

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Council</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Report of the Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CNL(25)80</b></p>
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***Report of the Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council of the  
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization***

## **1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 In the absence of the President, the Acting President, Ruth Allin (UK), opened the meeting and chaired it. She introduced the Deputy Director for International Fisheries Negotiations and Trade of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Colin Faulkner, who welcomed delegates to the UK (Annex 1) and the Head of Aquaculture, Freshwater and Migratory Fisheries for Welsh Government, Robert Floyd, who welcomed delegates to Wales (Annex 2). The Acting President made an Opening Statement (Annex 3).
- 1.2 Written Opening Statements were submitted by Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union (EU), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (Annex 4).
- 1.3 A written Opening Statement was submitted on behalf of France (in respect of Saint Pierre and Miquelon) (Annex 5).
- 1.4 A joint written Opening Statement was submitted by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Annex 6). A written Opening Statement was submitted by the Coomhola Salmon Trust Ltd (Annex 7).
- 1.5 A written Opening Statement was submitted on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions (IPRIs) (Annex 8).
- 1.6 A list of participants at the Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council of NASCO is given in Annex 9.

## **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Council adopted its Agenda, [CNL\(25\)42](#).
- 2.2 Under this Agenda item the Acting President raised the topic of accredited observers. She noted that in 2024 Council adopted new 'Terms and Conditions for Observers at NASCO Meetings', [CNL\(24\)59](#), (T&Cs) which allow both NGOs and IPRIs to attend Council meetings as observers. She welcomed the 22 NGOs and four IPRIs represented at the Meeting.
- 2.3 The Acting President noted that the T&Cs allow each accredited observer organization either to represent themselves and to make a single intervention, of no more than two minutes, over the course of this Council Meeting, or for the Observers to work together using a spokesperson and to pool their interventions accordingly. She raised that the interventions must take place after debate by the Parties, and the Observers cannot participate in decision making.
- 2.4 The Acting President noted that the T&Cs state that the Presiding Officer should determine the format and procedure for such interventions. She raised that in Council, there would initially be two NGO Co-Chair seats at the table, with Co-Chairs signalling an NGO intervention, either to be made by a Co-Chair or by a specific NGO. She noted that there would now be a new IPRI seat at the top table, with IPRIs working together to ensure that the person at the top table is able to intervene on behalf of the IPRIs or to

bring the relevant IPRI to the table, at the appropriate time. She raised that the intention is to allow both NASCO and its Observers to benefit from observer interventions, while still enabling effective meeting management.

- 2.5 The Acting President reminded delegates that any questions or comments during Council should relate specifically to Agenda items and that there is no open question and answer session. She raised that Special Sessions are run differently and these rules do not apply to Special Sessions, where there is the opportunity for any delegate to ask questions, subject to time constraints.
- 2.6 The Acting President noted that, as agreed in 2022, Parties / NGOs were invited to submit questions on Agenda items, in advance of the Annual Meeting, to the relevant Party. The Secretariat received questions from NGOs. Five of these questions were grouped as questions to Heads of Delegation and the President informed the Meeting that she had met previously with the NGOs and indicated the most appropriate point in the Meeting for each question to be raised verbally. She also raised that some additional questions submitted for Parties were not appropriate to be raised in the Meeting and written responses would be provided and annexed to the Meeting Report (see Annex 10).
- 2.7 The Acting President noted that the practice of submitting written questions was introduced during the Covid pandemic and asked if the Council wished to continue including this procedure at its Annual Meeting.
- 2.8 The Council agreed to continue with written questions.
- 2.9 The Acting President noted that under NASCO's new T&Cs for accredited observers, IPRI's are now able to attend NASCO meetings. She raised that for 2026 onwards, therefore, NASCO should consider giving IPRI's as well as Parties and NGOs the opportunity to submit written questions in advance of the Annual Meeting and asked if Parties would be happy to include provision for Parties, NGOs and IPRI's to ask questions in advance, in future years.
- 2.10 The Council agreed it would be happy to include provision for Parties, NGOs and IPRI's to ask questions in advance, in future years.

### **3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1 The Council elected Seamus Connor (UK) as President (proposed by Norway and seconded by the EU) and Raoul Bierach (Norway) as Vice-President (proposed by the UK and seconded by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)). Both will serve for a two-year period to commence from the close of the 2025 Annual Meeting.

### **4. Financial and Administrative Issues**

#### **a) Report of the Finance and Administration Committee**

- 4.1 The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC), Seamus Connor (UK), introduced the report of the Meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee, [CNL\(25\)04](#).
- 4.2 At its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), Council had agreed a process and timeline for a full review of NASCO's Staff Fund Rules and Staff Rules, including incorporating provisions into the Staff Rule revisions to include interns, in line with many International Organizations. The FAC had met inter-sessionally in March 2025 to

finalise this work and had developed ‘Proposed Staff Handbook & Staff Rules’, FACIS(25)07, and a ‘Proposed NASCO Internship Programme’, FACIS(25)08, which it recommended for adoption by Council.

- 4.3 The FAC Chair informed Council that there were some further revisions to consider, in relation to the probation period, both in terms of its length and notice period, which had been highlighted by the law firm Gunnercooke LLP in the drawing up of the new letter of appointment for NASCO staff.
- 4.4 The FAC Chair noted that, following discussions with the President, Acting President and himself, and examining the probation period in several other RFMOs, a probation period of six months was proposed for NASCO Staff members, rather than the current 12 months. In addition, it was agreed that if that period did not cover an Annual Meeting, the Secretary could extend the probationary period for an additional period of not more than six months. The other exceptional circumstances clause would remain, where the Secretary could extend the probationary period for an additional period of not more than six months. Additionally, for the protection both of the Organization and the probationer, and in line with modern UK employment practice, a notice period of one month (both by and to the probationer) was proposed.
- 4.5 The FAC Chair stated that the first proposed change to the Staff Rules before Council was to Rule 5.4 under ‘Recruitment and Appointment’ as follows:

*‘Staff members shall be appointed subject to a probationary period of ~~one year~~ **six months. If this period does not cover an Annual Meeting, the Secretary may extend the probationary period for an additional period of not more than six months. Additionally, in exceptional circumstances the Secretary may extend the probationary period for an additional period of not more than six months.**’*

- 4.6 The FAC Chair noted that the next proposed change to the Staff Rules before Council was to Rule 14.1 under ‘Separation from Service’ as follows:

*‘A Secretariat member holding a permanent position may resign at any time upon giving in writing, three months’ notice or such lesser period as may be approved by the Council in the case of the Secretary or by the Secretary in the case of Staff members.*

***A Secretariat member on probation may resign at any time upon giving in writing, one month’s notice to the President in the case of the Secretary or to the Secretary in the case of Staff members.***

*In the event of a Secretariat member resigning without giving the required notice, the Council reserves the right to decide whether any allowances shall be paid.’*

- 4.7 The FAC Chair raised that the third proposed change to the Staff Rules before Council was to Rule 14.4 ‘Termination’ under ‘Separation from Service’ as follows:

