



2026 Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the streamlining of the ICES Advice as requested by NASCO in 2022 and reaffirmed in 2024 and 2025.

Decisions

Council agrees to request that:

- that ICES advice should be provided in the revised format going forward, as outlined in CNL(26)07rev;
- the SSC retains text in the ICES advice request for 2027 to include an overview of the status of salmon in the North Atlantic as a whole; and
- the advice on salmon in the three regional areas is provided in a similar format to that in 2026.

Background

At its 2022 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(22\)53rev](#), the Council of NASCO discussed various elements of the advice provided to NASCO by ICES. The discussion noted that the ICES advice for other stocks was much more focused and that the advice to NASCO from ICES might also be shorter and more focused in future, with delegates consulting the Report of the Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon (WGNAS) if more information on a specific decision was required.

Council agreed to ask the Secretary to approach ICES to investigate a more streamlined approach / presentation of the ICES Advice.

In 2023, an update on the timing and background to the process was provided to Council, [CNL\(23\)09](#). In 2024, ICES provided a further update on the work carried out, [CNL\(24\)07](#), outlining the process to be taken to enable a streamlined set of advice from ICES to NASCO to be produced, noting the membership of the subgroup carrying out the work, which mostly comprises current and former members of the WGNAS and includes the NASCO Secretary. The subgroup's first meeting was on 16 February 2024. Its aim then was to conclude its work by the end of February 2025 for consideration of ACOM (who must approve any format change) in advance of the March 2025 ACOM annual meeting.

At its 2024 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(24\)88rev](#), the Council of NASCO 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. As part of this Action Plan, Council agreed the action:

- 'ICES deliver simplified fisheries advice', by 2025.

In 2025 the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) Vice-Chair provided a '2025 Update on the Streamlining of the ICES Advice', [CNL\(25\)07](#). In response to the ACOM presentation, the UK presented on behalf of all NASCO Parties, a high-level direction, [CNL\(25\)63](#), to the NASCO Secretariat on how to progress the streamlining of the ICES advice for 2026.

At its 2025 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(25\)80rev](#), Council agreed:

- that the SSC be directed to request the advice on salmon in the three regional areas is

¹ Revised 21/05/2026 to edit wording in Decisions section on page 1.

provided in 2026 in the ‘simplified fisheries advice’ format as presented in [CNL\(25\)62](#) by the ICES ACOM Vice-Chair.

The Secretary worked with ICES, including in its advice format sub-group, to enable this to happen. This briefing document is to inform NASCO of the work that has been done to date to better align the advice for North Atlantic salmon with the request made by NASCO for the 2026 provision of the advice.

The update from ICES with an overview on progress to better align the advice for North Atlantic salmon with the request made by NASCO for the 2026 provision of the advice is given in Annex 1.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
8 May 2026



ICES Update on the Streamlining of the Advice for Atlantic Salmon

The objective of this briefing document is to inform NASCO of the work that has been done to date to better align the advice for North Atlantic salmon with the request made by NASCO for the 2026 provision of the advice.

The North Atlantic salmon Advice Formatting Subgroup (subgroup) worked from October 2025 to January 2026 to revise the following four advice sheets:

- Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) from the North American Commission Area of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization's (NASCO) Convention Area
- Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) from the Northeast Atlantic Commission Area of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization's (NASCO) Convention Area
- Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) from the West Greenland Commission Area of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization's (NASCO) Convention Area
- North Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) stocks

The subgroup included a lead from ICES secretariat, the ICES WGNAS professional officer, the incoming and outgoing ACOM vice-chairs for salmon advice, NASCO representatives, and WGNAS members including the chair. The group held 7 online meetings to review and modify the advice sheets iteratively and collaboratively, based on remote intersessional work by individual experts.

Representatives from NASCO were engaged throughout the process to ensure revisions would meet NASCO's needs.

The goal of the revision was to simplify and align the content of the advice sheets with the standard ICES approach to single stock advice, while retaining specific NASCO vocabulary. For example:

- Continental (complex), sub-complex, and stock unit scales rather than ICES areas for describing status and providing management advice;
- Conservation Limits (CLs) in terms of fish by sea age group and/or eggs in spawners are used as reference points for management advice;
- Absence of Fishing Mortality and PA reference points for Atlantic salmon; and
- Consideration of age structure in the fisheries catches and spawner abundances as an important ecological and management criterion.

Each advice sheet was developed as a stand-alone document with consistency in phrasing, approach and content / layout among advice sheets.

Some advice sheets were reduced in length compared with previous years, while others expanded with the addition of detailed tables for history of the advice, catch, management, and assessment results included in standard ICES advice. The North Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) stocks sheet was reduced from 34 pages in 2025 to 20 pages in 2026. Individual area sheets

increased in overall length because detailed catch tables were not included previously, but the 2026 text portion was generally reduced relative to 2025. Approximate page counts are compared below.

Sheet	2025 total pages	2025 text and figure pages	2025 table pages	2026 total pages	2026 text and figure pages	2026 table pages
All	34	17	17	20	15	5
NAC	22	21	1	36	19	17
NEAC	20	17	3	28	16	12
WGC	19	13	6	23	13	10

The North Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) stocks sheet was revised to focus on questions from NASCO related to the North Atlantic as a whole and is structured with sections addressing each of these questions. The three regional sheets are now organized in standard ICES sections:

- ICES advice on fishing opportunities;
- ICES non-fisheries conservation considerations;
- Stock development over time;
- Conservation status;
- Catch scenarios;
- Basis of the advice;
- Quality of the assessment;
- Issues relevant for the advice;
- Reference points;
- Basis of the assessment;
- History of the advice, catch, and management (tables);
- History of the catches (tables);
- Summary of the assessment (tables); and
- Sources and references.

Figures were substantially revised to conform as much as possible with standard ICES advice sheet layouts and formats. Catch and assessment data is also being integrated into ICES databases. However, the complexity of Atlantic salmon mixed stock fisheries, stock structure, and life cycles is reflected in a higher number of panels and figures than are found in single stock advice sheets. Further, multiple metrics of stock size and recruitment are available for Atlantic salmon which are not directly comparable to metrics used for simpler single stocks. In the 2026 advice sheets, all metrics are presented to allow consideration of which are most relevant for NASCO. These advice sheets are considered living documents to be further refined to best meet NASCO's needs.

The resulting advice sheet formats were reviewed by ACOM in March 2026. ACOM reviewed the format for the North Atlantic salmon stocks (*Salmo salar*) advice sheet and Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in the North American Commission Area of the North Atlantic Salmon

Conservation Organization's (NASCO) Convention Area advice sheet as an example of area-specific formatting. ACOM welcomed the subgroup's work and approved of the new advice sheet format.

Further refinements to the documents can be considered by ICES and NASCO going forward, including:

- Scope and level of detail required in each section; is the current balance appropriate?
 - Section 1.5 (Significant new, or emerging threats to, or opportunities for, Atlantic salmon conservation and management) of the North Atlantic salmon stocks
 - Conservation aspects in the three regional advice sheets
 - Stock development over time in the three regional advice sheets
- Clarifying which items requested for the 'North Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) stocks' are requests for information, and which are advice.
- Plots of historic forecast versus realised abundance are presented as indicators of quality of the assessments; is the metric clear?