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Press Release

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)
Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting, Edinburgh, Scotland
5–8 June 2012

**International Conference Concludes
with Call for More Action to Conserve Wild Atlantic Salmon**

International experts today concluded discussions on the condition of wild Atlantic salmon stocks and agreed on new steps to support recovery. Scientific information provided to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) during its 29th annual meeting this week indicated that salmon stocks across the North Atlantic remain at historically low levels, although small improvements were noted for some stocks. Taking on board scientific advice, NASCO negotiators worked together to hammer out two new agreements this week that will limit harvests of wild Atlantic salmon on their feeding grounds for the next three years. In Greenland, only a small internal use fishery, estimated to be about 20 tonnes, will be allowed. For the Faroe Islands, the agreement not to fish will be continued. Both governments stressed that they were committed to doing their part in the recovery of wild Atlantic salmon while claiming their historical rights to fish.

Newly re-elected President of NASCO, Mary Colligan, stressed: “The cooperation and collaboration of Greenland and the Faroe Islands in agreeing to actions to that will support the recovery of salmon across the Atlantic is to be commended. Similar actions have been taken by other countries in controlling their homewater fisheries. Still, more needs to be done to secure the future of wild Atlantic salmon.”

In support of management actions, countries also agreed to continue scientific cooperation to enhance the understanding of salmon stocks. According to the NASCO supported Salmon at Sea (SALSEA) research program, the largest internationally coordinated Atlantic salmon research program ever conducted (www.salmonatsea.com), a major stress on Atlantic salmon is a changing climate. At its recent meeting, NASCO considered the management implications of this work. The importance of addressing all the impact factors in fresh, estuarine, and coastal waters, including degraded freshwater habitats, barriers to migration, over-exploitation, and salmon farming was acknowledged. Such actions are critical to protect the genetic diversity of wild Atlantic salmon and maximize its potential to adapt. NASCO supported additional analysis of data collected under SALSEA as well as the instigation of new research to continue to advance human knowledge of wild Atlantic salmon and improve its conservation and management.

In order to continue to meet the various challenges facing wild Atlantic salmon, NASCO took a positive step in 2011 by appointing a panel of independent experts to assess its fitness for the future and to make recommendations that could facilitate its work. The results of this evaluation were presented this week. While the review found that NASCO is a strong organization overall, the panel of experts made several recommendations aimed at enhancing the work of the organization, including suggesting that NASCO explore whether and how to make some of its decisions binding. In light of the report, NASCO decided immediately to improve reporting requirements, which will increase transparency and accountability of NASCO members in implementing agreements on wild Atlantic salmon stock management, habitat protection, and aquaculture and related activities. Furthermore, NASCO agreed to initiate a process in 2012 to consider steps that might be needed to meet current and future challenges to the effective conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon.

The President said: “This is an historic moment for our organization. NASCO was the first regional fisheries management organization to begin a performance review process—back in 2004. Now that the report of the external performance review is here, the second stage of this process can begin in earnest.

This is a big challenge for the organization, and I am proud to be part of ensuring NASCO is fully prepared to meet the challenges of the future.”

In other news, long time Secretary of NASCO, Dr. Malcolm Windsor OBE (Order of the British Empire), retired following the 2012 NASCO annual meeting. Dr. Windsor’s dedication and commitment to the organization and to the conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon were warmly acknowledged. The position of Secretary will be filled temporarily by the current assistant Secretary Dr. Peter Hutchinson, and an open and transparent recruitment process to find a new Secretary will take place over the course of 2013.

The 30th Annual meeting of NASCO will be held in Ireland, June 4-7, 2013.

Notes for Editors:

NASCO is an intergovernmental organization formed by a treaty in 1984 and is based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Its objectives are the conservation, restoration and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon stocks, which do not recognise national boundaries. It is the only intergovernmental organisation with this mandate which it implements through international consultation, negotiation and co-operation.

The Parties to the Convention are: Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), European Union (representing its 27 Member States), Norway, Russia and USA. There are 35 non-government observers accredited to the Organization.

The 2012 meeting included over 101 scientists, policy makers and representatives of 14 nations as well as 4 Inter-Governmental Organisations and 18 Non-Governmental Organisations, who met to discuss the present status of wild Atlantic salmon and to consider management issues.

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