*‘A termination within the meaning of these Staff Rules is a separation initiated by the Organization if it is required that appointments be terminated as the result of abolition of posts, reduction in staff or if termination is deemed to be in the interest of the Organization. Due regard shall be had in all cases to the efficiency, competence, integrity and length of service of the member of staff concerned.*

*Appointment of Staff members may be terminated upon prior written notice, at least three months in advance, by the Secretary when they deem this to be in the interests of the Organization. The Organization reserves the right to offer pay in lieu of termination notice.*

***Appointment of a Secretariat member on probation may be terminated upon prior written notice, one month in advance, by the President for the Secretary or the Secretary for a Staff member, when they deem this to be in the interests of the Organization. The Organization reserves the right to offer pay in lieu of termination notice.***

*For any staff whose date of appointment is on or after 9 June 2024, in the event of the termination by the Organization of a Secretariat member's service, compensation at the rate on one month's salary for each year's service (capped at one year's salary) shall be paid unless the cause of termination has been any type of misconduct.'*

- 4.8 Council agreed these revisions and to adopt the:
- 'Staff Handbook & Staff Rules' [CNL\(25\)45](#); and
  - 'NASCO Internship Programme', [CNL\(25\)46](#).
- 4.9 The FAC Chair then introduced the Report of the FAC's Annual Meeting, [CNL\(25\)04](#). He noted that there was a major substantive discussion around the Budget for 2026 in view of no Party or jurisdiction offering to host the 2026 Annual Meeting. He added that significant increases in hotel costs since the Covid pandemic and the additional costs for the Secretariat running the Annual Meeting in 2026 presented a real challenge to the discussions on what could be accepted as the budget maximum for 2026.
- 4.10 The FAC Chair informed the Council of several items that did not require decision, in particular NASCO's MoU with the OSPAR Commission given that the OSPAR Secretariat would be organizing OSPAR's next Status Assessment of Salmon in 2026 and would be interested to know whether members of NASCO would be willing to engage in the process when the next Status Assessment is prepared.
- 4.11 The FAC Chair also informed Council of the election of Rebecca Wintering (USA) as FAC Chair and Dale Marsden (Canada) as FAC Vice-Chair. He also informed Council that Iceland raised the issue of including catches of ranched salmon in its nominal catches, and had agreed it was content for the FAC to note its paper.
- 4.12 The FAC Chair asked Council to adopt the 2024 Audited Accounts, for which there was only budget surplus in 2024 to enable a 'top up' to the NASCO Working Capital Fund. He informed Council that top ups to the Contractual Obligation Fund and Recruitment Fund were unable to be made.
- 4.13 The FAC Chair noted that some Parties had indicated that they could not support the extent of increase in the 2026 Draft Budget given how much difference it made to their contributions. He stated that the Secretary had, therefore, been asked to investigate options to reduce the costs of the 2026 Annual Meeting and find additional savings in other areas of the budget. He informed Council that the Secretary had successfully found savings in the Annual Meeting costs and other areas of the budget, as detailed in the Report of the FAC, [CNL\(25\)04](#), to enable the FAC to recommend a figure for the 2026 Draft Budget of £735,330, i.e. the 2025 Budget raised by inflation.
- 4.14 On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council agreed to:

- accept the Audited Accounts for 2024;
  - adopt the Budget for 2026, [CNL\(25\)47](#); and
  - adopt the Report of the FAC, [CNL\(25\)04](#).
- 4.15 The Acting President acknowledged the work by the Secretariat to negotiate the revised costs for the 2026 Annual Meeting. She raised that there had been no offers to host the 2027 Annual Meeting and no indications that Parties would be able to host Annual Meetings further into the future. She noted that, on that basis, NASCO needed to make provision to fund future Annual Meetings from its budget, which is funded largely by Party contributions with some income from the Headquarters property and bank interest.
- 4.16 The UK raised that it recognised Parties were under tight budgetary constraints and hosting the Annual Meeting could incur huge costs, especially when it falls to NASCO and no Parties are able to host it. The UK asked if Council would support the Secretariat developing several options and providing one recommendation on different models of Annual Meeting from 2027 and onwards. The UK recommended that the focus be on the duration and size of the meeting with a view to making it cost efficient while still aiming to achieve the goals of NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy. Several Parties expressed support for this suggested path of action. Canada raised that a key item was to maintain high participation and engagement from key stakeholders.
- 4.17 Council agreed to:
- a ceiling for the 2027 Budget consisting of the 2026 Budget plus inflation;
  - task the Secretariat to review NASCO's meeting model for 2027 and to revert to Council with a proposal in advance of an inter-sessional meeting of the Council which may be scheduled before the end of 2025. This review should provide Council with a discussion document, outlining a limited number of meeting model options with a recommendation on the way forward based on an analysis of the options outlined; and
  - to task the Secretary to also prepare a Forecast Budget for 2027 and a five-year Budgeting Plan for 2026 – 2030, also to be discussed at the Council inter-sessional meeting.
- b) NASCO Calendar and Working Group Membership**
- 4.18 The Acting President noted that in 2024 Council had agreed that a calendar of inter-sessional meetings and membership of inter-sessional Working Groups would be included on the Agenda of each Annual Meeting for agreement by Council. She indicated that this would provide a greater level of certainty for Parties and the Secretariat, thereby enabling more efficient working for all concerned.
- 4.19 Council agreed the 'Membership of Working Groups agreed during the Annual Meeting', [CNL\(25\)48](#), with any outstanding names to be agreed by Parties as soon as possible.
- 4.20 Council agreed its 'Calendar of Inter-Sessional Meetings 2025 to 2026', [CNL\(25\)49](#), with Parties asked to provide specific availability information to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

## **5. Scientific, Technical, Legal and Other Information**

### **a) NASCO News 2025**

- 5.1 The Acting President noted that, in 2022, the Council had agreed that the ‘Report on the Activities of the Organization’ and the ‘Secretary’s Report’ would be merged to be a showcase for NASCO’s work. She referred Council to the ‘NASCO News 2025’, [CNL\(25\)05](#).
- 5.2 The Acting President raised that the NASCO News is intended to showcase NASCO’s work and only includes information up to the end of February of the current year. She noted that since then three NGOs (Saami Climate Council, Wye Salmon Association and SalmonCamera) and three IPRIs (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APC), Unama’ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR) and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians) had become accredited Observers to NASCO.
- 5.3 The Secretary raised that the communications experts that had produced the Communications and Outreach Strategy had recommended moving to a more frequent newsletter, which would provide more regular updates.

