

NEXT STEPS TASK FORCE

NSTF(06)10

***Guidelines for the Preparation of NASCO “Implementation Plans” and for
Reporting on Progress***

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Purpose of Implementation Plans

NASCO and its Parties have agreed to adopt and apply a Precautionary Approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of salmon in order to protect the resource and preserve the environments in which it lives. To this end, NASCO has adopted a number of Resolutions and Agreements which address the Organization’s principal areas of concern for the management of salmon stocks. The Organization has also developed Guidelines on topics which have a more general relevance to salmon management, including the consideration of social and economic factors in decisions under the Precautionary Approach and the development of stock rebuilding programmes.

As part of the ‘Next Steps’ process, NASCO has determined that it needs to develop a simpler and more transparent approach for reporting on progress on the implementation of these agreements. NASCO has therefore agreed that each Party or relevant jurisdiction should develop an Implementation Plan for meeting the objectives of NASCO’s agreements and should subsequently report to NASCO on actions taken to meet its management objectives.

The Implementation Plans will address NASCO’s overall objective of ensuring the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks, and will be focused around the three main agreements which address fishery management, protection and restoration of habitat, and aquaculture and associated activities. The overall goals of these agreements are summarised below:

Management of salmon fisheries

The goals for the management of salmon fisheries for NASCO and its Parties are to promote the diversity and abundance of salmon stocks and to maintain all stocks above their conservation limits (reference Action Plan for Application of the Precautionary Approach, CNL(99)48).

Protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to maintain and, where possible, increase the current productive capacity of Atlantic salmon habitat.

Management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics

The goal for NASCO and its Parties is to minimise the possible adverse impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics on the wild stocks of Atlantic salmon, including working with industry stakeholders, where appropriate.

The Implementation Plans will be subject to critical review by Parties and NGOs by means of an agreed review process. In order for Implementation Plans to be effective it will be

important for proposed actions and activities to have measurable outputs. The review process may result in suggestions to modify Implementation Plans to address any concerns expressed.

NASCO has also agreed to modify its reporting procedures to make them clearer and more transparent. The development of Implementation Plans will provide the basis for the preparation of regular reports on the extent to which the proposed actions have been undertaken and objectives have been achieved. These reports will also be subject to review to provide constructive comment on the progress made within each jurisdiction towards meeting the objectives of the Organization.

This document is designed to provide guidance on the structure and content of the Implementation Plans and describe the process that will be adopted for reporting progress to NASCO. It is recognised that the Implementation Plans developed by different jurisdictions may differ significantly depending on the nature and status of stocks, the management regimes in place and other factors.

Structure and Format of Implementation Plans

It is important that Implementation Plans are presented in a clear and straight-forward manner so that they are easily understood by both managers and stakeholders. It is anticipated that an Implementation Plan would normally:

- apply to all the stocks/fisheries managed within a jurisdiction;
- apply for a period of at least 5 years, and generally require no annual modification unless circumstances change significantly;
- provide a summary of the management approaches that will be utilised to meet the objectives and the anticipated results, rather than details of specific actions to be applied to individual stocks;
- be consistent with, and adopt approaches specified within, NASCO Resolutions and Agreements;
- take account of NASCO Guidelines as appropriate to the management approach;
- be written in a clear and concise form for easy accessibility and reference (e.g. use numbered paragraphs); and
- describe a process and proposed outputs that are open to critical evaluation.

Outline Content of Implementation Plans

It is recognised that Implementation Plans will necessarily reflect the management requirements of different jurisdictions. However, it is proposed that the basic structure of the Implementation Plans should usually include the following key elements:

1. Introduction

This section should provide a general picture of the resource and the management structure in place within the relevant jurisdiction. Sub-headings within this section might include:

- 1.1 objectives of the national management strategy (e.g. may be similar to NASCO Vision);
- 1.2 nature and extent of resource (e.g. number and size of stocks, special designations, etc.);

- 1.3 overview of fisheries (e.g. methods, locations, etc), including the existing management regime (e.g. types of regulations, enforcement activities, etc.);
- 1.4 management entities involved in fishery regulation and habitat protection/restoration (e.g. who does what and by what means).

2. *Status of stocks*

This section should describe the current status of stocks for future comparisons. It might provide a brief overview of current status of stocks assessed against reference levels (in accordance with the NASCO Decision Structure). Sub-headings within this section might include:

- 2.1 abundance (e.g. egg deposition, juvenile densities, and/or returning adults);
- 2.2 diversity (e.g. age composition, run-timing, etc.);
- 2.3 threatened or endangered stocks.

