



Council

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Report on the Activities of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization in 2019

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Note. This Report is not intended for publication but is submitted to the Council under Article 5, paragraph 6 of the Convention which requires the submission of an annual report to the Parties. The report is a summary of the activities of the Organization in 2019, focusing on the actions taken. Full details of the work of the Organization are contained in the reports of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meetings of the Council and Commissions and in the report of the Finance and Administration Committee.

*Report on the Activities of the
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
in 2019*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the invitation of the Government of Norway, NASCO held its Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting in Tromsø, Norway. The Organization greatly appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the hosts.

2. Council

- 2.1 The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Council was held during 5 – 7 June 2019 under the Presidency of Jóannes Hansen (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)). Representatives of all the Parties and observers from France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon), four Inter-Governmental Organizations and 22 accredited Non-Governmental Organizations participated in the meeting.

Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans

- 2.2 The primary purpose of the Annual Progress Reports (APRs) under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans (IPs) was to provide details of: any changes to the management regime for salmon and consequent changes to the IPs; actions that have been taken under the IPs in the previous year; significant changes to the status of stocks and a report on catches; and actions taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.
- 2.3 The 2019 APRs had been subject to a critical evaluation by the IP / APR Review Group to ensure that jurisdictions had provided a clear account of progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their IPs, along with the information required under the Convention. The report of the IP / APR Review Group was presented and discussed at a Special Session of the Council.

Evaluation of Implementation Plans under the Third Reporting Cycle (2019 – 2024)

- 2.4 The IP / APR Review Group met in February 2019 to undertake its initial evaluations of the 2019 – 2024 IPs. However, due to the more stringent review process, and an increased number of reporting jurisdictions, the Group was unable to complete the review of all IPs received within the time allocated to the meeting. It therefore met over a number of further days, through several conference calls and an extra one-day meeting, to complete the IP reviews and feed back to Parties / jurisdictions by 30 April. The interim report of the Review Group was presented at a Special Session of the Council, during which there were wide-ranging discussions. Parties and jurisdictions were requested to submit revised IPs by 1 November 2019, for review by the Review Group in mid-November. A schedule had been agreed out to 30 November 2019 to review the revised IPs. The Council agreed that a revised schedule setting out the calendar year beyond November 2019 would be reviewed by the IP / APR Review Group before being referred back to the Heads of Delegations for approval and distribution to Parties and jurisdictions.

International Year of the Salmon

- 2.5 2019 was the focal year of the International Year of the Salmon (IYS). As part of the IYS, a two-day international Symposium entitled ‘Managing the Atlantic Salmon in a Rapidly Changing Environment’ was held in Tromsø during 3 – 4 June, immediately prior to the 2019 Annual Meeting of NASCO. The Symposium focused on the challenges facing the Atlantic salmon and possible responses that can help conserve the resource in a rapidly changing environment. The Symposium was structured around two main themes: climate change and state of the salmon, with scientific overviews being provided on these subjects; and management challenges and solutions. Perspectives were provided from a number of different viewpoints, including managers, scientists, NGOs and Indigenous Peoples. In addition to the presentations and discussions surrounding those, a poster session was also held.
- 2.6 The IYS Symposium Steering Committee presented a report from the Symposium to the Council of NASCO during the 2019 Annual Meeting. The report contained the Committee’s recommendations to NASCO to address future management challenges. Prioritisation of the recommendations was recognised as a challenge and various mechanisms were discussed. It was suggested that swift take-up of the recommendations would stand NASCO in good stead for the upcoming Performance Review. The Council was informed that many of the recommendations would resonate in the Pacific and that much could be gained from cross-basin collaboration on considering the recommendations. It was agreed that the Parties would discuss and agree a process inter-sessionally to consider how to address the recommendations contained within the report.
- 2.7 A Special Session was held during the Annual Meeting on progress made during the IYS. Presentations were given on IYS progress made in the North Atlantic and the North Pacific since June 2018. Following these presentations there were wide-ranging discussions. The Council agreed:
- with regard to the legacy of the IYS, a periodic Symposium and State of Salmon Report should be delivered by the Secretariat. The other work of the Secretariat needs to be considered when determining when to hold the Symposium and update the State of Salmon report. The State of Salmon report statistics should be populated with data from sources including the Rivers Database and ICES data. To this end, Parties / jurisdictions should be encouraged to update their data in the Rivers Database on a regular basis. To enable this, the Secretariat will explore working towards a database that can be updated by Parties and jurisdictions;
 - NASCO IYS activities going forward for further investigation beyond the end of the focal year include: the research projects the Likely Suspects Framework and ‘ROAM’ initiative; and the 2022 closing Symposium (in conjunction with the NPAFC). Any other ‘IYS-labelled’ activities would have to be decided by Council prior to any commitment being made;
 - that the effective duration of the IYS for NASCO’s focused activity is to the end of 2019;
 - that the co-operation engendered between NASCO and the NPAFC may be fostered through science co-operation. This could be served by encouraging any of the members of the IASRB to attend NPAFC science meetings and reporting back to Council and by encouraging the NPAFC to attend the IASRB and Council meetings as an observer;

- that the structures supporting the IYS, i.e. the North Atlantic Steering Committee and the Co-ordinating Committee, will no longer need to exist after the focal year;
- that a final activity report should be delivered by the Parties in early 2020 to capture a full record of the activities delivered during the focal year of the IYS. On the basis of the activity reports, a final report on the IYS will be delivered at the 2020 NASCO Annual Meeting;
- that the Parties will sign off on the final draft of the State of Salmon Report via conference call; and
- that the NASC prepare a spending plan against the previously agreed areas of the IYS budget out to the end of 2019 for agreement by the Parties, i.e. following the same process as in 2018. If available, surplus funds remaining in the IYS budget should be used to cover the costs of the IYS Symposium and the State of Salmon Report.

