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|  | <p><i>International Atlantic Salmon Research Board</i></p> <p><i>Report of the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board</i></p> | <p>ICR(24)03</p> <p>Agenda Item: 3a</p> |
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Report of the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board

By Video Conference

26, 27 & 29 February 2024

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1 The Chair, Martha Robertson (Canada), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the meeting. She noted that whilst the other participants were attending virtually, she was in NASCO Headquarters with the Secretariat to assist with the smooth running of the meeting.

1.2 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

2.1 The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board) adopted its Agenda, ICRIS(24)04 (Annex 2).

3. Report of the Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to Identify Potential Research Priorities

3.1 The Chair reminded participants that, as part of the review of its overall vision, scope and purpose, the Board agreed during its 2023 Inter-Sessional Meeting, [ICR\(23\)02](#), that, prior to seeking funding opportunities, the Board should identify its research priorities to help focus its efforts. To facilitate this work, the Board agreed to ask its Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) to identify a prioritised list of research needs. At the Board's 2023 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(23\)10](#), the Board agreed 'Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board's Scientific Advisory Group to Identify Potential Research Priorities', [ICR\(23\)14](#). The SAG met in October and November 2023 to address these Terms of Reference.

3.2 The SAG Chair (Peder Fiske, Norway) presented the 'Report of the Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to Identify Potential Research Priorities', ICRIS(24)02. His presentation is available as document ICRIS(24)05.

3.3 The Board member for Canada noted that she was pleased to see that the freshwater environment and its impacts on marine mortality were included on the list, as many recent studies show the freshwater impact on at-sea survival.

3.4 The Board Chair thanked the SAG Chair for his presentation and the SAG for its work in developing the 'Prioritised List of Research Needs and Topics for Consideration by the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board'.

4. Consideration of the ‘Prioritised List of Research Needs and Topics for Consideration by the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board’

4.1 The Chair asked participants to consider the report of the SAG’s work and the prioritised list of research needs. She noted that while the SAG had grouped the five research topics into three rankings, the Board may wish to consider ranking each of the five topics individually. Therefore, she asked the Board members present, and the NGO representative, to submit their rankings to the Secretariat. The rankings received were as follows:

| Topic | Rank | Score |
|---|------|---|
| Basin-wide patterns of marine growth and survival of Atlantic salmon | 1 | Total: 12 <i>Individual Scores: 1, 1, 1, 5, 1, 1, 1, 1</i> |
| Migration of salmon at sea | 2 | Total: 21 <i>Individual Scores: 3, 2, 2, 4, 2, 2, 4, 2</i> |
| The impact of the freshwater environment on mortality occurring at sea | 3 | Total: 25 <i>Individual Scores: 2, 3, 3, 2, 5, 5, 2, 3</i> |
| Potential interactions between pink salmon and Atlantic salmon | 4 | Total: 28 <i>Individual Scores: 5, 4, 4, 1, 3, 4, 3, 4</i> |
| Quantification of the mortality of Atlantic salmon caught as bycatch in pelagic and coastal fisheries | 5 | Total: 34 <i>Individual Scores: 4, 5, 5, 3, 4, 3, 5, 5</i> |

4.2 The Board noted that, while it had prioritised the topics in the same order as the SAG, there were greater gaps between the individual topics. The Board, therefore, agreed to rank the five topics individually.

4.3 The Board agreed its prioritised list of research needs as:

1. Basin-wide patterns of marine growth and survival of Atlantic salmon.
2. Migration of salmon at sea.
3. The impact of the freshwater environment on mortality occurring at sea.
4. Potential interactions between pink salmon and Atlantic salmon.
5. Quantification of the mortality of Atlantic salmon caught as bycatch in pelagic and coastal fisheries.

4.4 The Board considered a Draft Statement, ICRIS(24)06, to publicise this decision. The Board adopted a ‘Statement of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board on Future Research Priorities’, ICR(24)01 (Annex 3) and asked the Secretariat to publish this Statement on the Board’s website.

5. Revision of the ‘Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund’

5.1 During its 2023 Inter-Sessional Meeting, [ICR\(23\)02](#), the Board had agreed that it would revise its ‘Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund’, ICR(01)10. It was agreed that the revised document would include ethical guidance. The Board member for Canada had worked with the Secretariat and Chair to develop ‘Proposed Revised Guidelines on Acceptance

of Voluntary Contributions to the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund’, [ICR\(23\)05](#). The Board had considered this document at its 2023 Annual Meeting, [CNL\(23\)10](#), and agreed that the Secretariat should work with the Chair to revise the document further, taking the discussions into account.

