

***Draft Report of the Sixteenth Meeting of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board***

***Varbergs Kusthotell, Varberg, Sweden***

***5 June 2017***

**1. Opening of the Meeting**

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Rory Saunders (USA), opened the meeting and welcomed members of the Board, their scientific advisers and observers to Varberg.
- 1.2 A list of participants is contained in Annex 1.

**2. Adoption of the Agenda**

- 2.1 The Board adopted its Agenda, ICR(17)5 (Annex 2).

**3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1 The Board unanimously re-elected Mr Rory Saunders as its Chairman for a further period of two years to commence from the close of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

**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(17)7 (Annex 3). During its meeting the SAG had:
  - discussed the Updated Inventory of Marine Research. Twelve new projects have been included since last year, some of which have been ongoing for some time and one of which is completed. Seven of these new projects involve telemetry. The value of the inventory was recognised;
  - considered the timing of the next review of the inventory and, given that the Board has identified its research priority as SALSEA – Track, and that the focal year of IYS is 2019, recommended that the next review should be deferred to 2019 or 2020;
  - reviewed the metadatabase of salmon survey data and sample collections. In 2016, the Board agreed that information on scale collections should be included in the metadatabase and information has been received from the Russian Federation and the United States. Information has also been included in the metadatabase on the West Greenland Sampling Programme Biological Characteristics database. The Chairman encouraged Parties/jurisdictions to contribute further information on scale collections for inclusion in the metadatabase;

- received updates on the International Year of the Salmon from Mr Mark Saunders (on activities in the North Pacific) and Mr Dan Morris (on activities in the North Atlantic. Mr Morris urged the SAG to dream big to make the IYS a success.
- discussed developments in relation to SALSEA - Track (see item 5 below);
- received progress reports on two projects for which funding had been provided to the Board through EU ‘grants for actions’. These projects are ‘Understanding and comparing early migration of European salmon populations at sea’ and ‘Sea lice model for the sustainable development of Atlantic salmon and fisheries’.
- received a report on the SAMARCH project, a collaborative project with partners in England and France to track salmon and sea trout in support of stock assessments and measures to protect them.
- received a report on a new approach to tracking ‘ROAM’ based on a technique for sub-surface oceanographic monitoring. A study plan to track sub-adult salmon at Greenland using this technique was described. While this technique is not suitable for nearshore waters it offers potential in tracking salmon through the North Atlantic area at reasonable cost;
- received an update on the telemetry programme being conducted by the Atlantic Salmon Federation;
- received an update on the project entitled ‘Enhancement of a North American Atlantic salmon genetic baseline for individual and stock identification and application of the baseline to historical scales collected at West Greenland’ which is being funded through the Board. Sample collection and processing has been completed and final results are expected by October 2017;
- considered an application to the Board for endorsement and funding by the Atlantic Salmon Trust (UK). A sum of £5,000 is being sought (see SAG(17)4 and ICR(17)4) which would, if approved, be used to help organise and run a scientific workshop related to the development of a ‘suspects model’;

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, prior to it being uploaded to the IASRB website;
- to postpone the next review of the Updated Inventory of Marine Research until 2019 or 2020;
- to endorse the AST project to develop a ‘suspects model’ and to explore options to provide financial support;
- to encourage Parties/jurisdictions to provide details of archive scale collections for inclusion in the metadatabase and ask the Secretary to contact Parties/jurisdictions in order to seek relevant additional information.

## **5. Developments in relation to SALSEA - Track**

- 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.
- 5.2 In 2015, the Board received a report from its Telemetry Workshop that had, *inter alia*, developed 12 outline project proposals. The Board had recognised that 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. The Board also recognised 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, 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.
- 5.3 The Chairman introduced document ICR(17)3 (Annex 4) providing an update on developments in relation to SALSEA - Track. Following the Board’s 2016 Annual Meeting, applications for funding from the European Union were successfully completed and funding has been granted for two following projects and the progress on each is shown in italics:
- Understanding and comparing early mortality of European salmon populations at sea

*The SMOLTRACK project has just started, but already good progress has been made. Central purchase of telemetry equipment has enabled partners to get a large discount to the benefit of the whole project. As a consequence, several partners have now committed to do a two season study instead of the originally planned 1 season study. The first workshop with partners was held in Galway from 28 February - 1 March 2017. The general criteria for the study were discussed and co-ordinated, an overview of the study sites was presented and a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed. The workshop also included a practical hands-on tagging course for all partners. These steps will ensure a good possibility for comparison between the sites. The acoustic systems are in place at all partners and tagging began in the last week of March, with the majority of smolts expected to be tagged in April and early May.*
  - Sea lice model for the sustainable development of Atlantic salmon fisheries and aquaculture

*The EU funded NASCO project Licetrack, Sea lice model for the sustainable development of Atlantic salmon fisheries and aquaculture, began in early March 2017 when a workshop of all project partners took place at IFI headquarters in Dublin. The workshop covered items such as fieldwork planning for the sentinel cage experiment in Killary harbour, development of hydrodynamic modelling in*