Review of the Procedures Relating to the Work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group

- 2.8 At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the Council and IASRB had considered a review of the procedures relating to the work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Board. It was agreed that the then Chair of the IASRB propose new Rules of Procedure and clarify the Terms of Reference for the IASRB and the SAG, in consultation with the Secretary, members of the IASRB and current and past Chairs of the SAG.
- 2.9 A ‘Review of the Procedures Relating to the Work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group’ was presented, which contained the ‘Chair’s Proposed Revisions to the Rules of Procedure for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board’. The Council was advised that the proposal had been considered by the IASRB at its meeting, but was not yet ready for adoption by the IASRB in light of a request to clarify further a number of points. The IASRB had therefore resolved to consider and revise further the proposal inter-sessionally, given the wish to operate in 2020 under the new rules proposed such that a meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group would not automatically occur. Council agreed to work inter-sessionally with the IASRB to agree the new document in advance of the 2020 Annual Meeting.

Consideration of the Process for Arranging a Second External Performance Review in 2021

- 2.10 At its 2018 Annual Meeting, the Council agreed that the process to consider conducting the third Performance Review of NASCO should commence in 2019, with a view to holding the review in 2021.
- 2.11 A document was provided outlining the process for a review. It was noted in this document that there were four main areas in which decisions would need to be made by the Council as follows:
- the panel (fully internal, fully external, or a hybrid);
 - the criteria for a review;
 - the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for a review; and
 - the recommendations, including follow-up mechanisms.

- 2.12 The Council agreed that the President would develop a process for arranging NASCO's next Performance Review in 2021 that would be discussed and agreed by the Parties inter-sessionally.

Theme-based Special Session

- 2.13 The Council agreed that a Theme-based Special Session would be held during the 2020 Annual Meeting. The topic for this Theme-based Special Session would be discussed and agreed by the Parties inter-sessionally.

Progress in Implementing the 'Action Plan for Taking Forward the Recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', CNL(13)38

- 2.14 The Council received an update on progress in implementing the 2013 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO'. The Council welcomed the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations.

Incorporating Social and Economic Factors in Salmon Management

- 2.15 One new study relating to the socio-economic values of the wild Atlantic salmon had been reported in 2019. Additionally, to support the production of the State of Salmon Report, specifically the values section, a review of the literature for the period 2009 – 2019 and an assessment of changes in values was commissioned by NASCO. 'The Social, Economic and Cultural values of wild Atlantic salmon' is a report produced by the Norwegian Institute of Nature Research (NINA) to be published at the same time as the State of Salmon report.

Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry

- 2.16 In 2013, the Council had agreed that an item should be retained on its Agenda entitled 'Liaison with the Salmon Farming Industry', during which a representative of the International Salmon Farmers' Association (ISFA) would be invited to participate in an exchange of information on issues concerning impacts of aquaculture on wild salmon.
- 2.17 At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the Council had asked the Secretary to approach ISFA to request that they publish the 'Guidance on Best Management Practices to address impacts of sea lice and escaped farmed salmon on wild salmon stocks' document, agreed jointly by NASCO and ISFA, on the ISFA website. The Secretary had exchanged correspondence with ISFA regarding this request.
- 2.18 ISFA made a statement to the Council and highlighted the intergovernmental reference organization the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), encouraging NASCO to engage with them should further work on pathogens be undertaken.

Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 2.19 A report on the Management and Sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery was presented.

Scientific Research Fishing in the Convention Area

- 2.20 The Council was advised that the Norwegian Environment Agency received an application from the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian Institute of Nature Research and the Institute of Marine Research for the capture, electronic tagging and release of 50 – 200 adult salmon in the waters of Bjørnøya (Bear Island) from 12 – 22 October 2018, as part of a research programme funded by the Norwegian Research Council. The

area is outside the Norwegian Economic Zone but in the ‘protected fisheries zone’ around Svalbard. The Norwegian Environment Agency granted permission for the work to go ahead prior to informing NASCO on 12 October 2018 of the work. There was some uncertainty in Norway regarding the legal status of the ‘protected fisheries zone’ around Svalbard in relation to the NASCO Convention and whether the NASCO Resolution on Scientific Research Fishing was therefore applicable. The Norwegian authorities agreed to clarify further the legal status of the ‘protected fisheries zone’ around Svalbard in relation to the Convention. Only one fish was caught.

Scientific Advice

- 2.21 The scientific advice from ICES was presented. The Council adopted a request for scientific advice to be presented in 2020.

New or Emerging Opportunities for, or Threats to, Salmon Conservation and Management

- 2.22 ICES presented information on: an update on Red Vent Syndrome; updates on *G. salaris* eradication efforts, sea lice investigations and sea lice management in Norway; the presence of *G. salaris* in the Russian Federation; the continued presence of diseased salmon in rivers in Sweden; diseased salmon in Russian rivers in 2018; an update on sea lice investigations and sea lice management programmes in Norway; two projects reporting on monitoring programmes for pathogens and parasites from wild salmon sampled from the marine environment at West Greenland; environmental and ecosystem interactions with Atlantic salmon; an update on the Atlantic salmon stock situation in Germany; research on links between smolt size and marine survival; updates on opportunities for investigating salmon at sea, including the International Ecosystem Summer Survey of the Nordic Seas, the ‘SeaSalar’ project, PIT tag screening programmes, tracking and acoustic tagging studies and pop-up satellite tagging at Greenland; and progress in stock assessment models. Norway reported on similar observations of diseased salmon in Norway in 2019 and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) cited a number of examples of predators and proposed that these were an increasing threat. Relevant information had also been presented in the ‘Summary of Annual Progress Reports under the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans’.