### **b) Scientific Advice from ICES**

#### **(i) *A new approach / presentation of the ICES Advice***

- 5.4 The Acting President noted that, as requested by Council at its 2022 Annual Meeting, the Secretary had been working with ICES to investigate a more streamlined approach / presentation of the ICES Advice
- 5.5 The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) Vice-Chair, Joanne Morgan, provided a ‘2025 Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice’, [CNL\(25\)07](#). Her presentation is available as [CNL\(25\)62](#).
- 5.6 The ACOM Vice-Chair noted that the beginnings of streamlined advice are already available, and there remains a decision to be made by the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) on the appropriate metrics. She raised that making decisions on the whole Atlantic would help with streamlining regional advice sheets. She also raised that there was a significant difference between the streamlined advice being proposed and the current format, which had to be considered carefully. In addition, ICES had suffered a cyber-attack which had taken several months to recover from.
- 5.7 In response to the ACOM presentation, the UK presented, on behalf of all NASCO Parties, a high-level direction to the NASCO Secretariat on how to progress the streamlining of the ICES advice for 2026. The presentation is available as [CNL\(25\)63](#).
- 5.8 Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland) raised that, while it had been concerned that no progress had been made on streamlining the advice previously, it was very encouraged by the presentation from the ACOM Vice-Chair on what has been done. It also supported the suggestions presented by the UK and was expecting the regional advice for 2026 to be in a streamlined advice sheet. Iceland raised that it also hoped for a different and improved ICES format.
- 5.9 The Acting President noted that it was apparent from the Parties that they wanted to receive streamlined advice, and from the ACOM Vice-Chair that it was possible, with a proviso that it may be a developmental process.
- 5.10 Council agreed:



- that the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) be asked to add new text to the request for scientific advice from ICES to include an overview of the status of salmon in the North Atlantic as a whole in the section on Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic area in 2026;
- that the SSC be directed to request the advice on salmon in the three regional areas is provided in 2026 in the ‘simplified fisheries advice’ format as presented in [CNL\(25\)62](#) by the ICES ACOM Vice-Chair; and
- to ask the Secretary to work with ICES, including in its advice format sub-group, to enable this to happen.

**(ii) *Scientific Advice from ICES***

- 5.11 The Acting President reminded delegates that the ICES advice for North Atlantic salmon stocks was published on 9 May 2025, [CNL\(25\)06](#), and would be presented alongside advice relating to item 7.a) ‘New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management’.
- 5.12 The Chair of the ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS), Alan Walker (UK), presented the advice. His presentation is available as document [CNL\(25\)61](#). He drew attention to the record or near record low returns of 1SW and MSW salmon in the majority of Parties / jurisdictions in 2023 or 2024.
- 5.13 The NGOs raised concerns over the statistics reported by the Chair of the WGNAS, which showed some of the lowest returns on record, and asked him what additional types of data would be required to see a response at the ICES level. The Chair of the WGNAS responded that the data presented are appropriate for the spatial scales considered in the advice, but that a high number of changes at a local level would be required to see the aggregated impact at the high level used by ICES.
- 5.14 The IPRIs asked for clarification on whether it would be possible to estimate post-release mortality in catch and release, given the increase in it, and also asked what constituted ‘unreported catch’. The Chair of the WGNAS responded that most Parties already estimated mortality in catch and release, and that it would be possible for ICES to reflect this in their statistics. He added that ‘unreported catch’ was the estimate given by each Party of the number of fish caught but not reported, with different methods being used across Parties.

**c) *Report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board***

- 5.15 The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board) met on 2 and 5 June. The report of the Meeting of the Board, [CNL\(25\)08](#), was introduced by its Acting Chair, Peder Fiske (Norway). He noted the origin of the Board and its Scientific Advisory Group.
- 5.16 The main topics for the Board’s Annual Meeting were the consideration of a basin-wide marine growth study and the revision of the Terms of Reference of the Board and SAG, enabling IPRIs to take part in both the Board and SAG meetings. For the marine growth study, a Steering Committee has been set up to co-ordinate the project and to seek funding opportunities.
- 5.17 On the recommendation of the Board, the Council:
- agreed the Report of the Meeting of the Board, [CNL\(25\)08](#); and

- adopted the ‘Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group’, [ICR\(25\)12](#).

**d) Report of the Standing Scientific Committee**

- 5.18 The Acting President informed the Council that Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention require NASCO to take into account the best scientific evidence and establish working arrangements with ICES. During the Annual Meeting, the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC), which assists the Council and Commissions in formulating their questions to ICES, met to develop a draft request for scientific advice from ICES for consideration by the Commissions and the Council.
- 5.19 In response to comments in 2024 on the SSC’s business and working methods, the Acting Co-ordinator of the SSC, Tim Sheehan (USA) explained the process that the SSC follows, noting differences this year because Council had given several instructions directly to the Committee, some of which were charges for text to include and others were for the SSC’s consideration.
- 5.20 He noted that the charges related specifically to including a request for a stock overview for North Atlantic salmon, presenting the ICES advice for the three regions in the ICES standard advice template and including a request for a data call on bycatch of salmon. The Committee was also asked to consider, inter-sessionally, a broader discussion of the advice needed from ICES to enable delivery of NASCO’s Ten-Year Strategy.
- 5.21 Council agreed the ‘Request for Scientific Advice from ICES’, [CNL\(25\)09rev](#).

**e) Report of the Stocking Guidelines Working Group**

- 5.22 The Acting President noted that, in 2024, Council had agreed ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), which contained a high-level Action Plan. She further noted that within this, Council agreed (see [CNL\(24\)88rev](#)) that the Stocking Guidelines Working Group would reconvene to work on updating the 2004 Stock Rebuilding Programme Guidelines and consider guidelines related to gene banking. To enable this, she noted that ‘Terms of Reference for the Stocking Guidelines Working Group’, [CNL\(24\)68](#), had been agreed.
- 5.23 The Acting President advised Council that the Stocking Guidelines Working Group met inter-sessionally, in late 2024 and early 2025, to draft the two documents ‘Draft Guidelines on the Use of Stock Rebuilding Programmes in the Context of the Precautionary Management of Salmon Stocks’ (Annex 3 of [CNL\(25\)11](#)), and ‘Draft Guidelines for Gene Banking for Wild Atlantic Salmon’ (Annex 4 of [CNL\(25\)11](#)).
- 5.24 The Chair of the Working Group, Stephen Gephard (USA), presented the ‘Draft Guidelines on the Use of Stock Rebuilding Programmes in the Context of the Precautionary Management of Salmon Stocks’ (Annex 3 of [CNL\(25\)11](#)). The UK welcomed the Guidelines and requested some minor amendments as follows:
- to ensure more consistent terminology to avoid confusion, refer to ‘rivers’ rather than ‘streams’ throughout the Guidelines; and
  - include reference to ‘severely depleted’ populations as an additional bullet in the section 2.II.C ‘Nature of Stock Decline’ on page 14 of the Guidelines document.
- 5.25 The NGO Co-Chair asked if the Working Group had considered the possibility that the precautionary principle could lead to paralysis problems in making decisions related to stock rebuilding programmes. The Chair of the Working Group responded that while it had not been discussed in that regard, the recurring theme of the Guidelines was to start



early and not wait for stocks to crash.

5.26 The NGO Co-Chair further asked if any additional guidance had been considered that had not been incorporated into the Guidelines. The Chair of the Working Group responded he did not feel that to be the case, that stock decline is very complicated and the Guidelines were not intended to be prescriptive.

