

## **ICR(15)6**

### ***Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board***

***Hotel North 2, Happy Valley – Goose Bay,  
Monday 1 June, 2015***

#### **1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Raoul Bierach, opened the meeting and welcomed members of the Board, their scientific advisers and observers to Happy Valley – Goose Bay.
- 1.2 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

#### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Board adopted its agenda, ICR(15)4 (Annex 2).

#### **3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1 The Board elected Mr Rory Saunders (USA) as its Chairman, to serve from the close of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board. The Board thanked Raoul Bierach for his excellent work for the Board over the last four years

#### **4. Report of the Scientific Advisory Group**

- 4.1 The Chairman of the Board's Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), Dr Niall Ó Maoiléidigh, presented a report on the Group's meeting, SAG(15)7 (Annex 3). During its meeting the SAG had reviewed:
  - the updated inventory of marine research. It was noted that information had been compiled for the ECOKNOWS project and would be provided to the Secretariat for inclusion in the inventory before it is uploaded to the website;
  - the report of the Telemetry Workshop (see section 5 below);
  - an application by the Atlantic Salmon Trust and University College Dublin for funding from the Board. A sum of £6,000 was sought for a project to investigate the application of eDNA technology in the assessment of pelagic by-catch of Atlantic salmon. The SAG noted that the Board's current priority is research to partition mortality of salmon at sea through an international telemetry programme. The SAG noted with interest the proposed project and would be interested in the findings, particularly if these clarify the scale of by-catch not just the presence or absence of salmon. The SAG noted that there are other ongoing initiatives that could increase understanding of by-catch including a PIT tagging programme of pelagic fish and the International Ecosystem Survey of the Nordic Seas (IESSNS);

- progress in establishing a metadatabase of salmon survey data and sample collections of relevance to mortality of salmon at sea. Since last year, some inconsistencies in the entries for the nine candidate datasets had been addressed and additional information included. The metadatabase had been made available on the Board's website. New candidate datasets had been identified and new information had been prepared for the SALSEA-Merge PGNAPES genetic and feeding databases and they will be included in the metadatabase after the Annual Meeting;
- a progress report on a project funded (£18,300) in 2014 by the IASRB to support further development of the North American genetic baseline and to undertake finer scale assignments of salmon caught at West Greenland, SAG(15)4.

4.2 In the light of the recommendations from the SAG, the Board decided:

- to ask the Parties to provide to the Secretariat, by 1 July, any changes or updates for the inventory, including the additional project referred to in 4.1 above, prior to it being uploaded to the IASRB website;
- to include the new datasets for the SALSEA-Merge PGNAPES genetic and feeding databases in the metadatabase; the SAG Chairman will follow-up on the West Greenland Sampling Programme Biological Characteristics dataset.

## **5. Report of the IASRB Telemetry Workshop**

5.1 In 2014, the Board had endorsed the need for an international acoustic tracking programme and adopted a Resolution (ICR(14)10) encouraging Parties to continue the development of local collaborative telemetry projects, encouraging the development of large international collaborative projects building on local efforts and encouraging Parties to make efforts to identify funding sources. The Board had noted that the telemetry programme should build on the success and identity of the SALSEA Programme and had recognised that, following the Workshop, there may be a role for the Board in coordinating efforts and supporting fund raising initiatives. In order to take this initiative forward, the Board had supported the convening of a Telemetry Workshop which was held in London in December 2014 and was co-convened by Tim Sheehan (USA) and Ted Potter (European Union). The report of the Telemetry Workshop (ICR(15)3) was presented by Mr Potter.

5.2 Information presented at the Workshop indicated that studies involving acoustic tracking of post-smolts have been ongoing in the North American Commission area for many years and have successfully tracked fish from rivers draining into the Gulf of St Lawrence (through the Strait of Belle Isle and the Cabot Strait) and from rivers draining into the Gulf of Maine up past Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. In comparison, many studies in the North-East Atlantic Commission (NEAC) area have been confined to estuary or fjord limits. The Workshop divided into three groups, on the basis of NASCO Commission areas, to consider ideas for new collaborative telemetry studies. It was noted that it would be important to develop links with groups working on acoustic telemetry with other species but the salmon projects should be steered by researchers working on salmon. While the Workshop had not been able to establish project Steering Committees, it had developed outline project plans (including testable

hypotheses, equipment and support needs, timelines for field work and duration, ball park budget costs and funding options) for future telemetry-based studies to estimate and partition marine mortality of salmon and improve understanding of migration and distribution patterns and project leaders had been identified. It was noted, however, that the project leaders identified at the Workshop might not be those that would ultimately take the projects forward. Nonetheless, they will be an initial point of contact for the projects.