Reports on NASCO’s Activities

- 2.23 The Council adopted a report on the activities of the Organization in 2018.
- 2.24 The Council received a report from each of the three regional Commissions on its activities (see sections 3, 4 and 5 below).
- 2.25 The Council adopted the report of the Finance and Administration Committee (see section 6 below). On the recommendations of the Finance and Administration Committee, the Council agreed to extend the MoU with ICES for one additional year (i.e. through 2020) and that the Secretary will continue to liaise with ICES during the 2019 – 2020 inter-sessional period to develop a longer term MoU that fully protects NASCO’s interests.
- 2.26 The Council received the report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board.
- 2.27 The Secretary made a report on a number of administrative and procedural matters, including: the status of ratifications of, and accessions to, the Convention or in the membership of the regional Commissions; the contributions for 2019; and any new information relating to IUU fishing by non-NASCO Parties.

Observers

- 2.28 The Council was advised that the Association de Défense des Ressources Marines (ADRM), (based in France), Tanavassdragets fiskeforvaltning (TF) (based in Norway) and WWF-Russia been granted observer status to NASCO. This brought the total to 44 NASCO accredited NGOs.

Other Business

- 2.29 The winner of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Grand Prize of £1,500 was Juan Eulogio Renedo Sedano, from Spain.
- 2.30 The Council agreed that its Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting would be held during 2 – 5 June 2020. The Council confirmed the dates for its Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting as 1 – 4 June 2021.

3. North American Commission

- 3.1 The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the North American Commission was held in Tromsø, Norway, during 5 – 7 June 2019. The Meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Commission, Tony Blanchard (Canada).

Review of the 2018 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 3.2 The Commission reviewed the 2018 fishery and considered the scientific advice from ICES. In response to a question from the United States, ICES advised that there is currently no ICES guidance for determining the percentage of a fishery that should be sampled to accurately determine the region of origin contributions, but that the fisheries in question are sampled at a rate of up to 10%. Beyond the percentage sampled, it is important to make sure that the sampling is distributed throughout the entire fishery in time and space. The United States noted that in the recent report, ICES stated that approximately 4% of the Labrador fishery, 10% of the St Pierre and Miquelon fishery and 10% of the Greenland fishery were sampled in 2018 and asked if this was adequate for identifying rare event contributions and whether increasing the sample sizes analysed would be of benefit. ICES advised that, due to funding issues, in some cases they get more samples than can be analysed. ICES further stated that confidence in whether a rare event did or did not occur is greater given a greater number of samples, and the more representative they are of the fishery in time and space. The Commission was advised that there would be sampling in the St Pierre and Miquelon fishery throughout the 2019 season.

The St Pierre and Miquelon Salmon Fishery

- 3.3 France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) presented an overview of the report on the management and sampling of the St Pierre and Miquelon salmon fishery. In response to a question from Canada regarding the reduction in harvest in 2018 compared to 2017, France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) indicated that some professional fishers were engaged in fishing for other species and therefore there was limited effort for salmon. For the recreational fishery, temperature and weather had been poor and the abundance of salmon low, which reduced fishing effort in this segment. The United States encouraged France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to reconsider joining NASCO and urged that sampling be improved as much as possible to ensure it is as representative of the fishery as possible. The United States requested that further information be provided in future reports, such as detailed statistics on catch and sample characteristics, to allow ICES and NASCO to better characterise the impact of the fishery on contributing stocks.

Salmonid Introductions and Transfers

- 3.4 The United States and Canada tabled reports on issues of mutual concern, including the number of disease incidences, the number of breaches of containment, any introductions of salmonids from outside the Commission area and transgenics. The United States noted that the report from Canada did not include information on the Placentia Bay / Greig Project. The United States felt that this should have been included given the relevance of this project to the work of the NAC, and NASCO more generally, given the terms of the Williamsburg Resolution and the NAC protocols and, particularly, the proposal to use non-North American strain salmon for a large sea-based aquaculture project. The United States noted its understanding that developing triploid fish is not 100% effective and that there are usually monitoring and verification / quality control procedures in place where triploid fish are used in other sensitive areas. Canada was asked whether it has established a threshold percentage of triploidy for fish to be stocked at this project. Canada responded that the sites are still undergoing review, so there have been no introductions yet, and that more than 99% triploidy is anticipated. The United States reiterated concern about the possible negative effects on U.S.-origin salmon if fish that are not 100% triploid are used in sea cages in Canada and there is a breach of containment. Canada was asked whether it had plans for developing a triploid threshold percentage. Canada responded that it would need to confirm the establishment of any threshold with the provincial government responsible for permitting. The United States asked whether Canada had performed a risk assessment for the potential escape of non-triploid fish from these cages and the impact on wild populations. Canada responded that they had done a full Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat review and concluded that the project was very low risk and the report was recently made available on the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website. The NGOs asked if the Canadian government had considered next steps if the planned stocking of triploid fish did not perform well and enquired about the process that would occur if the company wished to switch to diploid salmon. Canada responded that they had completed a full peer-review analysis on the use of triploid fish and are very comfortable with their use. Canada further noted that the project will be licensed for triploid-fish production, and that any proposed change away from using triploid fish would need to be reassessed by the provincial Government.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 3.5 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries (MSFs).
- 3.6 Canada presented a paper which provided a description of the Labrador subsistence food fishery, including information on the management, stock status, the most recent catch data and the sampling programme, as well as the origin and composition of the catches. The United States noted continued concern about any fishery that may intercept U.S.-origin fish. The United States appreciated Canada's continued efforts to reduce impacts on U.S.-origin salmon, acknowledging that working in remote areas is difficult and noting the increase in logbook reporting in 2018. The United States asked whether Canada felt that the data from the returned logbooks adequately represented the total fishery. Canada stated that it is difficult to know what they do not know. The catch report for a community is adjusted to assign a catch for those individuals that did not report, so there is an incentive in local communities to report. Canada will try to