5.27 Canada suggested some additional amendments to text in section 3.II.B ‘Stocking’ on page 19, from:

*‘NASCO considers that where integrity (i.e. evolutionary and ecological naturalness) of the wild stock is a management priority, stocking should not be considered as a remediation measure. **However, consideration may be given to the need for interim stocking of hatchery products as an emergency stock protection measure. Stocking may be used to circumvent bottlenecks in production while other actions are taken to address the cause of the stock decline.** Further guidance is provided in NASCO’s ‘Guidelines for Stocking Atlantic Salmon’, CNL(24)61.’*

to

*‘NASCO considers that where integrity (i.e. evolutionary and ecological naturalness) of the wild stock is a management priority, stocking should not be considered as a remediation measure. **Despite the risks associated with stocking, there are some limited situations where stocking may be beneficial for wild salmon. Stocking may be beneficial where the wild Atlantic salmon population has been extirpated or is at immediate risk of extirpation.** Further guidance is provided in NASCO’s ‘Guidelines for Stocking Atlantic Salmon’, CNL(24)61.’*

5.28 The Chair informed Council that he had consulted with the other members of the Stocking Guidelines Working Group to incorporate the text amendments from Canada and the UK.

5.29 Norway asked for clarification on the meaning of ‘interim’ in the context of the Guidelines and expressed concern that stocking could be seen as an easy option rather than finding a better solution. The Chair responded that the Guidelines contained important qualification in its text that stated that ‘stocking should not be considered as a remediation measure’ and should be considered a last resort.

5.30 The United States made the following statement:

*‘The U.S. will not oppose the adoption of the revised Stock Rebuilding Programme Guidelines or Gene Banking Guidelines. While we do not support the multiple references to climate change, we also acknowledge that these documents are technical in nature and ultimately are only guidelines, and therefore not legally binding on any Party.’*

5.31 The Council agreed the revisions and adopted the ‘Guidelines on the Use of Stock Rebuilding Programmes in the Context of the Precautionary Management of Salmon Stocks’, [CNL\(25\)50](#).

5.32 The Chair of the Working Group presented the ‘Draft Guidelines for Gene Banking for Wild Atlantic Salmon’ (Annex 4 of [CNL\(25\)11](#)). The UK welcomed the Guidelines and requested a minor amendment as follows:

- the addition of text to the last sentence of section 1. ‘Introduction’ to modify

‘NASCO recommends that Parties / jurisdictions establish frozen gene banks as soon as possible...’ to ‘NASCO recommends that Parties / jurisdictions consider establishing frozen gene banks as soon as possible...’.

- 5.33 Council agreed the revisions and adopted ‘Guidelines for Gene Banking for Wild Atlantic Salmon’, [CNL\(25\)51](#).

**f) The Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas**

- 5.34 The Acting President noted that in 2022 the Council agreed to develop a Wild Atlantic Salmon Atlas (WASA), [CNL\(22\)53rev](#) and the Atlas development was completed prior to the 2024 Annual Meeting. She further noted that in 2024, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), Council had agreed to finalise the WASA, and that that Parties would populate the WASA to give a global picture of the status of salmon, using the agreed WASA data metrics, by December 2024.
- 5.35 The Acting President stated that all Parties and jurisdictions had provided data for inclusion in the Atlas, which had been used by the Secretariat, in conjunction with a GIS expert, to complete the build of the Atlas by April 2025. She noted that Parties / jurisdictions were given the opportunity to review the Atlas by the end of April 2025.
- 5.36 The Acting President raised that access details for the Atlas would be shared with all delegates by email following the Agenda item, as an official launch at the Annual Meeting. She also informed delegates that the Steering Committee members Helge Dyrendal (Norway), Stephen Gephard (USA), Nora Hanson (UK – Scotland) and Sarah McLean (EU – Ireland) and Secretariat staff would be available for any informal questions at the coffee break. She invited all delegates to try out the Atlas and approach the members of the Steering Committee with any comments or questions.
- 5.37 The Acting President raised that the translation of the Atlas in the official languages of each of the NASCO Parties was a recommendation of the Rivers Database Working Group, [CNL\(22\)12](#), and agreed by Council, [CNL\(22\)53rev](#). She further raised that making the Atlas available in each of the NASCO Parties’ ‘official’ languages would make it more accessible. Several Parties raised that they would provide translations of text should they wish to have that text in the Atlas. The NGOs offered to help with translation into some languages.
- 5.38 Council agreed that, if there was sufficient budget in 2025, the Secretariat should effect a translation of the Atlas to French using automated translation where possible.

**g) Final Report on the Review of the Effect of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations**

- 5.39 The Acting President reminded Council that, at its 2021 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(21\)62](#), NASCO agreed to fund a study to provide the latest scientific knowledge on the impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon. She noted that a detailed proposal to enable this work to be conducted was provided to Council in 2022, [CNL\(22\)07](#). She further noted that updates on the work were provided in 2023 and 2024 and expressed gratitude to the EU for part-funding this project.
- 5.40 The Acting President stated that the work is now complete and will be published as two papers in peer-reviewed journals. She noted that a paper entitled ‘Does exposure to sea lice from aquaculture have a population-reducing effect on wild Atlantic salmon? A systematic review’ will be submitted to the journal ‘Fish and Fisheries’, in summer 2025. She further noted that a second paper entitled ‘Genetic introgression of farmed Atlantic salmon in wild salmon populations throughout its native range’ has been

prepared and will be submitted to the journal ‘Nature Communications’, in summer 2025. She also raised that a policy brief on the management implications of the key findings of the State of Knowledge studies on the ‘Effect of Aquaculture on Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations’, [CNL\(25\)18](#), had been provided by the Expert Groups that performed the studies.

- 5.41 The UK asked how the papers would be used aside from being published.
- 5.42 The Secretary raised that it was important to note that the papers submitted for publication to peer-reviewed journals and referred to by the Acting President were not NASCO papers. Rather NASCO had commissioned the research by expert groups following its Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture and provided some of the funding to produce the papers. She further noted that the Groups working on the papers had had free rein, with no guidance or input from NASCO.
- 5.43 The NGO Co-Chair asked why this Agenda item had no decision associated with it, when the Policy Brief raised significant points on introgression as the most serious threat to the viability of wild Atlantic Salmon.
- 5.44 The Acting President noted that NASCO wanted to have independent scientists produce the work to avoid perceptions of bias. The Working Group that would review the relevant Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines associated with aquaculture would be undertaking its work after the papers had been published and could, therefore, consider how to use and respond to them once they had been published.
- 5.45 The IPRI noted that she was looking forward to the papers being published and highlighted that there was a need to incorporate Indigenous Peoples’ views into such work.

## **6. NASCO’s High-Level Action Plan as Contained in ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’**

### **a) Update from The Working Group on the Future of NASCO**

- 6.1 The Acting President reminded Council that, in 2023, following various recommendations from its third performance review, Council agreed to establish a Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON) to develop a strategy and action plan for the Organization, informed by the many recommendations for improvement received by NASCO, in recent years. She further reminded Council that the WGFON met inter-sessionally in 2023 and in 2024, and at the 2024 Annual Meeting Council adopted the document ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), which included both a Strategy and a high level Action Plan.
- 6.2 The Acting President raised that at the 2024 Annual Meeting the Council noted that the WGFON had not completed its work and it was reconvened to address some recommendations from the Draft Action Plan that were still to be resolved. She noted that the WGFON met in March 2025 and also worked by correspondence to complete four tasks:
  - develop a proposal for updating NASCO’s Action Plan, on an annual basis;
  - make recommendations on how to tackle 19 recommendations that had not been addressed within either the 2024 Action Plan, or NASCO’s wider work;
  - develop a position paper on changing the NASCO Convention; and
  - further consider the action for ‘Parties to share baseline analysis to inform progress

on stressors.’