5.2 The Chair referred participants to the ‘Updated Proposed Revised Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund’ ICRIS(24)03, which contained the revisions proposed by the Chair and Secretariat in line with the discussions held during the Board’s 2023 Annual Meeting.

5.3 The Board considered the proposed revisions and adopted its ‘Revised Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund’, ICR(24)02.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Board discussed what should be done with the prioritised research topics. It was agreed that, at this time, the Board should focus any of its own new research on the top priority, namely ‘basin-wide patterns of marine growth and survival of Atlantic salmon’. However, the Board noted that it wished to continue to be informed of research into the other four priorities and agreed it would support research, in any way it could, into these other topics.

6.2 The Board discussed whether new research was a possibility for the Board. It was noted that most of the funds in the Board’s accounts were ring-fenced for other projects and that, recently, the Board had not been very successful in attracting non ring-fenced funding. The Board discussed whether it was best to develop a project and seek funding for it once a detailed proposal was in place, or whether to seek funds and then begin developing a new project proposal. The Board agreed to task the SAG with drafting an outline that describes the requirements of a basin-wide marine growth project based on adult scales and adopted Terms of Reference for this work, ICRIS(24)08. It was agreed that the SAG would co-ordinate a single meeting or a series of meetings to conduct this work, which could be in-person or virtual as decided by the Chairs of the Board and SAG and in consultation with the Secretariat. The Board agreed that a draft project outline would be made available to the Board prior to the first session of its 2024 Annual Meeting on 2 June. The SAG Chair agreed to provide an overview presentation of the SAG’s work at that meeting. It was noted that the SAG may then need to work further, prior to the Board’s second meeting on 4 June, to present a further developed draft outline to the Board at that meeting.

6.3 The Board noted that it would consider its next steps in relation to the SAG’s output further at the second session of the Board’s 2024 Annual Meeting.

7. Other Business

7.1 There was no other business.

8. Report of the Meeting

8.1 The Board agreed the Report of its Meeting by correspondence.

9. Close of the Meeting

9.1 The Chair thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

2024 Inter-Sessional Board Meeting – List of Participants

Canada

**Cindy Breau
Martha Robertson (Chair)

Denmark (In respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

**Rebekka Nygård Bak

European Union

**Cathal Gallagher

Iceland

**Guðni Magnús Eiríksson

Norway

**Raoul Bierach
*Helge Dyrendal

Russian Federation

*Sergey Prusov (virtual participant). Acting Board member for the 2024 IS Meeting

United Kingdom

**Nora Hanson

United States

**Tim Sheehan

NGOs

Ken Whelan (Nominated NGO Representative)

Secretariat

Emma Hatfield
Louise Forero

**Nominated Board Member

*Board Adviser

ICRIS(24)04

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By Video Conference

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Agenda

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Report of the Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to Identify Potential Research Priorities
4. Consideration of the ‘Prioritised List of Research Needs and Topics for Consideration by the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board’
5. Revision of the ‘Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund’
6. Next Steps
7. Other Business
8. Report of the Meeting
9. Close of the Meeting

ICR(24)01

Statement of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board on Future Research Priorities

Given that the vision of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board (the Board) is:

‘Factors causing salmon mortality at sea are understood to the level that supports the development of management actions by Parties to reduce mortality to recover, protect and conserve salmon stocks’

and in the context of the climate change emergency, the Board has undertaken a review of its immediate research priorities. In doing so:

The Board has agreed the need to prioritise research into the future prospects for Atlantic salmon populations towards 2050, on both a basin-wide and regional scale, so as to support an adaptive management approach to their protection and conservation into the future.

The top research priorities for the Board in support of this, ranked in order of importance to the Board, are:

1. Basin-wide patterns of marine growth and survival of Atlantic salmon.
2. Migration of salmon at sea.
3. The impact of freshwater environment on mortality occurring at sea.
4. Potential interactions between pink salmon and Atlantic salmon.
5. Quantification of the mortality of Atlantic salmon caught as bycatch in pelagic and coastal fisheries.

The Board wishes to be informed of, and support in any way it can, research into each of these priority areas. However, the Board has agreed to pursue new research activities into addressing the top ranked area at this time, namely ‘basin-wide patterns of marine growth and survival of Atlantic salmon’.