

CONNECTICUT RIVER ATLANTIC SALMON COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting

October 4, 1996

Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center
Turners Falls, Massachusetts

The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (CRASC) met on October 4, 1996, at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls, Massachusetts. The meeting convened at 10:13 a.m. and adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Agenda Item:

1. Call to Order, Determination of Quorum and State Representation, and Approval of Minutes from April 17, 1996 and Approval of Today's Agenda - *Lambertson*

Chair Ron Lambertson presided over a full quorum. All States were represented. Mr. Harold Mears represented Commissioner Jonathan Rittgers for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Charlie Thoits motioned to accept the minutes from the April 17, 1996 meeting, Duncan McInnes seconded the motion, and all approved. The agenda was also approved.

2. Status of Connecticut River Coordinator - *Lambertson*

Ralph Pisapia, Assistant Regional Director for New England and supervisor of Fisheries field stations in the Region, informed the Commissioners that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had filled the Connecticut River Coordinator's position as of August 18, 1996, after a two year vacancy. Janice Rowan was appointed to the post, having served temporarily as Coordinator last winter.

3. Officers and Terms of Office - *Lambertson*

It was noted that Duncan McInnes was elected Commission Vice Chair at the last meeting. His term of office is current.

Bob Jones motioned to select Janice Rowan as the Commission's Executive Assistant, Wayne MacCallum seconded the motion, and all approved.

Lambertson indicated that he had been Commission Chair since April 1992 and asked if the Commissioners wished to elect another Chair. The term of office is one year and a Chair can be re-elected multiple times. Bob Jones motioned to schedule an election for the next Commission meeting, Charlie Thoits seconded the motion, and all approved.

Commissioners discussed the five year term of office for the Technical Committee Chair, served by John O'Leary, and allowed that selection of this office was the responsibility of the Technical Committee. The Commissioners charges the Technical Committee to select a new Chair. [Coordinator's Note: John O'Leary has indicated an interest in remaining Chair of the Technical Committee for one more year.]

4. Report of the Executive Assistant - *Rowan*

The full report is attached.

Discussion on the draft Strategic Plan focused on the need and process for obtaining public input. Commissioners charged the Technical Committee with developing recommendations on releasing the Plan to the public. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission uses a defined process to secure public input that may serve as a model. The Silvio Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge used a public process in planning and development which may also serve as an example. NEPA compliance and other regulatory processes may be required as well. Commissioners developed general process guidance for the Technical Committee:

- Commission approval of final draft prior to release of document for public comment
- Release of final draft for public comment prior to meetings
- Public meetings in each of the four cooperating states addressing both those with direct and those with general interest through informal discussions and public input periods at the same meeting
- Coordinate and compile results
- Provide feedback to public on results of meetings

The issue of providing a pre-release comment period for stakeholders was broached but not resolved. Public release will be contingent upon Commission approval which will also define the time of release.

5. Report of Technical Committee Chair - *O'Leary*

The full report is attached.

Chair Lambertson thanked John O'Leary for five years of hard work as the Technical Committee Chair.

6. CRASC Broodstock Policy, Egg and Fish Disposition Approval Process - *Lambertson*

Lambertson began the discussion by establishing that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (like the states) had ceded jurisdiction to the Compact when it was established. The Commission's broodstock policy, therefore, supersedes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's broodstock policy. However, the Commission's 1991 Atlantic Salmon Domestic Broodstock Disposal Policy needs to be revised.

The broodstock policy and disposition process have become an issue because of expanded domestic production at the White River National Fish Hatchery and because potential for sea run/kelt releases have increased since future returns may not carry tags and because fish health management has improved allowing for releases.

The current Policy is outdated in that it addresses only domestic broodstock, not sea run/kelts, and it delegates disposition responsibility to the states as opposed to the Commission. It does not establish criteria for determining which requests are honored. The Policy does not prioritize use nor address other program uses including research and outreach. Moreover, it is not clearly related to strategies within the draft Strategic Plan.

Discussion centered on how to allocate the available broodstock (pool all sources, equitable allocation among participating states), where to stock them (in the mainstem and tributaries, in the basin, outside the basin but in the four states, outside the basin but in New England, outside the basin and outside New England), why (strategy of restoration program, support of other state restoration programs, fishery, other restoration programs and fisheries), and for what benefit (developing measurable strategic support for the Connecticut River restoration program, meeting angler expectations, benefit trade-off for expenditures made). It was noted that Connecticut has a fishery established and needs to meet angler expectations for 1600 fish/year, Massachusetts indicated that managing their inland broodstock fishery for major media attention is their goal in support of the salmon restoration program.

The Commission charged the Technical Committee with drafting a new policy (which will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan) that addresses domestic broodstock, kelts and sea run fish, and can address all life stages, using the following disposition guidance:

- The first priority is to meet the needs of the restoration program within the Connecticut River basin - this includes research, outreach and education and special studies as with passage efficiency testing
- The second priority is to assist the four cooperating states with restoration programs in other tributaries
- The third priority includes other state fishery goals if they are tied to the primary restoration program

- The last priority are other restoration programs outside of the cooperating states

Chair Lambertson indicated that broodstock disposition authority could be delegated to the Technical Committee if the policy and its criteria are clear, with exceptions referred to the Commission.

