



A Backgrounder from

Atlantic Salmon Federation

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ASF-NASF INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

I. GREENLAND AND FAROE ISLANDS SALMON FISHERIES

- Large wild Atlantic salmon (>63cm) from North American and European rivers migrate to feeding grounds off the coast of west Greenland and around the Faroe Islands.
- Salmon from hundreds of rivers converge in these areas. Commercial efforts using drift nets and set gill nets in west Greenland, and longlines off the Faroe Islands, constitute a mixed stock fishery because it is impossible to target only salmon from relatively healthy populations. For example, in 2017, 1.4 percent of salmon sampled from the Greenland catch were determined to be of U.S. origin, where wild Atlantic salmon are listed under the Endangered Species Act.
- Catch data from the Faroe Islands fishery was first reported in 1968 at five metric tonnes, peaking in 1981 at 1,025 tonnes. The method used was baited longlines. Since 1992, when the first conservation agreement with the Faroese Salmon Fishing Vessel Association (Laksaskip) was signed, except for a brief resumption in 2000, there has been no commercial salmon fishery.
- In Greenland, intensive fisheries for wild Atlantic salmon began around 1960 and peaked in 1971 when records indicate 2,700 metric tonnes were taken, equivalent to approximately 810,000 large salmon. The method of capture is by drift nets and coastal gill nets.
- In 1998, faced with declining catch rates and collapsing wild salmon populations, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), a treaty organization whose parties include all national governments with Atlantic salmon rivers, except Iceland, banned the export of salmon from Greenland although internal subsistence and commercial fisheries persisted.
- In 2014, the Greenland delegation to NASCO unilaterally declared a 45 tonne quota (personal and commercial) for the 2015-2017 period. Although this contravened international scientific advice, it represented a reduction from the estimated 88 tonnes (reported and unreported) taken in 2014. In 2015, Greenland reported a total catch of 58 tonnes, but in 2016 and 2017 catches were estimated at 27 tonnes and 28 tonnes respectively.

II. STOCK COMPOSITION AND RECENT TRENDS

- Because, effectively, no commercial salmon fishery has operated at the Faroe Islands since 1992, no information exists on the current mixture of North American and European salmon in the Faroese zone. However, sampling from the early 1990s indicate that approximately 20 per cent of salmon overwintering there were of North American origin.
- At Greenland, there are annual assessments of catch composition. Most recently, in 2017, it was determined that 74 per cent of the catch were large multi-sea winter salmon from North America, representing approximately 6,100 fish. This is a decline from a high of 93 per cent in 2011, but up from 2016 when it was estimated that 64 per cent of the harvest originated from North America.
- All Atlantic salmon captured at Greenland are multi-sea winter salmon and the majority of North American origin fish come from four regions; rivers emptying into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, from the Gaspé Peninsula, the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, and Labrador.

III. PAST ASF-NASF-KNAPK AGREEMENTS

- There have been three previous conservation agreements between the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, and the Association of Hunters and Fishers in Greenland (KNAPK). ASF is a conservation organization based in Canada and the United States. NASF is an American organization with chapters in Iceland, Scandinavia, and Western Europe. KNAPK is a union representing people in traditional Greenlandic industries.
- The first agreement was signed in 1993. A continuation agreement was signed in 1994. The third and most recent stretched from 2002 until the end of the 2010. It was cancelled in 2011 when Greenland's subsistence fishery was reported at 40 tonnes, double the agreed upon maximum.
- During the 2002-2010 period, ASF and NASF funded more than 750 projects in Greenland, mainly aimed at encouraging sustainable cod and lumpfish fisheries.
- In the years following 1993 and 1994, and particularly in 2011, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, a scientific authority that provides unbiased fishery advice to national governments, reported an increase in the abundance of adult Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic.
- The agreement with Laksaskip, the Faroese Salmon Fishing Vessel Association, has been renewed annually since 1992. It has been primarily funded by NASF, although beginning in 2018 ASF will begin to contribute a portion of the cost.

IV. CURRENT AGREEMENTS

- Financial details: The present conservation agreements with Greenlandic and Faroese fishermen represent private contracts and contain sensitive financial information. All monies to fund these arrangements will be raised privately from donors and supporters of ASF and NASF. No government money will be expended. As a result, ASF and NASF reserve the right to keep confidential the financial terms of each arrangement.
- Program details: The agreement with Laksaskip will see payment made to a joint bank account then disbursed to salmon fishing license holders in the Faroe Islands. The granted funds will be used to support conservation education and the development of sustainable alternatives to fishing for wild Atlantic salmon.
- The agreement with KNAPK will last for a period of 12 years and will see the establishment of a joint account known as the Salmon Fund where monies will be deposited to support grants for agreed upon projects that enable former and current salmon fishermen to engage in activities like the development of sustainable alternative fisheries and activities that complement the Greenland government's marine conservation goals.
- Some of the granted funds will be used to improve monitoring and reporting of the 20 tonne maximum subsistence fishery allowed under the Conservation Agreement. A further incentive in the agreement will compensate fishermen for each tonne of the subsistence quota not taken.
- Periodic progress reports on all aspects of the agreement will be regularly generated and shared with all parties. The Greenland Government has consented to support the agreement and its representative to NASCO will publicly declare a zero commercial quota each June for the life of the agreement.

