

# Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

## Minutes of Meeting – 03.05.2022 (Remotely)

### **Attendees:**

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Denis Maher (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Dr Cathal Gallagher (IFI), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair), Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Mary Breslin (DECC, Co-Secretary).

### **Apologies:**

Donal Kennedy (ICSA), Pdraig O’Riordan (IADA), Peter Walsh (IADA), John Chambers (IFPAC), Fergal Bell (IFPAC), Francis O’Donnell (IFI), Suzanne Campion (IFI).

## **Agenda Item 1 – Adoption of minutes**

Meeting opened with welcome to all.

The minutes of 1 March 2022 were circulated prior to the meeting. Adoption of the minutes were proposed and seconded.

### **Matters arising:**

No matters arising.

## **Agenda Item 2 - Draft policy paper – International Management of North Atlantic Salmon**

A discussion took place on the draft policy paper – International Management of North Atlantic Salmon. The work undertaken by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) in relation to the feeding grounds was discussed. DECC advised that the majority of the stock complex migrating to Faroese waters was of European (including Irish) origin. On the other hand, the majority migrating to Greenlandic waters was of North American origin. Nevertheless, as the proportion of European stocks migrating to Greenland is increasing it is important to engage on both issues at NASCO. There is currently no fishery in Faroese waters.

IFI advised that a large cohort of Irish fish are Multi-Sea-Winter (MSW) salmon. DECC and IFI continue to work with NASCO along with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to improve conditions in West Greenland. There now appears to be a more constructive approach from Denmark on behalf of Greenland. Difficulties remain due to the size of the country and distance between population centres. Ireland intends to continue taking part in the sampling programme and has committed to send scientific samplers to Greenland. Ireland have made strong points at NASCO in relation to aquaculture and will continue to do so.

SSTRAI welcomed the draft policy paper and advised that Ireland have been at the forefront of change and are well respected internationally. They raised the issue of anecdotal evidence regarding by-catch in wild fisheries – Blue Whiting in particular, including post smolt. DECC agreed to include the by-catch issue in the draft policy paper.

IFI advised that this issue has been raised at NASCO but there has never been an evidence-based report. There was an effort made to set up an eDNA programme to look at sampling nets for the presence of salmon. There have been many surveys done on by-catches and a very limited number of salmon were included. There has been a lot of work on telemetry projects to find out what areas salmon travel to. The use of advanced fish telemetry would enable an array to be put into the North Atlantic Basin which would locate tagged salmon within 200 metres. This is a low-cost solution and may give a better understanding of salmon activity. The problem of mortality at sea is a collective problem, by-catch being one issue but also competition and food source (e.g., Capelin – they are only at 50% of the calorific value that they have been in the past). IFI also mentioned a recent increase and improvement in the quality of wild salmon returns to Ireland.

FISSTA expressed concerns about the draft policy paper. They wanted the threat from sea lice to be referenced but are aware that the matter is outside the scope of the paper on the basis that the salmon habitat does not extend into international waters. It was asked whether the habitat extended into the North Atlantic. IFI confirmed the natural cycle of salmon is from freshwater into the estuarine and to the high seas feeding grounds and the reverse on their return. FISSTA said this was not the entire habitat for salmon. IFI confirmed they don't consider the high seas as salmon habitat. DECC advised that this draft policy paper relates to national policy. The draft policy paper on Mitigating the impacts of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Fish Stocks also relates to national policy and covers the broader sea lice issue. The initiatives and interactions DECC have on sea lice at NASCO will continue to be pushed internationally.

DECC advised that the paper on International Management of North Atlantic Salmon is a draft policy paper separate from the draft policy paper on Mitigating the impacts of Salmon Aquaculture on Wild Fish Stocks and that written comments are welcome on both.

DECC received an important scientific paper from Sweden on the issue of introgression. DECC will liaise with Swedish colleagues to confirm whether the paper has been published following which it can be circulated to ACCI members.

**Action Points:**

1. DECC to include the by-catch issue, raised by SSTRAI, in the draft policy paper on International Management of North Atlantic Salmon.
2. DECC to circulate scientific paper from Sweden when available.
3. ACCI to submit comments to DECC on all draft policy papers.

