



**26th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic
Fisheries Organization (NAFO)
13-17 September 2004
Dartmouth, Nov Scotia Canada**

Press Release

The 26th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) was held at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, during 13-17 September 2004, under the chairmanship of David Bevan (Canada), President of NAFO.

Fisheries Commission

NAFO Fisheries Commission was chaired by Dean Swanson from USA. As always, the advice of NAFO Scientific Council was heard before discussions on TACs (Total Allowable Catches) and quotas took place. After very long and difficult negotiations, Fisheries Commission agreed on a number of new measures to increase NAFO's ability to protect the fishery resources of the Northwest Atlantic:

- **More fish stocks under regulations:** NAFO will now extend regulations to a number of important fish stocks previously unregulated, namely 3O redbfish, thorny skate and white hake. Regarding thorny skate, this is the first time that a Regional Fisheries Body has imposed management measures on the fishery of an elasmobranch species.
- **More long-term protection plans:** In line with the new strategy for more efficient protection that was developed last year for the first time for Greenland halibut, TACs for these newly regulated species have been set to a fixed level for the next 3 years.
- **NAFO starts implementing the Precautionary Approach:** NAFO adopted a framework for the Precautionary Approach (PA). As a first step towards its implementation Fisheries Commission requested Scientific Council to provide advice for selected stocks in 2005 within the PA framework. The outcomes from the evaluation of these selected stocks will be used to guide Fisheries Commission regarding the most appropriate application of the framework to all NAFO stocks.
- **The Greenland halibut rebuilding plan has been reviewed and will be continued,** as agreed in 2003, with a decrease in the TAC for 2005.
- **Yellowtail flounder stock responds to NAFO protection measures:** NAFO regards it as a success of their conservation measures that the regulated yellowtail flounder stock is showing signs of continued recovery.
- **First NAFO Compliance Report:** For the first time in the history of the Organization, NAFO has undertaken a compliance review with the goal to identify areas in which compliance with the NAFO measures can be improved. This report will be accessible on the NAFO public website.
- **Conservation and Enforcement Measures (CEM) further improved:** A number of amendments to the CEM introduced substantial improvements to the NAFO inspection scheme. Product labelling and storage plans are now obligatory for all species and vessels. Also harmonization of NAFO reports with formats already used in the Northeast Atlantic by NEAFC has made great progress. NAFO is confident that these improvements will contribute

significantly to the transparency and efficiency of the Vessel Monitoring System that has been in place for many years now.

- **Rights of NAFO inspectors clarified:** NAFO clarified that inspectors are entitled to remain on board of fishing vessels in cases where citations for serious infringements have been issued.
- **Workshop for NAFO inspectors will enhance international cooperation for compliance:** EU has offered to host a workshop for inspectors to examine procedures and methods for inspections at sea and in port. The goal of this workshop is to increase confidence and to harmonize the approach of inspection authorities of NAFO Contracting Parties.

Attached is the table of Total Allowable Catches and quotas agreed at this session.

General Council

General Council, chaired by David Bevan from Canada, discussed administrative, financial and other matters including the following:

- **NAFO membership will be changing due to EU accessions.** Starting 2005, the membership of NAFO will change as four Contracting Parties, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, have acceded to the European Union. However, they will remain active participants in NAFO as part of the EU delegation.
- **Non-contracting party vessels (NCP) activities:** NAFO Parties were informed of NCP vessels believed to be fishing oceanic redfish in the NAFO Regulatory Area. These vessels are believed to be flagged to Dominica. NAFO Parties will be raising their concerns about these vessels with officials of Dominica. NAFO Contracting Parties are continuing work to make improvements to the Scheme to Promote Compliance by Non-Contracting Party Vessels with the Conservation and Enforcement Measures of NAFO.
- **The following election of NAFO officers took place:**

Standing Committee on Non-Contracting Party Fishing Activity in the Regulatory Area (STACFAC)

- (1) **Chair:** Nadia Bouffard
- (2) **Vice-Chair:** Gene Martin (USA)

- **A NAFO media policy is in place.** NAFO agreed on a media policy intended to express the desire of the organization to raise its profile and encourage media to report about the activities of NAFO including attendance at the opening sessions of the Organization. The media policy will be accessible through the NAFO webpages (www.nafo.int) and the Secretariat.
- **NAFO intends to enhance its webpages.** During the next year, the NAFO Secretariat will increase its efforts to provide relevant information on the Organization and on fishery issues to the public. The focus will be on enhancing the user-friendliness of the public NAFO webpages (www.nafo.int) by restructuring these pages and by including more summary documentation and links.

Scientific Council

The Scientific Council, under the chairmanship of Joanne Morgan (Canada), conducted assessments of stocks in the NAFO Convention Area during the past year, and advice was presented to the Fisheries Commission at this Annual Meeting. Most stocks in the NAFO Regulatory Area remain at low abundance, except for yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO and northern Shrimp in Div. 3M and Div. 3LNO.

Scientific Council expressed grave concern over the increase in catch for cod in Div. 3NO and American plaice in Div. 3LNO. Both of these stocks are below B_{lim} and under moratoria to directed fishing, yet fishing mortality over the last number of years has been at a level that will not allow the stocks to recover. Greenland halibut in Subarea 2 and Div. 3KLMNO is estimated to be at its lowest observed level and catches above 19000 t in 2005 will result in further stock decline.

Scientific Council also reported progress on the methods to estimate limit reference points and once again recommended that the Precautionary Approach framework developed by Council be adopted by the Fisheries Commission of NAFO.

General Information

The meeting was attended by 200 delegates from sixteen Contracting Parties - Canada, Cuba, Denmark (in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland), Estonia, European Union, France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and United States of America.

Prior to the Annual Meeting, the following NAFO meetings were held during 2004: (1) FC Working Group on the Management of Div. 3O Redfish (St. John's, NL, Canada, 30-31 March); (2) Scientific Council Limit Reference Point Study Group (Lorient, France, 15-20 April); (3) Scientific Council Regular Meeting (Dartmouth, N.S., Canada, 3-17 June); (4) STACFAC Meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, 15-16 and 18 June); (5) Joint STACFAC/STACTIC Meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, 17-18 June) and STACTIC Meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, 21-23 June).

NAFO Secretariat
17 September 2004

Dartmouth, N. S., Canada