improve communication about the importance and expectations of reporting within communities that did not have 100% reporting. In response to a further question, Canada stated that they would probably not be looking at new ways to improve the overall reporting rate and the quality of the information provided, but they would continue effort and pressure to increase the reporting rate from 78% to a higher level. The NGOs noted that the approach used in Canada was different to that used in Greenland with respect to assigning a catch to those individuals that do not report their catch, based on the average catch of those that do report. The NGOs stated that this is a good approach that improves the accuracy of the value of reported catch. In response to a question from the NGOs, Canada responded that the rate of reporting compliance of the four subsistence food fisheries ranged from 69% to 100% in 2018.

Sampling in the Labrador Fishery

- 3.7 Canada recognised the importance of a strong sampling programme and their commitment to expand and improve efforts to increase sampling. The United States asked if there was any progress made with regards to expanding sampling spatially and temporally. Canada responded that it is difficult to have a sampling requirement in terms of percentage of the catch, and it is important to get a representative sample of the fishery. Canada felt that the 2018 sampling was representative of size (i.e. small / large salmon) and noted that it is always a challenge to get the right coverage. More tissue samples are collected than are processed. Funding is secured for analysing samples and they are working to make sure the samples are representative of the fishery. Canada also noted that any U.S.-origin fish would likely be from the large landing category. Canada anticipates weekly updates with samplers and enhanced communication during the sampling programme to help ensure appropriate temporal and spatial coverage.

Other Business

- 3.8 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Andrew Mason, New Brunswick, Canada.

4. North-East Atlantic Commission

- 4.1 The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission was held in Tromsø, Norway, during 5 – 7 June 2019, chaired by Viktor Rozhnov (Russian Federation).

Review of the 2018 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 4.2 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES. The NGOs referred to the reported proportion of migrating smolts that returned as adults and asked whether it was correct to see the numbers as indicators of issues related to marine survival only, or if they should also be seen as indicators of issues relating to smolt living conditions in fresh water, prior to migration. In response, ICES reiterated that it is the proportion of migrating smolts returning as adults that is reported. It is therefore correct to see the numbers as indicators of marine survival. ICES added that it was not possible to rule out that factors in fresh water affect the quality of smolts, and thus indirectly may affect marine survival.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries Conducted by Members of the Commission

- 4.3 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a

focus on MSFs. The European Union (EU), Norway and the Russian Federation tabled papers providing an update on the information on MSFs contained in the 2013 – 2018 Implementation Plans, including a description of any MSFs still operating, the most recent catch data and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs to implement NASCO's agreements.

- 4.4 Those EU jurisdictions with MSFs were identified. Several of the remaining EU MSFs are exploiting identified stocks for which conservation limits are being met. A brief overview was given of the EU's report highlighting the changes that have been undertaken and planned, *inter alia*, that the UK (England and Wales) had, *de facto*, phased out various net fisheries in 2019. The NGOs stated that there are MSFs in southern France, with no regulations in place to govern them. This was particularly problematic since the fisheries are potentially impacting fish destined for Spain, as the situation for salmon in Spain was especially serious. The NGOs asked whether the EU was aware of the situation, and if not, if it could approach the French authorities with an aim of ensuring that the situation is addressed. The EU expressed concern with regard to the situation described by the NGOs, while stating that further information was required in order to completely assess the situation. The EU confirmed that the matter would be investigated and brought before the French authorities. The EU stressed that if there were MSFs operating as pointed out by the NGOs, the situation would have to be addressed and managed accordingly.
- 4.5 A joint statement on behalf of the EU and Norway concerning the status of work with implementing the bilateral agreement between Norway and Finland on the fisheries in the Tana / Teno river, which include MSFs, was also tabled. The agreement entered into force in 2017.
- 4.6 Norway indicated that MSFs are still in operation in most fjords in Norway and along the Norwegian coast. Generally, only the use of bag nets is permitted, except in Finnmark where the use of both bag nets and bend nets is allowed. The number of persons participating in the MSFs was 875 in 2018, a 4% increase compared to the figures for 2017. The new online system for reporting on fishing activities in 2018 had been used by 125 fishermen, the others reporting through the old paper-based system. The NGOs stated that there were ongoing MSFs in Norway on stocks that are not attaining their conservation limits and urged the Norwegian Government to refer to the weakest stocks as the benchmark for future fisheries regulation. Norway responded that it was not yet in a position to undertake full assessments of all salmon stocks, but confirmed that ongoing MSFs targeting stocks below conservation limits could not be ruled out. The Norwegian authorities were committed to implementing measures to improve the situation. Norway operates a five-year cycle for major revisions in its regulatory regime and the process for the next cycle would start in the autumn of 2019. It was hoped that this would bring an opportunity for making improvements to protect stocks as needed.
- 4.7 The Russian Federation explained that MSFs in Russia are only conducted in the White Sea. The commercial and indigenous fisheries are restricted to designated sites and catch limits are established on a regional basis by the anadromous commissions. Mixed-stock fishing has been phased out in the Barents Sea.
- 4.8 A joint statement on behalf of the Russian Federation and Norway on the work conducted under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fisheries (the Russian Federation) on co-operation on management and monitoring of, and research on, wild

Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk Region (the Russian Federation), which was signed on 30 September 2015, was also presented.