- 6.3 The Acting President presented an overview of NASCO’s five Objectives and high-level Action Plan from its Ten-Year Strategy. She proposed the Action Plan be updated after each Annual Meeting by the Secretariat to reflect the discussion and decision that had taken place. This could include updating the status of actions and / or adding any new action(s) agreed in Council. The updated Action Plan would be published as a standalone document that included details of the updates made in that year, to provide a clear audit trail on progress. She recommended that, to improve accessibility and impact, the Secretariat should work with a web developer to design a web-based platform to highlight progress made in the implementation of NASCO’s high-level Action Plan.
- 6.4 Council agreed to request that the Secretariat:
- create an updated high-level Action Plan, immediately after each Annual Meeting, showing the status of the high-level actions in the Action Plan, e.g. ‘2025 / 2026 High-Level Action Plan’;
  - create an accompanying Word document each year to describe the changes to the high-level Action Plan from the previous year, immediately following the Annual Meeting; and
  - each year, combine this information into a Council paper, separate from the ‘Ten Year Strategy’, that serves as the record of Council’s decisions.
- 6.5 The UK and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) both raised concerns on the proposal to work with a developer to design a web-based platform to highlight progress made in the implementation of NASCO’s high-level Action Plan, and noted that it required further discussion and consideration of the budget implications.
- 6.6 Council agreed to commission the Secretariat to work with a web developer to make the Action Plan more accessible if this is possible within budget, however, the PI and CR templates (see paragraph 6.84) should take priority.
- 6.7 The Acting President raised another piece of work that Council commissioned in 2024, to request that the Secretary work with ICES to develop a request to ensure that ICES databases and web-based applications, both present and future, accommodate salmon, as they do for other assessed stocks, and to request that Atlantic salmon be placed on the ICES bycatch list, to improve understanding of this matter, [CNL\(25\)15](#). She noted that the Group ICES WKFIBRE (Workshop on Fish Species Bycatch Relevance) met in 2024 / 25 and agreed not to add salmon to the ICES bycatch list, following which the Secretary initiated discussions between ACOM leadership in ICES and NASCO. ACOM decided on 28 April 2025 to add both Atlantic salmon and European eel to the list of fish species of bycatch relevance in all ecoregions. The Acting President raised that NASCO will need to include text in the ICES advice request for 2026 to enable a bycatch data call for salmon and for data from Canada and the United States to be included.
- 6.8 Council agreed to ask the SSC to include a new bullet in the request for scientific advice from ICES for 2026 to enable a bycatch data call for salmon and for data from Canada and the United States to be included.
- 6.9 Finally, the Acting President reminded Council that, in 2024, it had agreed, after discussing what constitutes a baseline analysis, that Parties / jurisdictions each carry

out such an analysis after the 2025 Annual Meeting and provide a paper to NASCO by 30 April 2026.

- 6.10 She noted that the Special Session on stressor analyses had demonstrated that these analyses had delivered baselines and several Parties agreed. Council, therefore, agreed that separate baseline analyses would not be required in 2026.
- 6.11 However, there was a general consensus that a review of progress against the baselines for each stressor at the end of the fourth reporting cycle would provide the opportunity to assess any change in the stressor at that time and to inform future action.
- 6.12 Council agreed that Parties / jurisdictions should run their stressor analyses again at the end of the fourth reporting cycle, i.e. in 2033.

**b) Decisions on the ‘Draft of an Action Plan for NASCO’, CNL(24)14**

- 6.13 The Acting President noted that this Agenda item continued the consideration of the 19 recommendations that remained to be resolved following the 2024 Annual Meeting. A sub-group of the WGFON met in October 2024 and produced a list of recommendations from the ‘Draft of an Action Plan’, [CNL\(24\)14](#), for consideration by the WGFON at its Meeting in March 2025. The WGFON considered these and had recommended them to Council.
- 6.14 The Acting President noted that there were two main sets of recommendations: the first six related to actions by NASCO bodies, i.e. Council, the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) and the three regional Commissions; and the second related to proposed additions for the revision of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines (RAGs).

***Actions by NASCO Bodies***

- 6.15 The Acting President noted that the recommendations relating to NASCO Bodies were the first six actions of Annex 2 of the ‘Proposed Decisions on the ‘Draft of an Action Plan for NASCO’’, [CNL\(25\)13](#).
- 6.16 Council agreed:
- to consider recommendations EPR1, EPR4, EPR5, EPR26, EPR46 and IP11 at the 2025 Annual Meeting for decision;
  - that recommendations EPR1, EPR4, EPR5, EPR26 and IP11 not be included in the high-level Action Plan but be agreed by Council and recorded in the 2025 Annual Meeting Report, as follows, to request the SSC to:
    - consider addressing recommendations EPR1 and EPR5 in the 2025 Request to ICES for Scientific Advice;
    - consider addressing recommendation EPR4 in the 2025 Request to ICES for Scientific Advice, ensuring that issues like climate change impacts on Conservation Limits would be incorporated in the request text;
    - address those recommendations in the 2025 Request to ICES for Scientific Advice; and
    - consider, inter-sessionally, a broader discussion of the advice needed from ICES to enable delivery of NASCO’s Ten-Year Strategy.
- 6.17 Council also agreed:

- that recommendation EPR26 is outside NASCO's remit and no action will, therefore, be taken; and
  - to propose that the Commissions consider whether there is a benefit to the provision of information to the Commissions on co-operative approaches to the management of salmon catchments that are shared with other jurisdictions (recommendation IP11).
- 6.18 The Acting President suggested that the additional action, on the convening of a Ministerial meeting (EPR46) be discussed as part of the outreach and communications strategy.

***Proposed additions for the revision of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines***

- 6.19 The Acting President noted that the thirteen actions in the second set of actions were those shown in pink underlined text in Annex 3 of the 'Proposed Decisions on the 'Draft of an Action Plan for NASCO', [CNL\(25\)13](#).
- 6.20 The Acting President reminded Council that at the 2024 Annual Meeting it was agreed that recommendations relating specifically to Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines should be considered further by the relevant Working Group. She raised that as the remaining 13 recommendations fall into this category they should also be considered by the relevant Working Group, as listed alongside other recommendations to be considered by each Working Group, in Annex 3 of paper [CNL\(25\)13](#). She also noted that while these recommendations would be for the consideration of the Working Groups carrying out the revisions of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, this does not mean that they would be ultimately incorporated in revision, but rather that they would be given due consideration.
- 6.21 Council agreed that:
- recommendations TBSS2(1), TBSS2(3) and TBSS2(4) be added to the Annex 1 bullet of [CNL\(24\)71rev](#) relating to the incorporation of climate change as a key element of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines (RAGs);
  - the Terms of Reference to each Working Group revising NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines should be clear that the various recommendations addressing NASCO's key themes areas should be considered as possible examples of best practice that could be considered for incorporation into the revisions rather than instructions to carry out the specific tasks themselves;
  - recommendations EPR8, EPR15 and EPR16 should be added to the 'Recommendation' column of the table in Annex 1 of [CNL\(24\)71rev](#) under the 'Habitat' RAGs, to join the recommendation T3 already in the table;
  - recommendations EPR11, EPR18, EPR21, EPR22, T8 and T9 should be added to the 'Recommendation' column of the table in Annex 1 of [CNL\(24\)71rev](#) under the 'Aquaculture and disease' RAGs, to join the recommendations EPR19, EPR20 and EPR28 already in the table;
  - recommendation EPR25 should be added to the 'Recommendation' column of the table in Annex 1 of [CNL\(24\)71rev](#) under the 'Management of salmon fisheries in the light of rapid change' RAGs, to join the recommendation EPR14 already in the table; and



