

***International Cooperation on the Conservation and Restoration
of Wild Atlantic Salmon – the Work of NASCO***

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This paper will describe the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), the inter-governmental treaty organization established in 1984 to conserve and restore wild stocks of Atlantic salmon. The NASCO Treaty immediately created an enormous protected zone free of salmon fisheries which led to the cessation of the Northern Norwegian Sea salmon fishery which, at its peak, prior to NASCO, harvested almost 1,000 tonnes of European-origin salmon. We will briefly describe the status of salmon stocks and the regulatory measures adopted by NASCO in response to declining salmon abundance. These measures have resulted in harvests in the distant-water fisheries being reduced from around 2,500 tonnes prior to NASCO to less than 20 tonnes in recent years. Significant measures to control exploitation have also been introduced by States of Origin both for domestic reasons and in fulfilment of international obligations under the NASCO Treaty. Despite all these measures salmon stocks have not responded and it is clear that if salmon stocks are to be conserved and restored, a holistic approach is needed which addresses the many threats to the resource. The paper will outline the broader aspects of NASCO's work in applying the Precautionary Approach to management of salmon fisheries; habitat protection and restoration; minimising impacts of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics; and stock rebuilding programmes. We will also describe how social and economic aspects are being incorporated into the Precautionary Approach. Recently, NASCO held open consultation meetings with its stakeholders in Europe and North America and the outcome of these meetings will be summarised and future challenges in managing Atlantic salmon will be identified. Finally, the development of a major international cooperative research programme into the factors affecting the mortality of salmon at sea will be described.