Current requests for eggs, juveniles and broodstock were addressed:

Numbers of Available Fish:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

White River NFH

2525-'93 year class (distribute post spawning in 1996)

255-'94 year class (distribute in 1996)

3500-'95 year class (distribute in 1996)

5800-'96 year class (distribute in spring '97 or before)

Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife:

Roger Reed SFH

200-4+ fish

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection:

Kensington SFH

115 baren-3+ fish

100-2+ fish

1200-3+ post spawning females (traditionally stocked for sport fishery in Nov.)

125-3+ post spawning males (kept until late Dec. for NANFH milt supply)

4-9000-0+ (fall parr stocking)

Al Elser motioned to delegate non-broodstock disposition authority to the Technical Committee, Bob Jones seconded the motion, and all approved.

Wayne MacCallum motioned to manage broodstock disposition by addressing cooperating state requests first, Bob Jones amended that motion to honor Vermont's request first (WRNFH-'94) and beyond that the request from Massachusetts (WRNFH-'93/'94). This motion was seconded by Al Elser and approved by all. The request from the Lower Great Lakes FRO was denied (WRNFH-'93/'94). This decision is for this year only and is effective until the Strategic Plan is in place to manage future allocations.

7. Role of Education and Outreach and Potential Funding Source - Rowan/Bandolin

Janice Rowan established that with increased opportunities for funding from the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, there is an increased potential for increased outreach activity and increased opportunity for linking such activities strategically within the basin. However,

activities are not currently linked by unifying goals, objectives or strategies, nor is there coordination of outreach efforts within the basin. Thus, a proposal was made that the Commission endorse outreach as an important component of the restoration program. Definition as such will be provided within the final draft Strategic Plan.

Larry Bandolin, Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, presented specific information on the small grants program administered by the Refuge as a tool to promote outreach and education within the Connecticut River basin. This year, the Refuge funded four proposals within the basin that carried a fisheries related component. Bandolin indicated that since both anadromous fish restoration and outreach & education are important elements of the Refuge's mission and since the Refuge can promote activities through its funding process, it is important for the Refuge to have a clear understanding of the Commission's vision regarding the role of outreach in the restoration program.

Jim Carroll, Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Association, said that the goal of education programs like the Adopt-A-Salmon program, are to provide educational benefits and to broaden voter support through parents. Such programs require support in terms of funding and coordination from outside sources. Volunteer support is especially important to "franchise" these education programs while ensuring that the programs continue to meet restoration program needs.

Vice Chair McInnes responded saying that outreach is the key to our success. Education programs like Adopt-A-Salmon and the Fishways program are a tool, just one aspect, to help us market and generate support for the program.

8. Egg Incubation Capacity - *Gephard*

Steve Gephard provided egg take projections for the coming spawning season. Currently, production is expected to range between 14.6 and 17.6 million eggs. Incubation capacity is limited to 12 million eggs which will result in an incubation shortfall of 2.6 to 5.6 million eggs. Since the program egg production goal is about 15.5 million eggs, the challenge is to find the resources needed to incubate all of the eggs. The primary obstacle is funding which precludes adequate staffing of the White River National Fish Hatchery where space and water are probably adequate to meet incubation requirements. Other options may exist but for various obstacles at the Pittsford National Fish Hatchery and the Richard Cronin National Salmon Station. The staffing need presents a partnership opportunity which, if overcome, could resolve the identified concerns. Chair Lambertson charged Ralph Pisapia, ARD-North, and Rick Bennett, DARD-Fisheries, with exploring USFWS options for meeting the incubation needs of the program.

9. Selection of Next CRASC Meeting Date - *Rowan*

The next Commission meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, January 14, 1997, at 10 a.m. in the conference room at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls, Massachusetts.

Agenda items include: election of the CRASC Chair, final draft Strategic Plan, recommendations from the Technical Committee on the public process for draft Strategic Plan, Technical Committee's proposed revision of the 1991 broodstock policy, and USFWS egg incubation potential if personnel issues can be addressed by cooperators.

10. Other Business - Rowan

- A Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for January 8, 1997, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office auditorium. The Coordinator is looking for speakers and papers that address management, culture and research activities pertaining to Connecticut River anadromous fish restoration.
- The U.S. Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee has a sub-team working to identify fish culture research needs. Responses to this inquiry can be directed through the Coordinator.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gratefully acknowledged support for its role in the anadromous fish restoration program provided in a letter to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.
- Cleve Kapala, New England Power Company, advised the Commission that, in response to a move to restructure utilities, the NEPCO would be getting out of the generating business and focusing solely on transmission in the future. These changes will be manifested in next 1 to 1-1/2 years. In the mean time, the Commission should not expect dramatic changes.
- Bob Jones provided the Commission with an update on NASCO activities. At the last meeting, Jones was elected Chair of the West Greenland Commission. The West Greenland Commission (U.S.A., Canada, Denmark for Greenland, and the European Union) is currently charged with meeting and developing a formula for setting quotas based on science prior to the next NASCO meeting. A formula that the member nations can agree upon is important if ICES quota recommendations are to be accepted. This year, both Greenland and Canada ignored the NASCO approved quotas because the basis for establishing those quotas was not accepted by those countries.

Respectfully Submitted on 10/8/1996,

Executive Secretary, CRASC