

***Welcoming address by the Minister of State, Fergus O'Dowd TD
at NASCO Annual Meeting in Drogheda 4th June 2013.***

Good morning to you all and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Drogheda and to Ireland for the 30th Annual Meeting of NASCO. I would like to thank NASCO for affording us the opportunity to host this very prestigious event, on behalf of the European Union, in Ireland and in Drogheda in particular.

Some of you may be familiar with the Irish legend about how a legendary ancient Celtic leader - Fionn McCumhall - came to be so wise and resourceful through eating what we famously call the Salmon of Knowledge.

Well, the legend has it that the story was set on the banks of the River Boyne, on which we now gather. I wish the wisdom of Fionn MacCumhall on you all as you work this week on very important business in the conservation and protection of salmon in the North Atlantic region. If you do not know about Fionn McCumhall, I can guarantee you that by the end of the week, you will!

It is not an overstatement to say that the very survival of this iconic species is at stake. It is an issue to which I am personally committed and I know that you are steadfast in the cause that is to promote and develop the salmon population to the point that it is viable, sustainable and growing. NASCO has added hugely to the concentration of effort over the past 30 years. We are under no illusions that the work must continue at that level if we are to make enduring progress into the next 30 years and beyond.

As Minister with responsibility for this sector in Ireland, I can assure you that the preservation and protection of salmon is also considered to be a vital economic resource in that salmon angling in Ireland is a hugely important revenue generator in parts of the country that have less access to other income earning and employment opportunities. In this respect success for NASCO and the salmon is a two way street, it is a win/win opportunity and that type of scenario does not come along nearly often enough.

I hope you have a chance to enjoy some of the world famous heritage and other sites in this locality in the time you have here. I am confident that you will look back with satisfaction and pride on your achievements of this week. I am sure that the famous Irish hospitality will be extended to you and that you will leave here with glow of pride and contentment with your week's work.