

NASCO'S FUTURE: A VISION STATEMENT

The Atlantic Salmon's Future at Stake

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) was created by the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean in 1983, and includes Canada, Denmark (for Faroes and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway, Russia and the United States of America. It promotes conservation, restoration and rational management of Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean through international cooperation.

NASCO's Future: A Vision Statement was produced by a panel of four distinguished individuals with long experience in NASCO affairs. They recommend 11 actions to strengthen NASCO.

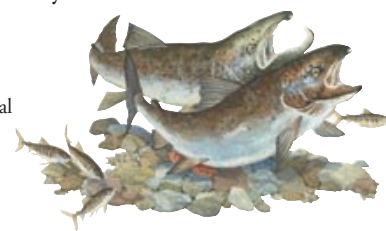
A CLEAR NEED FOR CHANGE

- During the 20-year lifetime of NASCO, world populations of wild Atlantic salmon have declined by 50%.
- NASCO is not structured to deal with the modern day threats to wild Atlantic salmon. NASCO was created a generation ago, at a time when Atlantic salmon populations were under siege from commercial drift nets on the high seas. Despite NASCO's success in reducing these fisheries, today's wild salmon numbers are generally dropping even more quickly, making it urgent that NASCO act decisively on new threats. There is now a clear and present danger of losing the wild Atlantic salmon from much of its traditional range.
- Increased Mortality at Sea: For unknown reasons, the death rate for wild Atlantic salmon has risen markedly during the ocean part of their lifecycle over the past decade. Scientists have increased the monthly ocean mortality rate in models from 1% to 3% in determining overall returns, with some populations experiencing much higher mortality. Among the suspected problems are increased predation, depleted food supplies and by-catch of juvenile salmon in pelagic fisheries.
- Endangered Status: Many salmon populations on both sides of the Atlantic are reaching critically low levels and governments have officially listed some as endangered.
- Salmon Aquaculture: Aquaculture continues to expand, with severe impacts on wild Atlantic salmon, especially those already fading towards oblivion.
- Losing an Economic Powerhouse: Wild Atlantic salmon are an important component of the rural life of communities around the North Atlantic basin. The species funnels millions of dollars into economies. In Canada, the recreational fishery for Atlantic salmon presently brings into the economy \$145M US¹; in Ireland 11M Euros (\$13M US)²; and in Scotland £73M (\$129M US)³. Salmon angling provides badly-needed employment to rural communities. Wild Atlantic salmon have been important contributors to the economies of Greenland and Faroe Islands. The economic benefit is similar in Norway, Iceland, and northwest Russia.
- The Public Spotlight: The plight of such an extraordinary species deserves to be heard. The general public must be informed about the sobering status of the wild Atlantic salmon, a mainstay of the culture, history and environment of thousands of rivers that empty into the North Atlantic. It is a symbol of healthy rivers and oceans. Its loss heralds the loss of environmental health.
- NASCO lacks the sense of urgency one might expect, given these alarming reductions. Lack of an international convention that clarifies NASCO's mandate and authority in dealing with modern threats may constrain NASCO Parties from taking politically difficult decisions on salmon conservation measures within their own jurisdictions.
- Preventing further decline of wild Atlantic salmon will require a change in the way NASCO conducts its business.

¹ Canadian figures compiled by ASF from a variety of sources

² *An Economic/Socio-Economic Evaluation of Wild Salmon in Ireland*, study by INDECON, for Ireland's Central Fisheries Board, April 2003

³ *The Economic Impact of Game and Coarse Angling in Scotland*, study by Glasgow Caledonian University and Cogentsi Research International, for the Scottish Executive, March 2004.



A WAY AHEAD

- Four leading NASCO participants are advancing a constructive and dynamic new vision to allow NASCO to more effectively protect the wild Atlantic salmon from further decline.
- Tangible, constructive headway beyond the initial success of NASCO, which concentrated on eliminating huge catches of migrating salmon in ocean commercial fisheries off Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and in the Norwegian Sea, must be made and soon.
- The Vision Statement and Agenda for Action will better position representative NASCO governments by providing the mandate and clout to deal with the ever-growing threats of salmon aquaculture, habitat deterioration and reduced survival of wild Atlantic salmon at sea.
- The authors recommend that a Working Party be established to consider various ways of strengthening NASCO, including adding new language to the treaty to broaden its legal authority, and that the Working Party consult closely with NASCO non governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Time is running out for wild Atlantic salmon. It is essential to advance the New Vision and Agenda for Action at the 2004 NASCO meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, June 7 to 11.
- NASCO should establish a working party for the future of Atlantic salmon at its June 2004 meeting.