*Norway, Scotland and Ireland, development of a standard model and project budget. Sentinel cages were manufactured and delivered during the first week in May and the first batch of salmon smolts was put to sea in six cages in Killary Harbour on 8 May. These salmon smolts were removed on 16 May and lice counts undertaken. A second batch of salmon smolts was put into the sentinel cages on 16 May and sampled on 23 May. Three cages are fitted with salinity and temperature probes and velocity meters. Some mortality of salmon smolts was encountered due to high water temperatures. A bag net has also been operating in Killary since early May. Farmed salmon in the vicinity of Killary Harbour are due to be harvested in late May and the site left fallow for a period. Salmon smolts will continue to be monitored in sentinel cages during this fallow period to provide baseline data. It is expected that larger salmon will be moved to sites in Killary harbour in autumn and salmon smolts will be placed in sentinel cages to monitor lice levels during this period. The field work element of the project has progressed as set out in the project plan and work is ongoing in developing a hydrodynamic model for Killary harbour. The development of a standard model using hydrodynamic models of local currents to generate sea lice dispersal patterns in any site specific location is also being progressed.*

- 5.4 Progress reports were received for 6 of the 12 outline projects developed at the Telemetry Workshop. Lack of funding or resources was identified as a factor hindering implementation of some of these projects. Identifying potential funders and attracting their interest in SALSEA - Track is a considerable undertaking that requires specialist skills. In the first phase of the SALSEA Programme, the Board had sought support from professional fund-raisers, Brakeley Consultants. The Secretary has contacted one of those involved in the earlier work and they have advised that their minimum contract would be for around £12,000. This would enable advice to be provided on an approach to fundraising but a fundraising programme would involve considerable cost. The IASRB agreed that the first step would be to develop Terms of Reference for the work to be undertaken in developing the fundraising approach including such considerations as questions to addressing ethical issues in the choice of potential funders and whether or not to seek funding for one or two well developed projects or the entire 12 project programme.
- 5.5 The Chair referred to the hemispheric collaboration envisaged under the IYS and asked Mr Mark Saunders (NPAFC) to provide an update. Mr Saunders referred to areas of overlap in interests in the North Atlantic and North Pacific identifying tracking studies and wild/farmed fish interactions. NPAFC sees collaboration as an essential component of the IYS and there have been similar long-term declines in abundance in the Pacific in more than 100 populations in the North Pacific and salmon face similar uncertainties in future. He indicated that those in the North Pacific want synergies in bringing resources to the IYS. Over the last year the governance model has been defined, a logo developed and work has commenced on the IYS website. NPAFC would like to work together inter-sessionally over the next months to manage joint interests.

## **6. Finance and Administrative Issues**

- 6.1 The Secretary introduced document ICR(17)2 presenting the Board's accounts for 2016. The decision had been taken not to have the 2016 accounts audited, but rather income and expenditure statements has been prepared. At the end of 2016, the balance of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund was £354,491.17. On 22 December

2016 the Board had received payment from the European Union of 70% (totaling €377,838.88) of the approved grants for two projects ‘Understanding and comparing early migration of European salmon populations at sea’ and ‘Sea lice model for the sustainable development of Atlantic salmon fisheries and aquaculture’. At current exchange rates this is equivalent to approximately £321,300 and is ring-fenced for these EU supported projects. The funding has levered substantial funding by the partners in the projects. For the Board’s general account, the year-end balance was £32,791 but a sum of £16,900 has subsequently been paid to the to support the project entitled ‘Enhancement of a North American Atlantic salmon genetic baseline for individual and stock identification and application of the baseline to historical scales collected at West Greenland’. The Board had received a donation amounting to £215 from a research project seeking to estimate willingness to pay. The current funds available amount to approximately £15,000. The Board had previously agreed that it was desirable to retain a reserve of £4,000 - £5,000.

- 6.2 The Chairman thanked the representative of the European Union for this generous contribution.
- 6.3 The Board agreed that given the increases in its resources it should have its 2017 accounts audited and the Secretary indicated that he thought this would involve costs of around £1,500 - £2,000.
- 6.4 The Chair noted that this would mean that if the cost of the audit and the agreed reserve were taken into account, the Board had a total of £13,000 in its general fund and the cost of the pilot fundraising exercise and the support for the AST partnership amounted to £17,000. The Board suggested that the Chair might seek approval from the Council to use a sum of £5,000 from the IYS Fund to support the AST proposal. In that regard, the Board asked that pilot fundraising payment be supported.
- 6.2 The Board decided that it would have its 2017 accounts audited by NASCO’s auditors, Saffery Champness (Edinburgh).

## **7. Other Business**

- 7.1 There was no other business.

## **8. Report of the Meeting**

- 8.1 The Board agreed a report of its meeting.

## **9. Date and Place of the Next Meeting**

- 9.1 The Board agreed to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of NASCO during 12 - 18 June 2018.

## **10. Close of the Meeting**

- 10.1 The Chairman thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.