Development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 4.9 The Commission had previously discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese salmon fishery. At the 2018 Annual Meeting, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had recognised the use of the ICES Risk Assessment Framework for the next cycle of ICES advice, noting that this would not prejudice a future framework of the sharing of quotas. It had been agreed that the first major step towards a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery would be a discussion document, to be prepared by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), for consideration by the Parties, which would examine the scientific and management components to be included in such a framework. This was a lengthy and resource-heavy process that is pending internal deliberations in the Faroe Islands. The Commission agreed that the question of the development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery be provisionally postponed and revisited by the Commission when Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) has prepared the discussion document.

Regulatory Measures

- 4.10 In 2018 the Commission adopted a ‘Decision Regarding the Salmon Fishery in Faroese Waters in 2018 / 2019, 2019 / 2020 and 2020 / 2021’. Under this Decision, the Commission agreed not to set a quota for the salmon fishery in the Faroese Fisheries Zone for 2018 / 2019, acknowledging that Faroese management decisions will be made with due consideration to the ICES advice concerning the biological situation and the status of the stocks contributing to the fishery. The Decision would also apply in 2019 / 2020 and 2020 / 2021 unless application of the Framework of Indicators (FWI) showed that a reassessment was warranted. The Commission had agreed that the procedure used for applying the FWI previously should continue under the new Decision.
- 4.11 The Commission was informed that the FWI Working Group had advised that that the results of the NEAC FWI assessment in 2019 (based on indicator values for 2018) did not suggest that the PFA forecast had been underestimated. Therefore, the FWI Working Group had concluded that no reassessment of the existing management advice for the Faroese fishery was required from ICES in 2019. The Decision adopted in 2018 would, therefore, continue to apply to the fishery in 2019 / 2020. It will also apply in 2020 / 2021 unless the application of the FWI shows that a reassessment is warranted.

Risk of Transmission of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area

- 4.12 The Commission was advised that there had been no spread of the parasite to new regions in Norway since 1997 thanks to strict rules and effective preventative measures. By June 2019, *G. salaris* has been detected on Atlantic salmon in 50 Norwegian rivers. 32 of these rivers have been treated and the parasite successfully eradicated from them. In another 11 rivers, eradication programmes have been completed but the results have not been confirmed. If all eradication measures currently being implemented in Norway are successful, the number of infected rivers will be reduced to seven. The Commission was also advised on the status of *G. salaris* in specific regions of Norway, as well as the development of new combating methods. Norway also informed the Commission on an issue regarding the synonymisation of the *Gyrodactylus* species *G. thymalli* and *G. salaris* and indicated that the Chair of the Working Group on *G. salaris* would contact the Working Group to discuss the issue as appropriate.

Other Business

- 4.13 The Commission elected Svein Magnason (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) to serve as Vice-Chair for the remainder of his predecessor's term of office, i.e. until the close of the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Commission.
- 4.14 The winner of the Commission's £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Alan Digby Flower, United Kingdom.
- 4.15 The Commission appointed Sergey Prusov (Russian Federation) as a representative to the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC). The Commission's representatives on the SSC are Sergey Prusov and Peder Fiske (Norway).

5. West Greenland Commission

- 5.1 The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission was held in Tromsø, Norway during 5 – 7 June 2019, chaired by Carl McLean (Canada).

Review of the 2018 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES

- 5.2 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented a paper describing events in the West Greenland salmon fishery in 2018. The quota for the Greenland fishery in 2018 was set for 30 t for the entire fishery, this to include all sectors of the fishery. A new Executive Order for salmon fishing came into effect in 2018 in order to implement the requirements within the regulatory measure, such as the need for all fishers to hold licenses, mandatory reporting, including of zero-catches, and no licenses being issued to Atlantic salmon fishers who have not provided a full catch report in the previous year. Salmon fishers were required to report daily, or every time their nets were mended, either directly to the Greenlandic Fisheries License Control Authority (GFLK), or indirectly through the municipalities. There were no landings of Atlantic salmon to factories in 2018. The season again ran from 15 August – 31 October, unless the quota was exhausted earlier. The private fishery closed on 19 October, while the professional fishery closed on 31 October. The export ban on salmon was also continued. The Commission was advised that the total catch recorded by the authorities on 31 October was 18.4 t. However, it became apparent that certain catches had not been registered and the total catch, taking account of reports received subsequently, rose to 26.8 t. Following the close of the fishery, a letter was sent to fishers who had held a license in 2018 but had not reported, which reminded them of the obligation to report and of the consequences of non-reporting. A press release was also issued by the Ministry. These actions resulted in a number of reports being received after the fishery had closed, although some fishers stated that they had reported but had still received a reminder letter. Other factors had contributed to reporting difficulties in 2018, including a number of fishers without digital skills or tools who had reported in paper form to their municipal office, but where reports had not subsequently been forwarded to GFLK. Some reports had also been wrongly registered in GFLK. As a result of the final adjustments, the final reported catch rose to 40.5 t. The majority of fish landed were recorded as gutted weights, but these were adjusted and reported to ICES as whole weights. Since a small number of fish may be landed and reported as whole weights, this might result in a small element of over-reporting of the total reported weight. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that 75% of professional fishers and 70% of private fishers had reported their landings in 2018.
- 5.3 The United States asked if there had been any follow-up of those fishers who had not reported and also asked for clarification about the reduction in the proportion of the

