



**International Atlantic Salmon Research Board**  
*Background Paper for the Inter Sessional Meeting of the Board*

**ICRIS(23)01**

## ***Background Paper for the Inter Sessional Meeting of the Board***

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide background to the Board's inter-sessional consideration of its overall vision, scope and purpose.

### **Introduction**

The 'Report of the Review of the Metadatabase of Salmon Survey Data and Sample Collections of Relevance to Mortality of Salmon at Sea', [ICR\(22\)03](#), included the recommendation that the Board may wish to:

- consider its overall vision, scope and purpose;
- assess whether the funding available to the Board is commensurate with its vision, scope and purpose;
- identify the priorities the Parties now have for the Board; and
- consider establishing a process for requesting and reviewing proposals.

At the Board's Annual Meeting in 2022, the Chair noted that it would be difficult to give this sufficient time and attention during an Annual Meeting. Therefore, she proposed that an Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Board be held to deal with these important issues. The Board agreed that the following steps would be taken, [ICR\(22\)15](#):

- a small Working Group comprising the Secretariat, Chair of the Board and SAG Chair would work together to prepare a background paper for the Board on this item. This paper will focus the next steps and information required;
- this paper would be circulated to Board members and the representative of the NGOs with an invitation for them to submit, if they wish, a paper outlining their views related to these questions. The Board anticipated that Board members for each Party would consult with their SAG member to ensure that the SAG's views are taken into account;
- the Working Group would collate the Board members' and NGO representative's views and outline possible ways forward for the Board;
- an inter-sessional meeting of the Board would be held to consider the recommendations relating to the other areas of the Board's work. This would be an in-person meeting with an option to participate virtually. The timing of this meeting should be agreed by the Chair and Secretary, as and when NASCO business allows, preferably in advance of the 2023 Annual Meeting.

In addition, in 2022, when considering a potential successor to SALSEA-Track, there was discussion on whether the Board should fund or endorse the *preparation* of research proposals. It was noted that:

- the Board had previously funded the preparation of projects, such as when it received seed funding to develop the SALSEA Programme;
- the Board's ToRs refer to soliciting research projects; and
- the Board's ToRs may need to be clarified in this respect.

Also relevant when considering the overall vision, scope and purpose of the Board, is that the third performance review of NASCO will report in March 2023. The Terms of Reference for the third performance review of NASCO, [CNL\(21\)22](#), do not specifically mention the work of the Board. However, it maybe that the recommendations made by the Review Panel and / or the Council's response to the recommendations, could relate to the vision, scope and purpose of the Board.

## **History of the Board**

Document [CNL\(18\)10](#), 'Review of the Procedures Relating to the Work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group' provides detailed background on the history of the Board. A summary is provided below.

In 2001, NASCO established an International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to promote collaboration and co-operation on research into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality.

Each NASCO Party is a founding member of the Board which also includes representation from NASCO's affiliated Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The original Rules of Procedure for the Board were adopted in 2001. The 2001 Board Report contains a number of Annexes worthy of note, [ICR\(01\)12](#):

- Annex 3: ICR(01)9, Rules of Procedure for the International Cooperative Salmon Research Board;
- Annex 4: ICR(01)10, Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund; and
- Annex 5: ICR(01)11, Financial Rules of the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund.

The original Rules of Procedure were revised in 2006, ICR(06)10 (Annex 6 of [CNL\(06\)11](#)). The 'Guidelines on Acceptance of Voluntary Contributions to the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund; ICR(01)10, and the 'Financial Rules of the International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund', ICR(01)11, were both revised in 2003. These updated versions are annexed to the accompanying document ICRIS(23)02, 'Call for Views on the Vision, Scope and Purpose of the Board'.

In 2020, 'Terms of Reference for the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and its Scientific Advisory Group', [ICR\(20\)03](#), replaced the 2006 Rules of Procedure. The changes made were largely procedural and provided distinct sections related to the Scientific Advisory Group, NGO involvement and the role of the Secretariat.

In each version of the Rules of Procedure, paragraph 2 sets out the purpose and scope of the Board. Since the establishment of the Board, this has remained largely unchanged. The information in Annex 1 shows this.

In recent years the activities of the Board have reduced:

- in 2020 it was agreed that the SALSEA-Track programme be closed;
- since 2020 the Inventory has been simplified; and
- in 2022 it was agreed that the Metadatabase no longer be maintained.

## **Report of the Working Group to Review the SALSEA-Track Programme and the Inventory**

In 2020 the recommendations of the Report of the Working Group to Review the SALSEA-Track Programme and the Inventory, [ICR\(20\)07](#), were accepted by the Board. A number of these recommendations are relevant to the overall vision, scope and purpose:

*‘2. That any successor to SALSEA-Track should have the following attributes:*

- *be problem focused with a clearly defined internationally relevant question, which was not solely developed based on the newest technology available;*
- *have clear SMART objectives;*
- *have clear timelines;*
- *have a clear budget;*
- *be at the basin-scale; and*
- *have an identified owner / co-ordinator.*

*Additionally, it should address issues such as: data gaps / climate change / commonalities across the jurisdictions / mechanisms for supporting new technologies;’*

And

*‘3. The Board confirms that survival at sea is still a principle focus for the Board’s work;’*

The final recommendation was that

*‘10. The metadata base be reviewed and consideration be given as to whether other areas of the Board’s work require review, and that this review be conducted by the Board.’*

This led to the current inquiry. However, that Working Group did not consider the wider issues related to the work of the Board or provide insights into the pros and cons of its Rules of Procedure and its vision, scope and purpose.

