



## *A Backgrounder from*

### **Atlantic Salmon Federation**

P. O. Box 5200, St. Andrews, NB E5B 3S8

P. O. Box 807, Calais, ME USA 04619-0807

Tel: (506) 529-4581

[www.asf.ca](http://www.asf.ca)

## **BACKGROUNDER: GREENLAND SALMON CONSERVATION AGREEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

After leaving home rivers in North America and Europe as juveniles, many wild Atlantic salmon migrate to feeding grounds off the west coast of Greenland. In the mid-20th century, an intensive salmon fishery was established in these marine waters.

Using drift nets and nets affixed to the coast, the Greenland Atlantic Salmon fishery peaked in 1971 with a take of nearly 2,700 tonnes, equal to approximately 810,000 large salmon. It is a 'mixed-stock' fishery, meaning Greenlanders intercept Atlantic salmon from thousands of rivers in North America and Europe, some with relatively healthy populations and others critically endangered.

In addition to the mixed-stock nature of the fishery, only Atlantic Salmon that spend two or more winters at sea migrate as far as Greenland. These large salmon, also known as multi sea-winter salmon, are predominantly female and carry significantly more eggs than small salmon, also known as grilse, that spend only a single winter at sea.

In 2020 there were 757 participants in the Greenland Atlantic Salmon Fishery, including 339 professional license holders who can sell their catch domestically, and 418 private license holders who fish for food and recreation.

*For Greenland harvests since 1960 view the table beginning on page 318 of the 2021 ICES Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon:*

[https://www.asf.ca/assets/files/wgnas\\_2021.pdf](https://www.asf.ca/assets/files/wgnas_2021.pdf)

### **GREENLAND SALMON CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS**

The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), North Atlantic Salmon Fund (NASF), and the Association of Greenland Hunters and Fishers (KNAPK), which is the union representing commercial fishermen in Greenland, have agreed periodically to incentive-based, voluntary Atlantic salmon harvest reductions. The intent of these agreements has been to complement the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) and to bring the harvest of wild Atlantic salmon in line with annual scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

<https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2021/2021/sal.oth.nasco.pdf>

- The first agreement was in effect for 1993 and 1994.
- The second agreement was in effect between 2002 and 2010.
- The current agreement was signed in 2018 for 12-years.

In return for curtailing their catch of Atlantic salmon, Greenland fishermen can access grants from ASF and NASF to support alternative fishery development, economic diversification, conservation, education, and research projects.

During the first three years of the current agreement, grants to fishermen have totaled more than \$900,000 USD.

The past and current ASF-KNAPK-NASF agreements have coincided with an increase in the estimated number of large Atlantic salmon at sea, prior to any removal by fisheries. See graph below

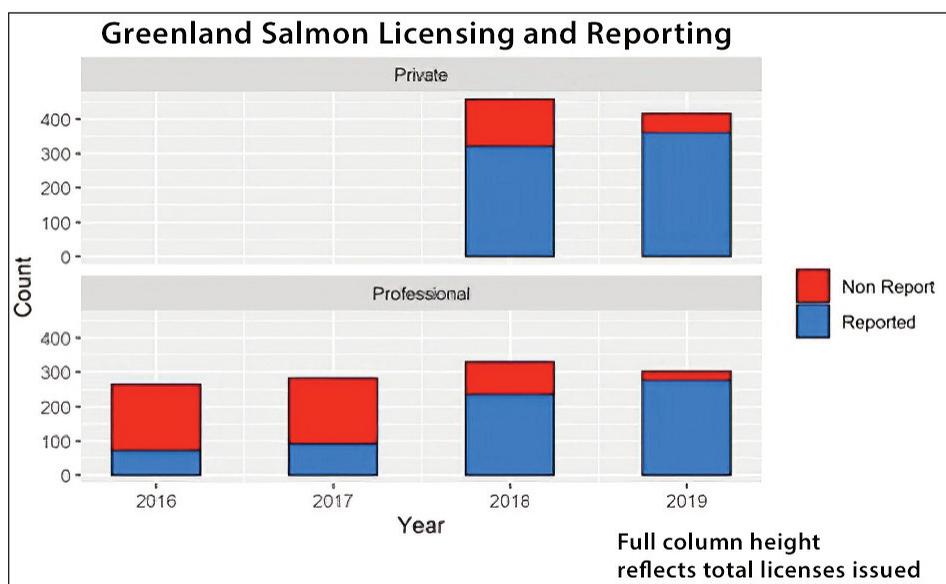


The graph above shows how North American salmon populations have responded to conservation agreements between ASF, NASF, and Greenland fishermen. The large circles indicate periods where conservation agreements were in place. The blue line indicates the number of 2 sea-winter salmon that returned to North American rivers. It is important to note that there is a lag period of a year or two before the salmon saved by these agreements return from their feeding areas at Greenland to their home rivers to spawn. The salmon saved by the current agreement which began in 2018 returned in 2019 and will increase in 2020 and beyond.

### THE CURRENT AGREEMENT

Signed in May 2018, the current Greenland Salmon Conservation Agreement has contributed to fishery reforms leading to a significant reduction in the real number of Atlantic salmon harvested.

Previously, only professional fishermen were required to have a license, and reporting was voluntary. This changed in 2018 when mandatory licensing and reporting for professional and private fishermen came into effect.



Improvements in issuing of licenses and reporting by both professional and private fishermen in Greenland

The modernization of the fishery has resulted in a significant reduction in harvest while maintaining the right of Greenlanders to fish salmon in the country's territorial waters. Prior to 2018, the reported catch was only a portion of the total harvest.

For example, in 2014, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea conducted a phone survey of Greenland salmon fishermen and estimated 30-35 t went unreported from professional fishermen in that year. Combined with the 58 t reported harvest, real landings could have topped 90 t that year, or approximately 27,000 large salmon.

Comparatively, the reported harvests for 2018, 2019, and 2020 were 39 t, 28 t, and 31 t with an average 80% of all license holders reporting their catch.

## **CONCLUSION**

ASF and NASF are dedicated to continuing to work in good faith with our partners at KNAPK and representatives of the Greenland Government to balance access to fisheries with significant conservation concerns in Atlantic salmon in home water countries like Canada, the United States, and Iceland.

The effect of our Greenland Salmon Conservation Agreements has been greater than any other single initiative since Canada's buy-out and retirement of approximately 7,000 commercial Atlantic salmon licenses.

Over the 14-years our agreements have been in place it is estimated that roughly 200,000 Atlantic Salmon have been saved, making an invaluable contribution to abundance and genetic diversity in Canadian, American, and European rivers.