- 5.3 The Workshop had recognised that the IASRB could play an important role by serving as a forum for information exchange and collaboration among research groups, by; facilitating coordination; supporting fund-raising initiatives; and providing funds as resources permit. The Workshop had proposed that the Secretary should write to the European Commission, DG Research, to update them on the Board's focus since completion of the SALSEA-Merge project. It was also hoped that this might influence the focus of future calls for research proposals, e.g. under Horizon 2020 as it did under the FP7 Programme.
- 5.4 The Secretary indicated that, following consultation with the Board, he had written to DG Research as requested by the Workshop to update them on developments since the completion of the SALSEA-Merge project, indicating the Board's current research priorities and offering to meet to discuss the outcome of the Telemetry Workshop.
- 5.5 The Board recognised that if the international telemetry programme is to proceed, it would be important to liaise with the outline project leaders with a view to following progress and, where appropriate, to provide support to assist with their implementation. It was noted that there may be a need to start with local projects and gradually move seaward. This was the approach to the telemetry projects in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Close collaboration with scientists working on other species would be important. In this regard it was noted that networks of telemetrists have been established in North America e.g. the East Coast Atlantic Cooperative Telemetry Network (ACT). The Board was informed of the recent establishment of a European Aquatic Animal Telemetry Network (EAATN). This group will hold its first meeting at the Third International Conference on Fish Telemetry to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia in July.
- 5.6 Mr Mark Saunders, representative of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), provided an update on the International Year of the Salmon (IYS). The IYS is an intensive burst of internationally coordinated, interdisciplinary, stimulating scientific research focused on salmon, and their relation to people. New technologies, observations and analytical methods, some developed exclusively during the IYS, will be focused on gaps in knowledge that prevent the clear and timely understanding of the future of salmon in a rapidly changing world. The IYS will support research under five broad scientific themes:
1. Status of Salmon: to understand the present status of salmon and their environment;
  2. Salmon in a changing salmosphere: to understand and quantify the effects of natural environmental variability and anthropogenic factors affecting salmon distribution and abundance and to make projections of their future changes;

3. New Frontiers: to develop new technologies and analytical methods to advance salmon science and to explore the uncharted regions of the salmosphere;
4. Human Dimension: to investigate the cultural, social, and economic elements that depend upon sustainable salmon populations;
5. Information Systems: to develop an integrated archive of accessible electronic data collected during the IYS and tools to support future research.

5.7 The Board recognised that there were some clear synergies between NPAFC's proposed IYS and the Board's international telemetry programme. The Board recognises the high value of the SALSEA brand and the strong impact of NASCO as the international forum for consultation and cooperation on wild Atlantic salmon. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to an international telemetry project under the SALSEA brand, perhaps named SALSEA-Track. Specifically the Board will support SALSEA-Track as a continuing commitment to understanding the factors affecting mortality of salmon at sea, to make funds available to prepare a vision statement for SALSEA-Track and to advance existing initiatives towards an integrated collaborative telemetry programme. Last year, the Board had recognised that in order to support fund-raising it would need to provide some 'seed corn' funding. This had not been done because it had been decided to wait until the findings of the Telemetry Workshop were available, and their implications for the Board were known. In the case of the SALSEA Programme, several million pounds had been raised with 'seed corn' funding of £30,000. The Chairman indicated that it would now be important to raise some funds and that Members of the Board should be consulted to see if funds could be made available.

5.8 The representative of the European Union indicated after reviewing research priorities, he was exploring the possibility of obtaining funds for two projects relating to marine survival of salmon, one regarding telemetry studies, and the other in relation to impacts of sea lice on wild salmonids.

## **6. Progress reports on projects funded by the Board**

6.1 Progress reports on projects funded by the Board had been made to the SAG. Last year, the Board had agreed to make £12,000 available to support the Telemetry Workshop (see item 5 above) and a project to support the further development of the North American genetic baseline and to undertake finer scale assignments of salmon caught at West Greenland. A report on the Workshop is contained in ICR(15)3 and on the genetic study in SAG(15)4.

6.2 In 2012, the Board had funded two projects (£6,000 each) entitled '*Genetic stock of origin identification of European salmon captured at West Greenland*' and '*Genetic stock identification of salmon caught in the Faroes fishery*'. Last year, progress reports on both of these projects were presented to the Board (SAG(14)5 and SAG(14)6 respectively) and it was noted that the obligations for reporting back to the Board had been met. No further progress reports were therefore made although updates are included in the ACOM advice, CNL(15)8.

## **7. Finance and administrative issues**

- 7.1 The Secretary introduced document ICR(15)2 presenting the Board's accounts for 2014. The decision had been taken not to have the 2014 accounts audited because of the limited funds held and the small number of transactions in the year. At the end of 2014, the balance of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund was £12,300. This is higher than anticipated, largely because only £3,700 was utilised of the £12,000 budgeted for the Telemetry Workshop.
- 7.2 In 2013, the Sub-Group on the Future Direction of Marine Research noted that the Board had very limited resources and recognised that if it is to continue to play a role in supporting research on salmon at sea it should consider how it can address this issue. The Board has been able to support important new projects e.g. the genetic studies of historic samples from West Greenland and the Faroe Islands and the ongoing study to develop a North American genetic baseline and undertake finer scale analysis of samples from West Greenland. The funds contributed by the Board had been useful in leveraging additional resources from other funding sources.
- 7.3 The Board decided that it would not have its 2015 accounts audited, unless significant additional funds were contributed before the end of the year. In the event that this was not the case, the Secretariat was asked to provide income and expenditure statements.

## **8. Other business**

- 8.1 There was no other business.

## **9. Report of the meeting**

- 9.1 The Board agreed a report of its meeting.

## **10. Date and Place of next meeting**

- 10.1 The Board agreed to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of NASCO in Germany.
- 10.2 The Chairman thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.