

PRESS RELEASE

Nineteenth Annual Meeting

**Tórshavn, Faroe Islands
June 3-7 2002**

“The Promotion of international co-operation on the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon stocks.”

These are the objectives of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), which held its 19th Annual meeting in the fishing community of Tórshavn, on the Faroe Islands.

“There is only one cause for the members of NASCO and that is the future of the wild salmon. Our reward will be their continued sustainable existence.”

– Jacque Robichaud, President of NASCO

The members of NASCO are Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

The Parties have made real progress in addressing the poor state of the wild Atlantic salmon stocks. At a special session on the application of the Precautionary Approach to salmon habitat protection and restoration, it became clear that we are moving into a period of net gain of habitat after years of decline. Partnerships with business, communities and organizations and fish management agencies have contributed to this process of providing a healthy environment in order for the stocks to flourish. Significant work has also been undertaken in the area of habitat reclamation and in developing inventories of habitat information, which will also aid wild salmon recoveries. This substantial progress has shown very clearly that the Precautionary Approach to the management of wild salmon is not just a theory but has contributed towards the very real progress seen in the improved habitat of the wild Atlantic salmon.

In the area of fisheries management, in applying the Precautionary Approach, NASCO is a leader among international organizations, where the NASCO Parties have significantly reduced efforts on mixed stock fisheries for salmon. A decision structure to assist in making sound management decisions in Atlantic salmon fisheries has been developed and will now be applied widely. A Precautionary Approach to

the intentional introductions and transfers of fish species, aquaculture and to transgenics will also be developed in the coming year.

All NASCO Parties appreciate the sacrifices made by Greenland fishermen in reducing their commercial fishery. However, NASCO Parties recognize there will be an on-going requirement to meet subsistence needs in areas such as Greenland. Major steps have been taken to reduce the harvest at West Greenland and this will assist in the rebuilding of many depleted stocks.

Despite the progress made to date, the Parties remain concerned about the poor status of many wild Atlantic salmon stocks. Although Northern European stocks have experienced gains, North American and Southern European stocks are still giving great cause for concern. The status of stocks in the southern portion of the North American range is especially tenuous. NASCO encouraged all Parties to redouble their efforts in restoring depleted stocks.

Marine mortality remains an obstacle in limiting the rebuilding of stocks that are at or below conservation limits. To address this issue, NASCO co-sponsored an international symposium this past spring bringing together, for the first time, the collective knowledge of the international community on factors contributing to marine mortality in the Baltic Sea and the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

NASCO has established an International Cooperative Salmon Research Board to provide a new cooperative effort in addressing the marine mortality issues. The first step has been to coordinate significant existing efforts. The Parties themselves, along with their partners, will have invested approximately £4 million (US\$6 million) in 2002 in order to address this issue. Although an initial amount has been provided to fund future programs for joint research under the Board, the Board will need to seek additional funds to enable it to adequately address the causes of marine mortality. It is expected that Parties will commit to providing additional new funds of over £500,000 (US\$750,000). Efforts will be underway shortly to seek additional contributions from private companies and individuals with an interest in the conservation of wild salmon stocks, so as to fill gaps in the current programmes.

It was decided unanimously that Mr. Jacque Robichaud from Canada would be re-elected as President of NASCO. Mr. Ole Tougaard from the European Union was elected as Vice-President.

There were representatives from 14 non-government organizations attending the meeting from North America and Europe. They participated positively with their own papers on issues related to wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

The next annual meeting of NASCO is scheduled for June 2 – 6, 2003 in Edinburgh, Scotland at the invitation of the European Union on behalf of the Scottish Executive.

The report of the annual meeting, including the annexed documents, as well as other information on NASCO can be freely accessed at the NASCO website: www.nasco.int.

“By the results it has achieved at its 19th Annual Meeting, NASCO has shown itself to be alive and well and continues to contribute in its work to the survival of the wild Atlantic salmon.”

– Jacque Robichaud, President of NASCO

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