private-use catch reported by professional fishers between 2017 and 2018. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that Greenland had already contacted non-respondents and indicated there would be a further opportunity to seek information on the 2018 catches when the new quota for 2019 is announced and new licenses are applied for. This could lead to an additional revision of the reported catch for 2018. If so, there would be a commensurate reduction in the quota for 2019. With regard to the private catch, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that 20 t of the 2018 quota had been allocated to professional fishers and 10 t to private fishers but suggested that the new licensing procedures may have accounted for some confusion in what to report and when. This may have accounted for the reduction in professional fishers reporting private-use landings. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) also confirmed that there had been no change to the conditions attached to professional licenses in 2018. The only change had been the introduction of licenses for private fishers; separate licenses were also required to fish for other species and for hunting. The rules about reporting applied to all fishers and it would not be possible for a professional fisher who had failed to report previously to be issued a private license. Professional fishers were allowed to sell fish to outlets other than open-air markets where there was no open-air market in the local community. Detailed written answers had been prepared by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) in response to additional questions from the United States that had been sent by email, and this information was made available to the Commission.

- 5.4 The Commission considered the scientific advice from ICES. In response to a question from the United States in relation to the implications of better spatial and temporal coverage in the West Greenland sampling programme, ICES confirmed that the more samples were collected the more confident one could be in the results and in supporting management efforts to help protect the weakest stocks. ICES indicated that there was no clear explanation for the increase in the proportion of North American fish in the harvest at West Greenland in the past three years, but that this may represent the distribution of sampling effort and annual variability in the continent of origin of fish available to the fishery.

Regulatory Measures

- 5.5 At its Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting (2018), the Commission had adopted a Multi-Annual Regulatory Measure for Fishing for Salmon at West Greenland for the calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020. This placed additional requirements on Greenland around licensing, monitoring and harvest levels. The progress made by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) with regard to new monitoring and control measures, and their willingness to improve on the implementation of these measures was recognised. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) presented a document containing the evaluation of the 2018 fishery and the proposed measures for the 2019 fishery.
- 5.6 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) acknowledged that there had been unforeseen reporting issues in 2018. Once these shortcomings had become apparent, Greenland had actively considered how they could improve procedures for the coming season, meetings were held with interested parties and a plan was produced. A key issue identified was the need to avoid misreporting within their own internal catch-recording systems and plans had been advanced to update a database to ensure that all catch reports were entered directly. In addition, new instructions had been developed to help regional municipalities improve their reporting arrangements. It was

evident that not all fishers had access to email and that it was therefore necessary to improve the audit trail for reports submitted in paper form. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) also indicated that it would be necessary to improve public engagement and that it was proposed to include information in an already existing citizen website to help provide a source of information; alongside this other reporting mechanisms (e.g. by phone) were under consideration. In addition, KNAPK was planning to meet with its members to keep them informed of the reporting requirements. Radio and TV campaigns would also be continued, and start-up meetings had also been proposed with the relevant authorities in the early part of the season to aid planning. A targeted postal reminder campaign would continue to be used to seek returns after the close of the fishing season. In the longer term, it was hoped that a suitable App could be introduced to enable online reporting, as is already being done for hunting. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) confirmed that all the current regulatory restrictions on the fishery would remain in place for 2019 and that the quota would be 19.5 t in line with the agreements set out in the regulatory measure, assuming no additional catch reports for 2018 were received. If they were, the quota would be reduced by a commensurate amount. The fishing season would be as previous, although it was noted that with a low quota, it was likely that the season in 2019 might finish earlier. No license would be issued to fishers who did not report in 2018. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) accepted that there had been teething problems with the new regulatory measures in 2018 but it was confident that appropriate decisions had been made to improve arrangements and that reporting arrangements would be better in future.

- 5.7 Members of the Commission also reiterated their support for Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) in sharing knowledge and experience, should this be beneficial to them.
- 5.8 The NGOs questioned whether it might be possible to arrange for weekly updates on catches from the various communities in Greenland, which the NGOs felt might be useful to add to the regulatory measure. The NGOs stated that such information could be of value in the context of co-ordinating the sampling programme and other research initiatives. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that weekly reports are published and circulated to KNAPK; it may therefore be possible to share these more widely.
- 5.9 It had been agreed that the regulatory measure agreed in 2018 would also apply to the fishery in 2019 and 2020, subject to the application of the FWI. The Commission was advised that the FWI did not show a significant change in the indicators used and, therefore, that a reassessment of the ICES management advice for the 2019 fishery was not required. The measure agreed in 2018 would therefore continue to apply to the 2019 fishery.

Mixed-Stock Fisheries conducted by Members of the Commission

- 5.10 Under the Council's 'Action Plan for taking forward the recommendations of the External Performance Review and the Review of the 'Next Steps' for NASCO', it was agreed that there should be agenda items in each of the Commissions to allow for a focus on mixed-stock fisheries. Canada and the European Union tabled papers providing a description of the MSFs still operating in their jurisdiction, the most recent catch data, any updates to their Implementation Plans relating to MSFs and any changes or developments in the management of MSFs in the IP period to implement NASCO's agreements. There are no directed wild Atlantic salmon fisheries in the United States.