3. *Threats to stocks, and current management measures*

Some river stocks remain below reference levels and are subject to a range of real and potential threats to their status. It is recognised that a wide range of management measures are already in place to address these threats. This section should provide a summary of the threats and outline the existing management measures, with specific reference to the extent to which NASCO's Resolutions and Agreements have been applied. This information will provide the baseline for developing the management plan described in Section 4, and might be presented in the following sub-sections:

- 3.1 effects of all salmon fisheries and fisheries taking juvenile or adult salmon as a by-catch (including fisheries in distant and home waters);
- 3.2 factors affecting estuarine and freshwater salmon habitat;
- 3.3 impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics (including diseases and parasites);
- 3.4 other influences affecting salmon abundance or diversity (including marine environment).

4. *Management approach*

This section should provide a clear account of the management approach which will be used to address the problems identified in Section 3 over a period of about five years. It is important that the approaches described have measurable outputs against which subsequent reports can be assessed. The approaches should be presented under four headings: management of fisheries; protection and restoration of salmon habitats; management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers; and other influences. In each of these areas, the socio-economic implications of proposed actions should be considered. It will also be appropriate to identify data deficiencies and research needs in relation to each of these focus areas.

- Management of fisheries: to provide a summary of the approach that will be adopted to review and modify fishery regulations including both routine periodic reviews and the introduction of emergency measures; to include reference to/use of NASCO Decision Structure (SCPA(02)16) as appropriate;

[Subsequent reporting could describe numbers of fisheries for which control measures have been reviewed and actions taken to change regulations.]

- Protect and restore salmon habitat: to provide a summary of the approach that will be adopted to assess estuarine and freshwater habitat quality, identify problems and prioritise remedial actions, taking account of the guidance in the NASCO Plan of Action for the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat (CNL(01)51);
[Subsequent reporting could describe numbers of rivers for which habitat problems have been reviewed or habitat plans developed and provide a summary of mitigation, restoration or protection measures introduced]
- Manage aquaculture, introductions and transfers: to include a summary of the approach that will be adopted to minimise any adverse impacts from aquaculture and control introductions and transfers, in line with the Williamsburg Resolution (CNL(04)54);
[Subsequent reporting could summarise specific actions taken to control introductions and transfers and minimise any adverse impacts from aquaculture]
- Actions to be taken in relation other influences: to include a summary of the approach that will be adopted to address other influences identified in Section 3.4, such as those that may be reducing the marine survival of stocks; this might also include collaborative action such as through the SALSEA research programme;
[Subsequent reporting could summarise specific actions taken to address other influences]

5. Evaluation

To provide a summary of monitoring and evaluation activities that will be used to assess status of stocks and the efficacy of management measures.

Reporting procedures

Reports on actions taken to address Implementation Plans will be provided in two formats: written annual reports; and oral and written reports presented to Special Sessions.

Annual reports:

Reports will be provided on an annual basis by each Party or relevant jurisdiction. The primary purpose of these reports is to provide a summary of all the actions that have been taken under the Implementation Plan (Section 4) in the previous year. In addition, any significant changes to the status of stocks, factors affecting stocks and the management regime in place should be included in the report.

The annual report will therefore provide the following information:

1. a statement of any significant changes to the management outlined in the introduction to the Plan;
2. a description of significant changes to the status of stocks, and information on catches required under Article 15.1 and 15.2;

3. a description of new factors within the territory or area of fisheries jurisdiction which may significantly affect the abundance of salmon stocks (Article 15.5(c) of the Convention);
4. an account of actions taken under the four headings in Section 4 of the Implementation Plan including:
 - the adoption or repeal in the past year of laws, regulations and programmes relating to the NASCO objectives or any commitments to such measures as required under Article 15.5 (a and b), including management measures established or envisaged for homewater fisheries and their expected effects;
 - where appropriate, jurisdictions should also provide reports required under Article 14;
5. proposed revisions to the Implementation Plan.

Special Session reports:

Reports to Special Sessions will provide a more in-depth assessment of actions taken under one of the Focus Areas in Section 4 of the Implementation Plan, as selected by the Council. These reports will provide the basis for review of management actions taken within each jurisdiction over more than one year to meet the objectives of the Implementation Plan and will assess the efficacy of those actions in addressing the overall objectives of NASCO and in particular to conserve and restore salmon stocks.