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| **Fisheries Management Scotland Report** |  |
| **Update on the 34th Annual Meeting on NASCO**  **Date: 5 - 9 June 2017** |

1. **Introduction**

Alan Wells attended the annual meeting of NASCO at Varberg, Sweden from 5th-9th June 2017. This paper provides an update on the formal business at the meeting and also the opportunities for engagement and advocacy that arise as a consequence. Fisheries Management Scotland has accredited observer status to NASCO and AW attended as part of the NGO group.

This was the last meeting for Dr Peter Hutchison, secretary to NASCO. His replacement was announced as Dr Emma Hatfield, previously of Marine Scotland Science and EU DG Mare, who will take up the role of Secretary to NASCO on 1 October. The official report of the meeting is now available[[1]](#footnote-1).

1. **ICES Scientific advice**

The representative of ICES presented the report of the Advisory Committee[[2]](#footnote-2). It was noted that:

* + 2016 catches were the second lowest reported catch in the timeseries after 2014
  + Scotland has the highest level of catch and release within NASCO (90%).
  + Nominal catch of Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic as 0.05% of the worldwide farmed production (including Chile).
  + A review of major threats to Atlantic salmon in Norway was noted. Escaped farm salmon are considered the current largest threat, with salmon lice also identified as an important threat. The cost of treating GS in Norway is £100m to date.
  + Poor juvenile recruitment in UK (England and Wales) was noted, and this was associated with high winter flows and temperatures and relatively low number of spawners.
  + Bycatch in the Icelandic maceral fishery was identified at 5.4 fish per 1000 tonnes mackerel, which is similar to previously reported levels. Screening for PIT and RFID tags in fish processing plants is in place in several countries.
  + Habitat fragmentation and water quality degradation are two of the most important stressors that have contributed to reductions in salmon. There are clear remedial actions which can be of great benefit to populations.
  + The report includes information on key prey species and inter-species competition, and the associated impacts of climate change. This has resulted in large changes in the preferred feeding areas for herring, mackerel and capelin since the mid-1990s.

1. **Report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board**

The Report of the Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board was presented and focussed on various tracking studies arising from SALSEA.

1. **Theme-based Special Session: Understanding the Risks and Benefits of Hatchery and Stocking Activities to Wild Atlantic Salmon Populations**

The objective for the Special Session was to facilitate an exchange of information relating to understanding the risks and benefits of hatchery and stocking activities to wild Atlantic salmon populations. The session started with three presentations on the risks and benefits of hatchery and stocking activities (Dylan Fraser, Canada)[[3]](#footnote-3), approaches to minimising negative consequences of stocking (Kyle Young, Zurich)[[4]](#footnote-4), and approaches to prevent the loss of populations at high risk of extinction (Arne Sivertsen, Norway)[[5]](#footnote-5). These were followed by updates on the policy relating to hatchery and stocking activities in Canada, Wales, France and Norway. The negative consequences of stocking were widely recognised, and Kyle Young suggested a novel alternative to stocking – the capture, movement and stocking of wild fry. It is possible that this approach may be trialled in Ireland.

1. **Special Session: Planning for the International Year of the Salmon**

The Council held a half-day Special Session on the International Year of the Salmon, which included an update on the work of the International Year of the Salmon Committees and IYS planning. A report of the session is in preparation.

1. **Special Session: Evaluation of Annual Progress Reports under the 2013 - 2018 Implementation Plans**

The 2017 APRs are subject to a critical evaluation by the Implementation Plan/Annual Progress Report Review Group to ensure that jurisdictions had provided a clear account of progress in implementing and evaluating the actions detailed in their Implementation Plans, along with the information required under the Convention. Scotland was congratulated by the USA and EU on efforts to manage mixed stock fisheries. The NGOs questioned Scotland’s approach to aquaculture and in particular the approach to regulation of sea lice. Mike Palmer responded on behalf of the Scottish Government, noting that the Scottish Government seeks to take a balanced approach which supports the sustainable growth of aquaculture, balanced with the protection of wild fisheries. He emphasised the obligations and responsibilities to protect Atlantic salmon and noted that wild fisheries legislation is planned within this session. He stated that SG would be open to proposals to protect wild Atlantic salmon.

Following a question by the NGOs, the Irish delegation helpfully set out their position on impacts of sea lice, observing that sea lice have a potential significant and detrimental effect on Atlantic salmon. The most recent study, based on 30 years of data from the River Eriff (national index catchment) demonstrated that returns of wild salmon can be reduced by more than 50% in years with high lice levels. In the absence of serious impacts from sea lice, returns might be expected to be twice as large as those observed.

1. **North-East Atlantic Commission**

Discussion in NEAC focussed on ICES advice, the threat posed by *Gyrodactylus salaris*, mixed stock fisheries conducted by members of the Commission, and development of a risk framework for the Faroese fishery (for which there has been a moratorium since 2000). The official report of the meeting is available[[6]](#footnote-6).

1. **West Greenland Commission**

Discussion in WGC focussed on ICES advice, the multi annual regulatory measure for salmon fishing at West Greenland, MSFs conducted by members of the Commission, regulatory measures and sampling in the West Greenland Fishery. Greenland plans to manage its salmon fishery in 2017 as follows: the quota for the 2017 fishery will be set at 45 tonnes; there will be no factory landings; the season will remain the same as 2016; the awareness campaign on reporting catches will continue; validation of catches through phone surveys will continue. The official report of the meeting is available[[7]](#footnote-7).

1. **North American Commission**

AW did not attend the NEC, but the official report of the meeting is available[[8]](#footnote-8).

1. **Future Meetings**

The 35th Annual Meeting will be held in the United States from 12-15 June 2018.

The 36th Annual Meeting will be held in Norway from 4-7 June 2019.

1. **Discussion outside the meetings**

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of NASCO meetings is the opportunity to engage with NGOs and officials from other jurisdictions, as well as the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with officials from Scotland. Simon Dryden and Mike Palmer (Marine Scotland Deputy Director) were both in attendance and this presented the opportunity to discuss a range of issues including, wild fisheries reform, fisheries management planning and aquaculture, both on a bilateral basis and in conjunction with other officials. As noted above, the input from Ireland was particularly helpful in this regard. In addition, useful discussions took place with Irish officials in relation to monitoring wild fish for impacts from sea lice – a key issue in Scotland in relation to aquaculture planning and Aquaculture Stewardship Council accreditation.

1. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/reports_annual/CNL_17_59_Report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/2017%20papers/CNL_17_8_ACOM_Advice.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/2017%20papers/CNL_17_41_DylanFraser.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/2017%20papers/CNL_17_40_KyleYoung.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/2017%20papers/CNL_17_43_ArneSivertsen.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/reports_annual/NEA_17_11_Report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/reports_annual/WGC_17_9_WGCReport.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.nasco.int/pdf/reports_annual/NAC_17_7_Report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)