



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

- *The FAC may wish to recommend to Council to direct the Standing Scientific Committee to engage with OSPAR to update the OSPAR Status Assessment for Atlantic salmon in 2027*

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 and 2029 Intermediate Assessment;
2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon (2026-2027);
3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon;
4. Extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic; and
5. Outputs from OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in June 2025.

1. OSPAR Quality Status Assessment 2023 and the move towards the 2029 intermediate assessment

Following the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023, OSPAR will produce an ‘Intermediate Assessment’ in 2029 (IA 2029), which will update indicator assessments and some feeder reports focusing on cross-cutting aspects of the marine environment (e.g., offshore renewables and marine geoengineering). The objective of an Intermediate Assessment is to assess the environmental status of the North-East Atlantic against the objectives of the North-East Atlantic Environmental Strategy and identify priority elements for action to achieve OSPAR’s vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic Ocean, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification.

When it met in March 2026, the Biodiversity Committee agreed to extend some of its existing Common Indicators to Regions I (Arctic) and/or Region V (wider Atlantic) and to run pilot assessments of a number of new benthic, pelagic, non-indigenous species, food web and marine mammal indicators as part of the IA 2029. Subject to approval by the Commission, the list of indicators to be included in the IA 2029 will all be set out in an update of [OSPAR’s Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme](#), to be published in summer 2026.

2. OSPAR Status Assessment of Salmon (2026-2027)

It is planned to update the OSPAR Status Assessment for Atlantic salmon in 2027, so that it can be agreed by the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee in spring 2028. OSPAR have not yet identified a lead for this status assessment; the 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 it comes to time to prepare the next Status Assessment; this would be likely to be late 2026 / early 2027. OSPAR is also developing a database to hold this implementation reporting information.

3. OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on Salmon

There have been no updates to the Recommendation. OSPAR has been undertaking a periodic (six-yearly) reporting exercise on the Contracting Parties' implementation of Recommendations for all T&D species and habitats, including Atlantic Salmon, and a draft report is expected to be presented to the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Protection Of Species and Habitats (ICG-POSH) when the group holds its annual meeting in November 2026.

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

There has been no extension of the NACES Marine Protected Area in the North-East Atlantic since the protections were extended from the water column only to add the seabed and subsoil thereof, which came into force in January 2024. More broadly on OSPAR's MPA and OECM network, OSPAR is developing a new Protected and Converted Areas database which is planned for launch in June 2026.

5. Outputs from OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in June 2025

OSPAR in 2025 adopted amendments to the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 (NEAES 2030 - consolidated text) following a mid-term review of the (NEAES 2030) and made some amendments to the Strategy to reflect work completed and to add a few additional operational objectives.

OSPAR agreed to **extend the OSPAR maritime** area by over 2.5 million km² to include Macaronesian waters, encompassing the Azores, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. This historic decision brings these biodiversity-rich areas under OSPAR protection, recognising the critical importance of regional cooperation.

Expressing serious concern about hazardous discharges from all types of Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS) on ships, particularly in coastal zones, OSPAR agreed a staged ban on the release of discharge water from ships' exhaust gas scrubbers in coastal waters. A roadmap to examine strengthening this by 2027 was also agreed.

As part of OSPAR's Regional Action Plan on **Marine Litter**, two new measures were agreed:

- A ban on plastic pollution from pontoons and buoys; and
- Implementation of best practices to reduce marine litter across sectors.

OSPAR adopted a new regional **Action Plan on Underwater Noise** and phase one of a Regional Action Plan on Benthic Habitats

In relation to emerging pressures, Ministers agreed to examine how the Convention can better respond to issues related to offshore renewables, space launch debris, carbon dioxide capture and storage, hydrogen production linked to offshore oil and gas, and clarify provisions on land-based sources of pollution

Strengthened work on the Arctic, OSPAR region I, includes:

- Collaboration with the **Arctic Council**, IMO, and other relevant organisations;
- **Strengthened engagement with Indigenous Peoples Organisations** of the North-East Atlantic region; and

- Identification of priority sites to be considered in developing OSPAR's network of marine protected areas (MPAs), and of other area-based conservation and management measures in ABNJ in Arctic Waters, considering indigenous knowledge and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Secretary
Edinburgh
22 May 2026