North-East Atlantic Commission *The Spread of* **Gyrodactylus salaris** *in Northern Europe (Submitted to the North-East Atlantic Commission by Norway)*	**NEA(26)09** **Agenda item: 8**

The Spread of Gyrodactylus salaris *in Northern Europe*

The problem:

New detection of *G. salaris* in a river on the Swedish west coast.

Background:

The Working Group received a presentation from EU-Sweden on a new detection of the parasite in Sweden, GSWG(26)16 (Annex 15). *G. salaris* was detected for the first time in the river Örekilsälven. With this detection, the parasite has spread significantly closer to the Norwegian border. This spread of the parasite is very worrying.

There is also a previous history of rainbow trout farming in Lake Bullaren, which is not far from the river Örekilsälven. The fish were infected with *G. salaris* (detected in 2001). The lake drains into the salmon river Enningsdalselva on the Norwegian side of the border. An environmental organization acted and removed all fish from the farm, thus preventing a catastrophic spread that could have ended up infecting Norway's largest river, the river Glomma. It is also worth mentioning that a similar incident took place in the Finnish lake Inari in northern Finland. In 1995, the same environmental organization acted against a fish farm in Lake Inari because the rainbow trout in the farm were infected with *Gyrodactylus*, thus threatening some of the world's best salmon rivers located in the northernmost part of Norway.

The parasite is also spreading in northern Russia. The Keret River has been infected for a long time without any information that the parasite has spread to new rivers in the area. In 2016, *G. salaris* was detected on farmed rainbow trout in the Tuloma River, and wild salmon smolt in the tributary Pak. Whether this detection has any significance for the risk of spread to Norwegian rivers is uncertain, but an expansion of rainbow trout farming in the area will increase the risk of *Gyrodactylus* spread.

Consequences:

The new detection of *G. salaris* in the river Örekilsälven significantly increases the possibility of further spread of the parasite both to rivers along the Swedish west coast and to Norwegian salmon rivers. If the parasite spreads to the river Glomma, which is Norway's largest river, it will be almost impossible to eradicate the parasite.

The increased activity of rainbow trout farming is one of the biggest threats to the spread of *G. salaris*. Many rainbow trout farms are infected, and veterinary control is not sufficient to prevent the spread from infected farms.

Recommendation:

- Swedish authorities increase *Gyrodactylus* surveillance to determine the total prevalence of the parasite in rivers on the Swedish west coast, with emphasis on rivers north of Gothenburg.
- Consider the possibility of eradication of the parasite in infected rivers north of Gothenburg to prevent spread to Norwegian rivers.
- Increased focus on *Gyrodactylus* infection on rainbow trout in fish farms.
- Implement measures to prevent the spread of infection from rainbow trout.

- Establish a Norwegian-Swedish working group to discuss possible measures to prevent the spread of *G. salaris* and eradication where necessary.