

North-East Atlantic Commission

***Joint Statement on behalf of the European Union and Norway
Regarding the Management of the Fisheries in the Tana Watercourse
(Submitted by the EU and Norway to the North-East Atlantic
Commission)***

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***Joint statement on behalf of the European Union and Norway regarding the
management of the Fisheries in the Näätämö / Neiden and Tana watercourse***

The Agreement between Norway and Finland on the Fisheries in the Tana watercourse came into force in 2017. The Agreement includes common fishing rules, that was for the next period (from 2024 to 2030), to safeguard the recovery of the depleted salmon stocks in the Tana watercourse.

The main part of the new fishing rules is a new way to regulate the salmon fisheries in the Tana watercourse in the form of a new baseline rule. The new baseline rule sets clear thresholds for when and to what extent fishing for salmon is to be permitted. This means that fishing regulations, to a greater extent than previously, are based on each stock's harvestable surplus. A limited fishing may be permitted when *less than 20 percent* of the salmon that are in the river at any given time belong to stocks that are assessed to be in the red, and weakest, stock category. When fishing is allowed, the catch will be regulated according to quotas and not only according to fishing time as has been done previously. The new baseline rule also ensures that right holder groups are given priority compared to tourists, when a limited fishing can take place, and they will also take part in distributing the catch quotas. There is also a possibility for exceptions in individual cases in order to transfer and maintain the know-how related to the traditional fishing culture of the Sámi.

The situation for the salmon stocks in the Tana watercourse in 2025 continued to show a negative status. Although salmon run improved slightly compared to all-time low spawning stocks and low estimates of pre-fishery abundance in 2024, the overall low returns of salmon continued, and it is therefore expected that the return of salmon will be low in 2026. There has been no harvestable surplus in Tana or its tributaries in 2019 – 2025, with a few exceptions, and the situation will most likely stay the same in 2026 also.

The monitoring of the salmon stocks indicates that the survival rate at sea has decreased dramatically in recent years, with low pre-fishery abundance as a result. The status report after 2025 revealed that stocks from all evaluated areas were placed in the worst (red) status category due to no exploitable surplus in at least two of the last four years. In order to balance between salmon stock recovery and preserving local sami fishing culture, Finland has proposed a strictly limited salmon fishery in two of the tributaries that produced some exploitable surplus in year 2025 (fishery with rod and nets allowed for 2 days, with a personal quota of one 1 SW salmon). Norway has issued a statement expressing concern for this regulation.

In order to prevent the expansion of pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) in the Tana River and neighboring salmon rivers, Norwegian authorities and partners constructed a fish weir/trap in the lower part of the Tana river in 2025, as in 2023. The project built on experiences from 2023, but was arranged further downstreams, and the project was expanded significantly as the whole river width was covered by a solid aluminum construction with traps and solutions to take out pink salmon, and at the same time letting the local fish pass. Valuable knowledge was gained from this follow-up, and c. 28 000 pink salmon were removed from the river by the weir. In co-operation, Norwegian and Finnish authorities developed pre-agreed measures for different risk scenarios when operating the weir, with special attention to local salmon stocks. Also Norwegian and Finnish researchers co-operated with a smolt telemetry-project, with the objective to study smolt migration survival and how the weir influenced the smolt behaviour and survival at the weir site. Finland has advocated the need for better public participation in order to improve the local acceptance for pink salmon removal measures in coming years. It is also important to continue work on impacts of the weir on migratory fish species.

Finland and Norway have proceeded in the renewal work of the Fisheries Agreement for River Näätänojoki / Neiden. An important starting point is to renew the agreement and fishing rules to secure sustainable fishing and adaptive management of the Neiden/Näätänojoki salmon stocks and other fish species. The new fishing rules will also be in conformity with NASCO's principles for salmon management. Local stakeholders are actively involved in the renewal process of the fisheries agreement. Based on the present negative situation for the salmon stock in Neiden/Näätänojoki, Norwegian and Finnish authorities have also been discussing possible measures that can be implemented at a short notice in 2026 before the new Fisheries Agreement is finalized and put into action. Norway and Finland agree that strong measures will be implemented, but the details still remain.