



*Embargoed for 12:00 GMT,  
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# Call to Action

*To restore Wild Atlantic Salmon and assure a legacy of healthy populations for future generations, all the State Members of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization must act now to address the most serious threats to the survival of this great wild species.*

## **WWF and ASF call on the Delegates to NASCO 2001 to adopt resolutions that:**

- ◆ **INSTRUCT** all member countries to assess and classify the status of all salmon rivers within their borders and present to NASCO 2002 a plan of action aimed at eliminating the major threats to salmon and their habitat;
- ◆ **IMPLEMENT** measures to close all mixed-stock fisheries for wild Atlantic salmon, establish permanent “no-take” marine protected areas for salmon and provide appropriate compensation for adversely affected fishermen;
- ◆ **DECIDE** to establish a code of conduct for Responsible Aquaculture Industry Operations within the boundaries of the NASCO member countries by NASCO 2002 and full compliance within NASCO by 2005; and
- ◆ **URGENTLY REQUEST** member governments to establish, before NASCO 2002, gene banks that would ensure the survival of salmon stocks in rivers faced with imminent extinction.

# The Status of Wild Atlantic Salmon: A River by River Assessment

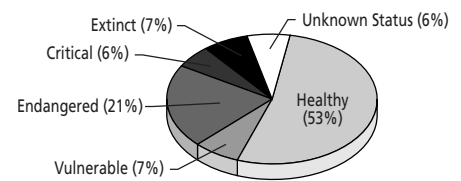
(Published by WWF, May 2001)

## Summary of findings

Based on nation-by-nation reports from the remaining 19 countries still hosting populations of wild Atlantic salmon, this study finds that:

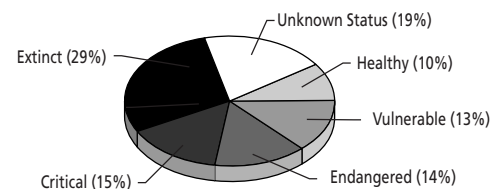
- Wild Atlantic salmon populations in one third of the rivers of North America and Europe are endangered;
- Wild Atlantic salmon stocks have already disappeared completely from at least 309 river systems in Europe and North America;
- Wild Atlantic salmon are on the brink of extinction in Portugal, Estonia, Poland, the United States and adjoining parts of southern Canada;
- Nearly 90 percent of the known healthy populations of wild salmon are found in only four countries – Norway, Iceland, Scotland and Ireland;
- In the remainder of the range, 85 percent of wild Atlantic salmon populations are categorized as either *Vulnerable*, *Endangered* or *Critical*; and
- The production of farmed salmon in the North Atlantic is 600,000 tonnes annually – which is 300 times greater than the annual catch of wild salmon. This means that for every wild salmon caught, one tonne of farmed salmon is produced.

Aggregated categorization of salmon-bearing rivers in the four countries<sup>1</sup> that host the majority (more than 90%) of the remaining healthy rivers



1. Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Scotland

Aggregated categorization of salmon-bearing rivers in 14 countries<sup>2</sup> where the majority of rivers are threatened (vulnerable, endangered, critical and/or extinct)



2. Denmark, England and Wales, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, N. Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Sweden - West, United States (Canada was not included since 72% of its rivers are categorized as Unknown Status)

## Major impacts on wild Atlantic salmon

This study finds that the major threats to wild Atlantic salmon populations are:

- **Overfishing** in the sea, estuaries and rivers reduces the stock size to below a critical level;
- **Hydropower dams and other man-made river obstructions** form severe obstacles to upstream and downstream migration of salmon, reducing population viability;
- **River engineering schemes** (e.g. for flood defence or navigation) result in direct habitat loss (e.g. through channel deepening) and disconnection of the main river from the complex of floodplain habitats (e.g. ox bow lakes, channels and islands). Habitat degradation also occurs through the resulting changes in ecological processes such as nutrient cycling, sedimentation and flooding;
- **Pollution** (from industry, urban settlements and agriculture) resulting in acid rain, inputs of excessive nutrients and upstream sediments, heavy metals and other toxic substances, including endocrine disruptors. These pollutants degrade the salmon habitats and some have direct impacts on species mortality and behaviour; and
- **Salmon aquaculture** results in erosion of the natural gene pool through interbreeding with escapees, resulting in a competitive disadvantage to the wild stock. Diseases and sea lice transferred from caged salmon to wild salmon are a severe hazard to juveniles in countries where salmon farming is predominant. In countries with major salmon aquaculture industries (Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Canada and the United States), which impact upon nearly two-thirds of the salmon rivers in the Atlantic salmon's range, salmon aquaculture now constitutes a major threat to wild salmon stocks – if not *the* major threat.