- 5.11 The Commission was advised that 73% of logbooks had been returned from the fishers in Labrador food, social and ceremonial fisheries in 2018 and that the total catch was estimated by raising the declared catch by the proportion of returns received. The NGOs noted that the approach used in Canada to derive the reported catch – i.e. adjusting according to the proportion of returns received – differed in other jurisdictions and indicated that had such an approach been used in Greenland, the reported catch in 2018 would have risen by 10 t.
- 5.12 The NGOs indicated that concerns had been raised about the impact of a mixed-stock fishery in the Adour Estuary in France and in relation to possible by catch of salmon in other coastal fisheries in the area, which had not been reported on by the European Union. The European Union expressed concern and indicated that this would be investigated further.

Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 5.13 The Commission adopted a ‘Statement of Co-operation on the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Program for 2019’. This internationally co-ordinated sampling programme provides valuable biological data to the ICES stock assessments that inform science-based management decisions for the West Greenland fishery. It was noted that ICES has recommended that the broad geographic sampling programme, including in Nuuk, should be expanded across the fishing season to ensure that samples are representative of the entire catch. Such expansion would allow more accurate estimates of region of origin and biological characteristics in the mixed-stock fishery. In response to a question from the NGOs about the lack of sampling by the Greenland authorities at Nuuk in recent years, the Greenland sampling programme Co-ordinator advised that sampling at Nuuk continued to be included in the sampling agreement. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) advised that sampling in 2018 had been constrained by resource issues. However, assurances were given that sampling would be conducted at Nuuk in the coming year.

Other Business

- 5.14 The winner of the Commission’s £1,000 prize in the Tag Return Incentive Scheme was Ole Simonsen, Nanortalik, Greenland.
- 5.15 The Commission appointed John Biilmann (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as a representative on the SSC. The Commission’s representatives on the SSC are John Biilmann and Niall Ó Maoiléidigh (European Union).

6. Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.1 The Finance and Administration Committee met prior to the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Council, chaired by Kim Blankenbeker (USA).

Audited Accounts

- 6.2 The audited accounts for 2018 were presented. The Committee recommended to the Council that it adopt the 2018 Audited accounts.
- 6.3 The Working Capital Fund remained at its ceiling of £200,000. The Contractual Obligation Fund had been reduced to £3,357 in 2017. However, with the incorporation of the 2018 year-end surplus, it had increased to approximately £156,000. The Recruitment Fund, which had been reduced from its standing level of £60,000 to £45,000, had been rebuilt to approximately £52,000. The IYS Fund stood at approximately £215,000 at the end of 2018, which included a £41,983 voluntary

contribution from Canada and a £38,650 voluntary contribution from the United States.

- 6.4 It was noted that the relationship between IYS income, expenditures and allocation is hard to track and monitor, in particular due to the inclusion of voluntary contributions. The Secretary was asked to provide clearer reporting to the FAC in future years about voluntary contributions received and their purpose.
- 6.5 The Committee was advised that the NASCO auditors have indicated that the current audit cycle of three years is short and have asked NASCO to consider the benefits of extending the cycle. The Committee considered a document on this matter, produced by the Institute of Chartered Accountants, intended to guide inter-governmental and other organizations on matters related to selecting an auditor. This document suggested that a common appointment period for auditors of public sector organizations is five years. The Committee discussed the issue and asked the Secretary to liaise with the auditors on the question of costs, if possible before the 2020 Annual Meeting, and report back.

Relationship with ICES

- 6.6 The MoU with ICES specifies recurrent requests for advice and procedures for *ad hoc* requests for advice, as well as key administrative procedures and financial aspects. The MoU has been extended three times since it was signed in 2007, with the current extension ending in 2019. The Secretary had liaised with ICES inter-sessionally to discuss a further extension of the MoU. The Committee was advised that, given recent developments in ICES' advisory work as a whole related to the interface between data, science and advice, some of which is still ongoing with other entities, ICES has suggested that a revision of the NASCO-ICES MoU be initiated in 2020. ICES had indicated that the review of the NASCO-ICES MoU be aligned with the new and revised agreements and MoUs that ICES has concluded with other advice requesters, including:
- a new four-year Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission, providing the basis for annual agreements;
 - a review of the 2017 MoU between Norway and ICES; as well as
 - MoU negotiations with the United Kingdom and Iceland.
- 6.7 Pending a review and possible revision to the current NASCO-ICES MoU to take into account relevant developments, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that the current MoU be extended for one additional year (i.e. through 2020). The FAC also asked the Secretary to continue to liaise with ICES during the 2019 – 2020 inter-sessional period to develop a longer term MoU that fully protects NASCO's interests. Ideally, a new MoU would be adopted in 2020 and become effective in 2021.
- 6.8 The Committee asked that the Secretary continue to liaise with ICES on any issues that arise relating to the provision of advice under the MoU, request that the advice be made available as early as possible and begin the process of extending the MoU before its expiration in 2019.

MoU with the OSPAR Commission

- 6.9 The MoU between NASCO and the OSPAR Commission came into effect on 5 August 2013. The Committee was advised that the MoU continued to work well.
- 6.10 The Contracting Parties of the OSPAR Commission are to report on the implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2016/3 on furthering the protection and conservation of

the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), in Regions I, II, III and IV of the OSPAR maritime area by 31 December 2019 and every six years thereafter. Once the Contracting Parties to OSPAR make their reports to the OSPAR Secretariat, NASCO will receive any relevant information from OSPAR, which is likely to occur prior to the 2020 NASCO Annual Meeting.