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

Based on this new vision of a reinvigorated NASCO role in saving Atlantic salmon, with a new legal mandate, a new guiding principle of ecosystem-based management and a new orientation toward public awareness and NGO participation, we propose the following agenda for action aimed at achieving dramatic progress on several fronts over the next several years. This agenda for action is elaborated in more detail in a companion document.

1. Establish a Working Party to consider various ways of strengthening NASCO, including adding new language to the treaty to broaden its legal authority.

A NASCO Working Party should be formed at the 2004 meeting to consider and recommend to the Council various ways of reinforcing NASCO so that it can act more decisively and urgently to deal with all threats to wild Atlantic salmon throughout their North Atlantic range. It should hear proposals for adding new language to the NASCO Convention to give the organization a broader legal mandate, as well as for actions that can be taken without amending the Convention, such as more transparent reporting.

2. Develop a common strategy with other North Atlantic fisheries organizations for minimizing pelagic by-catch.

NASCO should work closely with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to develop joint strategies for minimizing by-catch of salmon in fisheries managed by these organizations.

3. Strengthen the role of NASCO in habitat conservation and restoration.

NASCO should establish a clear mandate to establish broad targets for habitat conservation and restoration, to be achieved through policies and methods to be determined by the Member States, and to require reporting to NASCO of progress in achieving those targets.

4. Make a stronger push for the establishment of river-by-river Conservation Limits in all salmon rivers.

NASCO should establish a new mandate to guide national efforts to create river-by-river conservation limits. In cases where data is not available for the calculation of such a limit, NASCO should establish a default conservation limit.



AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

5. Require strict enforcement of Conservation Limits in mixed stock fisheries.

NASCO should require that all countries other than Greenland and Faroe Islands conducting Atlantic salmon fisheries within their 12-mile limits monitor and enforce regulations necessary to ensure that all stocks harvested meet their annual conservation targets. If it cannot be demonstrated that all stocks harvested in a mixed-stock fishery do meet their annual conservation targets, NASCO should call for the closure of the fishery by the Member State in question.

6. Launch an initiative on endangered populations.

NASCO should launch a special initiative, based on the mechanism of national plans and detailed national reporting, that gives high priority in national salmon policies to the recovery of endangered populations of Atlantic salmon.

7. Initiate negotiations toward an international regime on aquaculture management to protect wild salmon.

While continuing to develop measures for regulation of aquaculture to minimize its impact on wild salmon stocks, NASCO should add that subject to its legal mandate. In the longer-run NASCO should initiate a process of negotiating an international regulatory regime for management of aquaculture to protect wild salmon stocks.

8. Create a new methodology for estimating unreported and illegal catch.

NASCO should hire an appropriate independent specialist to create a new methodology for estimating illegal and unreported catch to be applied by all Contracting Parties.

9. Develop a plan with NGOs for partnership in regard to prioritization of research and funding for research on marine survival.

Based on the principle that the International Salmon Research Board should work in partnership with NGOs in serving as a clearing house on research on salmon survival at sea and in raising funds for such research, NASCO should work with relevant NGOs on a plan for cooperation in carrying out those tasks.

10. Adopt a new strategy for public awareness, openness and NGO participation.

NASCO should adopt a broad strategy with specific goals for greater public awareness. These goals should include increasing the participation in its activities by NGOs, in part by revising the present rules of procedure for NGO participation in meetings, devising new mechanisms for collaboration with NGOs to enhance public understanding, and establishing a new policy on enhanced relations with the media.

11. Publish an annual official NASCO report on the status of Atlantic salmon stocks.

NASCO should issue its own annual report, in non-technical language, on how salmon populations are faring, to the general public as a central element in its strategy for generating more public awareness and support for the measures necessary to save threatened salmon populations.



CONTACT INFORMATION



The views expressed in the report *NASCO's Future: A Vision Statement* are solely those of the authors. The publishers below can provide contact information for the authors and other background information.



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For complete biographies, see the full report, page 4 *NASCO's Future: A Vision Statement*.