- all 13 recommendations, i.e. TBSS2(1), TBSS2(3), TBSS2(4), EPR8, EPR11, EPR15, EPR16, EPR18, EPR21, EPR22, EPR25, T8 and T9, should be included as part of any update to the high-level Action Plan following the 2025 Annual Meeting.
- c) **Decisions on a Position Paper on Changing the NASCO Convention**
- 6.22 The Acting President reminded delegates that one of the unresolved recommendations (EPR42) related to developing a position paper on changing the NASCO Convention. She said that this work included developing a position paper on changing the NASCO Convention – **in response to recommendations from NASCO’s third performance review**, which had been discussed throughout the strategy development process, but not recorded.
- 6.23 She noted that the proposed position paper, [CNL\(25\)14](#), sets out the four recommendations from NASCO’s third performance review that relate specifically to Convention change. It then explores the processes for amending the Convention, before concluding that, in relation to the recommendations under consideration, it would be more constructive to focus efforts on delivering NASCO’s Strategy and Action Plan, than to invest time and resource into Convention change, as set out in the ‘decision’ on page 4.
- 6.24 The paper makes it clear that Convention change still remains an option in relation to other matters. The final paragraph reads ‘Should the need to amend the NASCO Convention arise in the future, amendments may be proposed and considered for adoption and ratification or approval in accordance with Article 19 of the Convention’.
- 6.25 Council agreed to:
- adopt ‘NASCO’s Position on Convention Change’, [CNL\(25\)52](#); and
  - instruct the Secretary to ensure that this decision and its rationale be communicated to NASCO stakeholders.
- d) **Decisions on the Update and Consolidation of NASCO’s Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines**
- 6.26 The Acting President noted that, as part of the Action Plan adopted in 2024, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), Council had agreed:
- *‘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.’*
- 6.27 The Acting President also reminded Council that the high-level Action Plan contained within the Ten-Year Strategy noted that these actions were for delivery by Theme-based / Expert Working Groups. Draft generic Terms of Reference (ToRs) for these Groups, [CNL\(25\)19](#), were considered by Council.
- 6.28 The United States noted that the ToRs state that each Working Group must consider the

recommendations from past performance reviews and Theme-based Special Sessions and noted that that does include a Special Session on climate change. However, since each Working Group is only being asked to consider those recommendations in their work and does not say that any Party must do anything in particular at this time, it could support the Terms of Reference as written.

- 6.29 The United States also noted that the ToRs seemed to address only the review of NASCO's Guidelines and questioned whether the Working Groups' scope should be expanded to cover the review of all of NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines.
- 6.30 Council agreed that the ToRs should address only the update of the Guidelines listed within and agreed that the Terms of Reference should be for the Working Groups for the Revision of NASCO's Guidelines.
- 6.31 The UK sought a common understanding of how information discussed in such Working Groups could be shared between members of the Groups and members of their delegations. Various members of the Council felt that as long as the work of the Group was ongoing, that discussion on the work of the Group and sharing of draft text could take place in parallel, to feed into the discussion by the Group. However, once the document was adopted by the Group it would be considered closed for further comment.
- 6.32 Council felt it was unnecessary to reflect this common understanding in the ToRs for the Working Group.
- 6.33 The Acting President then raised the seven topics that the Working Group on Future Reporting (WGFR) had presented in its Report to Council, [CNL\(25\)22](#), for consideration by the Working Groups for the Revision of NASCO's Guidelines.
- 6.34 Council considered that six of the topics should be incorporated into the ToRs for consideration by the Working Groups, but that the first topic, on the definition of wild Atlantic salmon, was not appropriate for the Working Groups' consideration.
- 6.35 Council asked the Secretariat to incorporate the WGFR's second to seventh topics into the ToRs for consideration by the Working Groups.
- 6.36 Council agreed to adopt the 'Generic Terms of Reference for the Working Groups for the Revision of NASCO's Guidelines', [CNL\(25\)53](#).
- 6.37 With respect to the consideration of perspectives on the definition of 'wild Atlantic salmon', the WGFR's first item on its list, Iceland raised the fact that NASCO seemed to be inconsistent in its definitions.
- 6.38 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested that a way forward could be to look at the definitions of salmon already agreed within NASCO's various Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines, as proposed earlier by Iceland. These could be compiled by the Secretariat and shared and could even be used by the new Working Groups to review NASCO's Guidelines to ensure consistency of language going forward.
- 6.39 Iceland proposed the following text as an agreement for Council to make on this matter:  
*'Council agreed to commission the Secretariat to compile a list of any definition on salmon to be found in adopted Council Resolutions, Agreements, and Guidelines. This paper shall, at the latest, be tabled at the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting.'*
- 6.40 Council agreed to commission the Secretariat to compile a list of any definition of

salmon to be found in NASCO's Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines. The resulting paper shall, at the latest, be tabled at the Forty-Third Annual Meeting.

- 6.41 The Acting President reminded Council that, in the margins of the 2024 Annual Meeting, the Secretary had been asked to explore with ICES the kind of support that ICES might be able to provide to NASCO in the revision / update of its Resolutions, Agreements and Guidelines and has provided a proposal from ICES, see [CNL\(25\)15](#).
- 6.42 Given the various budgetary constraints, and the level of expertise available with the Parties / jurisdictions, Council agreed that ICES would not be approached for assistance in supporting the NASCO process.
- 6.43 There was then a discussion on whether the two high-impact papers to be published on the impacts of salmon farming on wild salmon should be included in the considerations for the Working Group to revise NASCO's aquaculture guidelines and Council agreed that they should not.
- 6.44 Following some questions raised by the NGOs, the Acting President reminded NASCO's accredited Observers that they could submit papers on areas of concern for consideration by the Working Groups for the Revision of NASCO's Guidelines.
- 6.45 Finally, the Acting President noted that the Standing Scientific Committee had been asked to consider a broader discussion of the advice needed from ICES to enable delivery of NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy.