- 6.11 In 2018, the FAC had been advised of discussions within OSPAR on the possible establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the central Atlantic Ocean, part of which occurs in the NEAFC area. The Committee was advised that further details on the proposal were now available. The proposed MPA is called the ‘North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount Marine Protected Area’. The site is located in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) of the OSPAR Maritime Area. It has been identified as an important foraging area for many species of seabirds in the OSPAR Maritime Area. Some of the seabird species identified as using the proposed site are wide ranging and also occur in waters of non-OSPAR States, and such States may be able to provide information not readily available to OSPAR. OSPAR has indicated there is a need to increase information on which human activities occur at the site and how they may impact the seabirds’ use of the site. OSPAR’s proposal went out to consultation in 2018, to seek information on human activities that would assist OSPAR to improve the decision basis for any designation from competent authorities regulating human activities in ABNJ. NASCO had responded to the consultation. In March 2019 the annual OSPAR Biodiversity Committee meeting recognised that the information on human activities would benefit from further input from competent authorities and this was to be included during the 5th meeting under the Collective Arrangement between OSPAR and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission in May 2019. The NASCO Secretariat was invited to attend but was unable to do so. It was expected that OSPAR’s proposal would be put forward for consideration at the OSPAR Commission’s Annual Meeting in June 2019. The FAC agreed that the Secretary should continue to liaise with OSPAR on issues of mutual interest and bring relevant information and developments to its attention.

Consideration of the Need for Clarification of, or Amendments to, NASCO’s Rules Relating to Finance and Administration Matters

- 6.12 In 2017, the FAC had considered a number of issues related to providing lump sum payments exceeding the level required under Staff Rule 8.2(b) to two retiring staff members. The Committee was advised that the question of providing an extra lump sum had also arisen in 2012 upon the retirement of the first NASCO Secretary. The 2017 discussion related to the retirement of the second NASCO Secretary and the Personal Assistant to the Secretary. At neither time was there clear guidance on which to base a decision, and NASCO struggled to find a way forward. In the end, the two retiring NASCO Secretaries received a lump sum payment of about one eighth (rather than one twelfth) of their final years’ gross salary and allowances for each year of service with NASCO and the Personal Assistant to the Secretary received about one sixth.
- 6.13 Following that discussion, the FAC agreed that it would consider whether clarification or amendment to NASCO’s rules relating to financial and administrative matters might be needed. At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the Parties briefly discussed the pros and cons related to the discretion in the Staff Rules that allowed for an increase in the lump sum payment. Some Parties noted that, given the difficult decision-making regarding the discretionary lump sum payments in both 2012 and 2017, establishing a transparent, consistent and repeatable process would have value. In particular, it would bring

predictability and certainty with regard to the lump sum issue that would allow for appropriate budgeting by NASCO and more effective retirement planning for Secretariat staff. The members of the FAC noted at that meeting that they were not prepared to recommend a way forward on this matter but agreed to consider it further at the 2019 Annual Meeting.

- 6.14 At the 2019 Annual Meeting, the Committee considered an analysis looking at the possible financial aspects of changing the lump sum payment set out in Staff Rule 8.2 (b) to a higher proportion using different assumptions. A number of illustrative calculations were presented that looked at building the Contractual Obligation Fund to various levels under different scenarios. The different fractions of lump sum evaluated were one-twelfth, one-tenth, one-eighth and one-sixth, which encompassed the known range of lump sums paid out to retiring Secretariat staff thus far, as well as the fraction allowed for in Staff Rule 8.2 (b).
- 6.15 Canada noted interest in seeing a comparison of staff retirement benefits across relevant RFMOs to support further consideration of this important issue and indicated that any system should be clear, transparent and predictable. Following discussion of this matter, the Secretary was asked to liaise with other relevant RFMOs to seek information on their approaches to retirement benefits for their staff, such as pensions, lump sum payments, etc. and prepare a paper comparing those approaches to NASCO's retirement benefits package, to be circulated well in advance of the 2020 Annual Meeting. The FAC noted that, if feasible and appropriate, a conference call in advance of the 2020 Annual Meeting could be considered to discuss the issue. It was also suggested that the Secretary could explore using a cloud-based share point for use by FAC members to facilitate access to and sharing of relevant information, views and ideas.

Consideration of the 2020 Draft Budget, Schedule of Contributions and Five-year Budgeting Plan

- 6.16 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of the 2020 Draft Budget and 2021 Forecast Budget and noted a Five-year Budgeting Plan (2020 – 2024) which had been provided for information.
- 6.17 It was clarified that the explanation in the budget commentary providing the rationale for the lack of additional IYS funding related only to budgeted contributions from the Parties. While 2019 was the focal year of the IYS, IYS continues until 2022. Although no contributions to the IYS Fund were included in the Draft Budget, voluntary contributions or available monies could still be directed to the IYS fund.
- 6.18 It was suggested that in future draft budget documents, expenditures associated with the previous year's Budget should be presented alongside the proposed budget figures for the following year. This is common practice in other organizations and facilitates review and consideration of draft budgets by the Parties.
- 6.19 The Committee also considered a document presenting illustrative budget contribution scenarios for 2019, 2020 and 2021 associated with Brexit. The information was provided in response to a request from the FAC in 2018 to understand better the potential future financial implications of the UK leaving the EU. It was noted that the UK had already indicated that it intended to seek accession to the NASCO Convention in its own right with effect from the point of its withdrawal from the EU (if no withdrawal agreement was reached). The FAC recognised that, depending on the timing and outcome of the Brexit process and the UK joining NASCO, there could be effects on the budget contributions of the Parties in future. The EU noted that the UK

communications with NASCO about possible future accession did not follow correct procedure. While the UK remained a Member State of the EU, communications should only happen through the EU.

Secretariat
Edinburgh
31 March 2020