### **The Report of the Review of the Metadatabase**

In 2021 the ‘Report of the Review of the Metadatabase of Salmon Survey Data and Sample Collections of Relevance to Mortality of Salmon at Sea’, [ICR\(22\)03](#), was considered by the Board. It included the recommendation that led to this inter-sessional process. The Report of the Working Group provides some insight as to why it made its recommendations and some consideration of what the vision, scope and purpose of the Board should be. Paragraph 6.2 – 6.5 state:

*‘6.2 The Working Group noted that the Board is currently carrying out very few of these tasks [from paragraph 2 of the Terms of Reference, [ICR\(20\)03](#)]. It discussed whether the funding available to the Board enabled the tasks in the Terms of Reference to be conducted. The Working Group felt that the funding available and the tasks were not well aligned at present.*

*6.3 The Board’s Terms of Reference appear to indicate that the Board should be setting a research agenda into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon. The Working Group noted that since the Board has not been proactive in this area, others have come forward with projects. The Working Group felt that the Board’s role in accepting project proposals, reviewing them and determining whether they should be endorsed*

*or funded was unclear. The role of the Scientific Advisory Group in advising the Board on project proposals was also discussed. It was felt that the process around the consideration of project proposals may appear ad hoc and that more clarity around this element of the Board's work may be useful. However, this Working Group also noted the approach recommended by the Working Group for the Review of SALSEA-Track and the Inventory of Research, ICR(20)07, and agreed by the Board in 2020, whereby Board members could canvass colleagues on a potential successor to SALSEA-Track (and therefore a new signature project for the Board). Therefore, any proposed projects would be reviewed against the attributes set out in recommendation 2 of that Working Group's report.*

*6.4 The Working Group observed that in recent years the activities of the Board have reduced. The SALSEA-Track programme has closed, the Inventory has been simplified, and this Working Group now recommends that the Metadatabase is no longer maintained. The Working Group also noted the small amount of funding within the International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund that is available to support the work of the Board.*

*6.5 Despite these discussions, the Working Group considered that some areas of the Board's work are valuable, especially its role in accepting funds to support research into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon. It agreed that a temporary lull between signature projects need not be cause for concern.'*

The Board members may wish to take this background and history into account during the inter-sessional process.

Secretariat  
Edinburgh  
8 November 2022

*Three Versions of Paragraph 2 of the Original and Revised Terms of Reference of the Board*

ICR(01)9 (Annex 3 of <a href="#">ICR(01)12</a> )	ICR(06)10 (Annex 6 of <a href="#">CNL(06)11</a> )	<a href="#">ICR(20)03</a>
The Board shall establish and administer an International Cooperative Salmon Research Programme into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality with the following Terms of Reference:	The Board shall establish and administer an International Atlantic Salmon Research Programme into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality with the following Terms of Reference:	The Board will oversee, administer, and seek to advance an International Atlantic Salmon Research Programme into the causes of marine mortality of Atlantic salmon and the opportunities to counteract this mortality through the following activities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of relevant research projects which are ongoing or planned and for which budgets have been confirmed;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of relevant research projects which are ongoing or planned and for which budgets have been confirmed;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining an inventory of relevant research projects (the Inventory) that are ongoing or planned and for which budgets have been confirmed;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying research needs;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying research needs;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying research needs;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluating the inventory against research needs;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluating the inventory against research needs;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluating the Inventory against research needs;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying gaps in the inventory of research and setting priorities for further research;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying gaps in the inventory of research and setting priorities for further research;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying gaps in the Inventory and setting priorities for further research;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing a forum for coordination of relevant research efforts by the Contracting Parties of NASCO;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing a forum for coordination of relevant research efforts by the Contracting Parties of NASCO;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing a forum for co-ordination of relevant research efforts by the Contracting Parties of NASCO;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing administrative mechanisms to accept financial contributions to an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing administrative mechanisms to accept financial contributions to an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing administrative mechanisms to accept financial contributions to an</li> </ul>

International Cooperative Salmon Research Fund;	International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund;	International Atlantic Salmon Research Fund (the Fund);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• soliciting and accepting financial contributions and managing the Fund;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• soliciting and accepting financial contributions and managing the Fund;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• soliciting and accepting financial contributions and managing the Fund;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing terms and conditions for soliciting, evaluating, approving and funding relevant research projects;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing terms and conditions for soliciting, evaluating, approving and funding relevant research projects;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing terms and conditions for soliciting, evaluating, approving and funding relevant research projects;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding approved projects and reviewing results in relation to the objectives of the Programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding approved projects and reviewing results in relation to the objectives of the Programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding approved projects and reviewing results in relation to the objectives of the Programme; and</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• endorsing projects that are consistent with the objectives of the Programme.</li> </ul>