**e) Decisions on a Communications and Outreach Strategy for NASCO**

- 6.46 The Acting President reminded Council that at its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), it agreed to adopt 'The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy', [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), incorporating NASCO's high-level actions. The Acting President further noted that Council recognised that communication is central to delivering NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy and included in the high-level actions was a request that the Secretary engage with an appropriate consultant to 'develop a communications and outreach strategy (e.g. running symposia, public & political engagement, industry engagement, certification agencies, improvement to website, etc.)'.
- 6.47 The Acting President informed Council that the Secretariat had worked with a consultancy in the second half of 2024, which provided an outreach and communications strategy, summarised in the paper [CNL\(25\)20](#), with a prioritised list of tasks and timelines for implementing the strategy.
- 6.48 The Acting President reminded Council that consideration of EPR46 from NASCO's third performance review regarding a Ministerial meeting had originally been under Agenda Item 6.b) and had been moved to be considered alongside the NASCO Outreach and Communication Strategy (the strategy).
- 6.49 The Acting President raised that this Agenda item contained several aspects that involved budget implications and therefore discussion and decisions should consider that there may be limitations. She then opened the floor for comments and questions on the strategy and proposed implementation steps / recommendations.
- 6.50 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) raised that communication and outreach was an important part of NASCO's Ten-Year Strategy. It further raised that it could agree to the strategy, and determining next steps and priority based on a limited budget. It also noted that a few stakeholders present at the Annual Meeting had good experience of outreach and could help NASCO with it, going forward.

- 6.51 The UK expressed support for Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)’s comment and noted that the strategy was comprehensive and had some good points for implementation. The UK raised the importance of upskilling the Secretariat to implement the outreach strategy and reduce future reliance on consultants. It further noted that it believed delivering the strategy was a big task for NASCO to deliver on its own and welcomed the suggestion to consider how others could help with this.
- 6.52 Norway also expressed support for the approaches discussed, if there could be flexibility in the budget required and resources were used efficiently. It also raised that it considered it important to look into the possibility of a Ministerial meeting and offered to work with the Secretariat to investigate how this could be done in the future.
- 6.53 The remaining Parties expressed wide support for the approaches proposed. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested NASCO create a LinkedIn profile, which many RFMOs had, to share its knowledge about salmon widely. It raised that the Secretariat should be able to choose how to implement the strategy, and that if money was available in the budget, the Parties could indicate the parts of the strategy to prioritise and allow the Secretary to select how to take them forward.
- 6.54 The NGO Co-Chair raised that the Atlantic Salmon Trust communications and outreach staff would be very happy to work with the Secretariat. He also raised the issue of the International Wild Salmon Day on 1 June, and asked NASCO to consider endorsing it by sharing material on its communication channels and social media.
- 6.55 The UK thanked the NGO Co-Chair for offering help to the Secretariat with its outreach and communications and expressed support for the issue of the International Wild Salmon Day in principle, noting it would need to consult internally first. Canada raised that it thought International Wild Salmon Day aligned well with the strategy.
- 6.56 The IPRI welcomed a day that highlighted salmon and raised that they did not call salmon in the wild ‘wild salmon’, that they just called it ‘salmon’ and the only other category they had was for ‘farmed salmon’.
- 6.57 The Acting President noted that there was broad support for marking the International Wild Salmon Day and asked the Secretary to explore the possibility of supporting it. She also asked the Secretary to explore creating a LinkedIn profile for NASCO.
- 6.58 The Acting President noted that the Secretary had informed her there were funds available in the 2025 Budget for communication activities, which could be used to initiate the strategy without implications for the 2026 Draft Budget. The Parties discussed the funding that should be allocated to the strategy at this stage, with some clarification from the Secretariat on how it would be utilised.
- 6.59 Council agreed, subject to a capped budget of £10,000, to the following recommendations for inclusion in the high-level Action Plan, to:
- adopt the NASCO Outreach and Communications Strategy, CNL(25)54, including the approach and associated actions summarised in its Annex 1 as a framework;
  - direct the Secretariat to complete an internal assessment of resources in 2025 / 2026 to establish whether it would be beneficial to retain the services of a communications expert for routine actions identified in the social media strategy (e.g. to produce and schedule evergreen content for social media and the website on a regular basis); and

- direct the Secretariat to explore options for a future Ministerial meeting with Parties and to report back to Council at the 2026 Annual Meeting.
- 6.60 Council agreed in principle to move forward with the three other recommendations on the Outreach and Communication Strategy, noting that any next steps would also be subject to the capped budget of £10,000.
- direct the Secretariat to work with a communications expert in 2025 / 2026 to develop concise branding guidelines and associated templates for the website, social media posts, written reports (Word) and presentation slides (PowerPoint) to ensure a consistent look and feel to NASCO's outputs;
  - direct the Secretariat to work with a communications expert in 2025 / 2026 to develop a social media strategy and implementation guidelines to provide guidance on posting engaging, targeted and consistent content on NASCO's chosen platform(s) (e.g. X, LinkedIn), building on the overarching NASCO outreach strategy; and
  - direct the Secretariat to consider the need for and resources available to review and update the website in 2026 / 2027, i.e. the year following the completion of branding guidelines and templates and of a social media strategy as outlined in the previous two recommendations.

**f) NASCO Secretariat Environmental Policy**

- 6.61 The Acting President raised that at its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), Council agreed to adopt 'The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy', [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), which incorporates NASCO's high-level actions in a single document. She noted that as part of its high-level Action Plan, Council agreed that the NASCO Secretariat should publish its environmental policy in 2025.
- 6.62 The Acting President noted that the Secretariat had prepared the 'NASCO Secretariat Environmental Policy', [CNL\(25\)21](#). She raised that Council may wish to decide if what is being done in the Secretariat is enough, or if it would like an energy audit to be done to enable the Secretary to implement higher environmental standards for the HQ building.
- 6.63 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that it was supportive of the policy and believed it showed good changes had been made in the Secretariat. The UK raised that grants were available in Scotland to improve heat efficiency in buildings.
- 6.64 Council agreed not to undertake an energy audit for the HQ building at this time.

**g) Informing the Fourth Reporting Cycle**

**(i) Special Session: Presentation of the Stressor Analyses Conducted by the Parties / jurisdictions**

- 6.65 The Acting President reminded Council that in response to recommendations from the IP / APR Review Group and the Steering Committee for the 2023 Theme-based Special Session on Climate Change, at its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), it discussed whether an evidence-based, objective analysis of the key threats and pressures (the stressors) to wild Atlantic salmon experienced in each jurisdiction under NASCO's umbrella would provide a solid basis for actions under the fourth reporting cycle, to address the issues of greatest risk to the restoration and conservation of salmon.

6.66 The Acting President emphasised that stressor analyses would not be part of the next reporting cycle but would inform it and Council agreed that Parties / jurisdictions would carry out a stressor analysis and each provide a paper to NASCO by 30 April 2025. She also noted that Council agreed to hold a Special Session during which the Parties / jurisdictions would share the results of their stressor analyses as short, rapid-fire presentations.

6.67 Parties / jurisdictions each gave a short presentation on their stressor analysis and the discussions held during the Special Session are contained in Annex 11.