## Agenda Item 3 – Updates

- **Finance Sub-Group report**

Report was submitted to DECC for review who will revert to the sub-group. FISSTA advised they will be sending their own submission to the Finance Sub-Group in due course. ACCI will be advised when this submission is received.

- **Update on the responses relating to Items on the IPS tracking log**

DECC advised that the IPS tracking log has been submitted to IFI who are working on a reply.

The Pike Sub-group have yet to meet as they are still awaiting answers to the questions raised with IFI. This is impacting on progress with the Pike Sub-group meeting.

- **IFI's draft Western Lakes Management Plan (WLMP)**

The draft WLMP has been noted by Minister Ryan and will be prepared by IFI for public consultation as soon as possible.

- **ACI/IFI access issues**

DECC queried whether a particular area of concern was identified in terms of access issues. IFSA advised they had raised the question with their members but have had no response. This issue will be carried over to the next ACCI meeting.

Co-Chair (ACI) mentioned the concerns raised by coarse anglers, the amount of equipment and tackle they carry, the potential damage to expensive equipment and access issues as areas are now closed off. The distance travelled with large quantities of equipment is preventing anglers from fishing such venues. Discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and Waterways Ireland (WI) are required to progress the concerns of anglers.

### **Action Points:**

1. ACI to identify a specific area where access for angling is an issue. This will be included on the agenda for the next meeting.
2. Co-Chair (ACI) to liaise with IFI on the proposed new Blueway development in Athlone town in terms of access for anglers.

## Agenda Item 4 - AOB

### **IPS comments on Stock Management Plan 2022**

IPS advised they had not received a notification that the Stock Management Plan was going ahead and were unable to let Pike anglers know it was taking place. IPS believe there was no management evaluation strategy. It appeared to be a very basic plan with no indication of the number of Pike to be removed and no measure of the expected increase in fish stocks. IPS recalled that IFI confirmed in November 2021 that the output of recent scientific reports could not be integrated into current management plans as they were only executed

on certain waters. These studies were executed on Lough's Conn, Barra and Sheelin with a financial and resource expense but there is currently no difference in the way these lakes are managed.

### **Owenriff Management Plan**

The original report stated that all issues relating to salmonids were related to Pike despite an NPWS report two years earlier that stated the issues were due to anthropogenic pressures. There was a general discussion on the Owenriff and other systems that require further clarity from IFI.

IPS advised that in relation to the decline of the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel (FWPM), the European Commission were advised that the issues associated with its decline were due to anthropogenic pressures in the system. DECC advised that while this was an Irish response, co-ordinated between the relevant departments and agencies, DECC had no input into the reply as the FWPM issues are within the remit of NPWS.

IFI confirmed that there was a new report being completed on the Owenriff that should be available shortly.

### **Action Point:**

IFI to check status of Owenriff Management Plan.

### **IPS comment on protection measures for Pike and Coarse fish**

IPS stated that it has been shown on social media that the Pike and Coarse Fish Bye-laws are being contravened. IPS requested a commitment on a date when the head of communications in IFI will remind people of the current fishing bye-laws in force.

### **Action Point:**

IFI to issue reminder regarding bye-laws.

### **6 Nautical Mile (6NM) Limit**

EFSA requested information regarding the 6NM limit and the draft Bluefin Tuna Report for 2021.

DECC will continue to seek updates from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) regarding the issue of inshore fisheries generally, bearing in mind that a significant related issue is awaiting a judgement from the High Court.

IFI said that the overall Tuna numbers were down in 2021. IFI's draft Bluefin Tuna Report was almost complete and IFI will respond to EFSA once it is finalised.

IFI mentioned that the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) conference is taking place in Killarney, Co Kerry on 20 and 21 June and all members of the ACCI are welcome to attend.

### **Action Points:**

1. IFI to forward the Bluefin Tuna Report to ACCI as soon as it is complete.

2. DECC to seek an update from DAFM on the inshore fisheries issues.

## **Agenda Item 5 - Date of next meeting**

An in-person meeting to take place on 30 May with a venue and time to follow.

It was suggested that it could be held on the same day as the National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF).

Some ACCI members expressed an interest in joining remotely.

Co-Chair (DECC) will invite a representative from Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) to present an update on their role.