maintenance and, where appropriate, restoration of seabird populations and the integrity of the various ecosystems and their processes that support those populations of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount MPA (NACES MPA).’ NASCO contributed to the analysis relating to the establishment of the MPA.

OSPAR is now seeking to work with other competent authorities through the Collective Arrangement (<https://www.ospar.org/about/international-cooperation/collective-arrangement>) to determine what management measures might be required to help the site meet its conservation objectives. The next step will be to hold an informal discussion by invitation to the Secretariats of international competent authorities in the margins of UNOC 3 in Nice.

5. Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee

An OSPAR task group on aquaculture has been established under Terms of Reference adopted at OSPAR 2024 in light of the findings of the QSR 2023. Its first meeting will be at the beginning of June. Its objectives over the period 2024-2026 are:

- to improve the co-ordination of existing OSPAR activities relating to aquaculture;
- to identify any gaps in measures and actions on aquaculture where OSPAR could add value and make proposals on additional Northeast Atlantic Environment Strategy tasks; and

- to improve the evidence base on the ecosystem services provided by aquaculture and its environmental objectives. The group will also look to assess impacts on food webs, benthic habitats, and the benefits of aquaculture in relation to other food production methods, while clarifying the various types of aquaculture involved.

There is also the work on [PARCOM Recommendation 94/6 on potentially toxic chemicals from aquaculture use](#). There is a proposal for revising or developing a new Recommendation focusing on minimising pollution from hazardous substances and nutrients, addressing veterinary medicinal products, cleaning and disinfecting agents, and considering fish feed composition, feeding practices and waste management. The proposal also included permitting regimes, monitoring requirements, and staff training. In order for greater efficiencies, there will be a merger of work on PARCOM Recommendation 94/6 with the broader aquaculture task group mentioned above.

Secretary
Edinburgh
16 May 2025