**(ii) Special Session: Successful Actions for Wild Atlantic Salmon Management from the Third Reporting Cycle**

6.68 In light of the decisions taken on preparations for a fourth reporting cycle where actions will be informed by stressors, the United Kingdom expressed its desire to retain a Special Session on the reporting cycle in 2025 to share the actions carried out by Parties / jurisdictions that have been considered to be a success for wild Atlantic salmon. The other Parties agreed that this would be very useful in planning for the fourth reporting cycle. Council agreed.

6.69 Owing to the length of the Special Sessions on stressors and the fourth reporting cycle, this third Special Session of the Council was unable to be held. The Acting President directed delegates to the authors of the papers and suggested they be spoken to privately if there were any questions.

**h) The Fourth Reporting Cycle**

**(i) Special Session: Report of the Working Group on Future Reporting**

6.70 In addition to adopting ‘The Future of NASCO – a Ten-Year Strategy’, [CNL\(24\)71rev](#), which incorporates NASCO’s high-level actions in a single document, at its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), Council took the following decisions:

- 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](#).

6.71 The Acting President reminded Council that the WGFR had met in November 2024 and developed a series of proposals for a fourth reporting cycle that were, in line with its Terms of Reference, discussed by the WGFON at its Meeting in March 2025. The WGFON’s proposed changes were then discussed by the WGFR at its second Meeting in late April 2025.

6.72 The discussions held during the Special Session are contained in Annex 12.

**(ii) Decisions on the Fourth Reporting Cycle**

6.73 The Acting President noted that this item allows for decisions to be taken on the fourth reporting cycle in light of the Special Session where the proposed content, timing and scheduling for the fourth reporting cycle was discussed.

6.74 The Acting President noted that, in the Special Session discussions, an NGO had raised a concern with the ambition of NASCO’s Strategic Goal, given that it sought to slow the decline of salmon rather than halt and reverse it.



- 6.75 Various members of the Council commented that the Strategic Goal does not exist in isolation but should be read in conjunction with NASCO's Vision and Mission statements and that the intention of the Strategic Goal is to halt and reverse the decline, but it is not clear if that would be possible by 2033.
- 6.76 The Acting President set out a number of options, including retaining the text agreed in 2024, whilst acknowledging that the Strategic Goal is a stepping stone towards the achievement of NASCO's ambitious Vision and Mission. She proposed that any use of the Strategic Goal in communications should always be in conjunction with NASCO's Vision and Mission.
- 6.77 Canada, the EU and United States agreed with that way forward.
- 6.78 The NGOs raised several concerns with the lack of ambition, noting that words matter, and proposed stronger language in the Strategic Goal, which was rejected by Council. The NGOs noted that salmon conservation is as much of a challenge to the NGOs as to the Parties.
- 6.79 The IPRI noted their alignment with Canada and the United States but acknowledged little success in slowing the decline of salmon thus far.
- 6.80 The Acting President welcomed the interventions from the accredited Observers and stated that NASCO would seek to take their concerns on board to ensure effective communication of the plight of wild Atlantic salmon. To this effect, she asked Council if it could support a proposal not to change the text of the Strategic Goal but to ensure that when it is referred to it is placed in the context of NASCO's Vision and Mission to ensure that NASCO's ambition is clear. Council agreed.
- 6.81 The Acting President moved the Council to consider the recommendations from the Working Group on Future Reporting.
- 6.82 Council agreed the basis of the fourth reporting cycle, see CNL(25)55, to be:
- the use of metrics called 'Performance Indicators' (PIs), to be reported annually, starting in 2027, 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, starting in 2027, and reviewed biennially, starting in 2028, 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.
- 6.83 Council agreed that:
- each action associated with each stressor proposed in the Conservation Commitments Reports requires a starting point, in order to measure its progress; and
  - each stressor proposed in the Conservation Commitments Reports also requires a starting point, in order to measure its progress.
- 6.84 Council further agreed to:
- charge the Secretariat to work with a developer to design web-based templates for the PIs and CCRs, using funds held in the 'consultancy' budget;
  - receive a recommendation in 2031 from the CCR Review Group on the process for conducting:

- an evaluation of the success of the fourth reporting cycle in 2032 to inform a possible fifth reporting cycle;
- an evaluation of the success of each Party's / jurisdiction's achievement in 2033 of each stated tangible outcome to support NASCO's Strategic Goal; 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;
- the 'Terms of Reference for the Conservation Commitments Reports Review Group', [CNL\(25\)56](#); and
- the 'Schedule for the Fourth Reporting Cycle', [CNL\(25\)57](#).

## **7. Conservation, Restoration, Enhancement and Rational Management of Atlantic Salmon under the Precautionary Approach**

### **a) New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management**

- 7.1 The Chair of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS), Alan Walker (UK), presented the advice relevant to this Agenda item. The presentation is available as document [CNL\(25\)61](#).

### **b) Pink Salmon in the NASCO Convention Area**

- 7.2 The Acting President noted that in 2022, the then President had expressed concern regarding the magnitude of pink salmon entering many Atlantic salmon rivers. She further noted that the Council had adopted a 'Statement of the Council Regarding Pink Salmon, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*, in the NASCO Convention Area', [CNL\(22\)47](#), which included agreement to establish a Standing NASCO Working Group on Pink Salmon (PSWG). She informed Council that revised 'Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Pink Salmon', [CNL\(24\)64](#), were adopted in 2024.
- 7.3 The Acting President noted that the next meeting of the Working Group would take place in July 2025.

### **c) Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery**

- 7.4 The Acting President noted that both the Council and the North American Commission were concerned about catches of salmon at Saint-Pierre and Miquelon which, although low, occurred at a time when there were serious concerns about the abundance of North American stocks and when harvest restrictions have been introduced throughout the North American Commission area.
- 7.5 The Acting President noted that France (in respect of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon) had submitted a written Opening Statement and the report 'Management and Sampling of the Saint-Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery', [CNL\(25\)27](#). The fishery report had been considered in the North American Commission Meeting and there were no further comments in the Council Meeting.

### **d) Reports on the Conservation Work of the Three Regional Commissions**

- 7.6 The activities of the three Commissions were reported to the Council by their Chairs.

## **8. Other Business**

- 8.1 To remind Council what had been achieved for salmon during the 2025 Annual Meeting, before the Report of the Meeting was deliberated, the Acting President reminded Council of its Strategy and Action Plan and presented a review of the high-level Action Plan to demonstrate the significant progress made across all five of NASCO's objectives. She also gave a preview of the business for consideration at the 2026 Annual Meeting under each of the Objectives.

## **9. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

- 9.1 Council agreed to hold its Forty-Third Annual Meeting from 2 – 5 June 2026 in Aviemore, Scotland.

## **10. Press Release**

- 10.1 The Council agreed a Press Release, [CNL\(25\)60](#).
- 10.2 The Council agreed to request the Secretariat to prepare NASCO's Annual Meeting Press Releases from 2026 onwards. Council agreement would not be required but the 2025 Press Release should be used as a template and messaging should be in line with the Outreach and Communications Strategy.

## **11. Report of the Meeting**

- 11.1 The Council agreed its Report of the Meeting.

## **12. Close of the Meeting**

- 12.1 The Acting President thanked the participants for their contributions and closed the Meeting.