

ASF Strategic Plan Update
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Background

ASF's current strategic plan, the "Blueprint" was prepared in 2017-18 and unanimously approved by the Boards of Directors of ASF in spring 2018 at their meeting in Toronto. This plan outlined the priorities for ASF for the coming five years including objectives and activities that ASF would undertake. ASF provided regular updates on progress against the plan at each Board meeting starting in autumn 2018 after the plan was launched for the 2018-19 ASF fiscal year.

The current document summarizes an update to the Blueprint based on:

1. Review of the Goals and Objectives of the previous plan,
2. Lessons the organization has learned implementing the 2018 plan,
3. Key changing circumstances affecting wild Atlantic salmon and understanding of causative factors,
4. Feedback received from Directors and donors during the 75th Anniversary Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign Listening Tour in 2022.

Review of the Blueprint Goals and Objectives

The Blueprint had four Goals:

1. Ensure fisheries are sustainable
2. Understand and address the suite of factors contributing to salmon mortality at sea
3. Contain and reduce the impacts of Open Net-Pen (ONP) aquaculture, and
4. Improve and restore connectivity and productivity of freshwater.

Each of the Goals had multiple Objectives, with numerous Activities to complete. By completing Activities we would achieve the Objective. The review by ASF staff concluded that the Goals were generally still valid but needed to be clearly re-stated and linked directly to the actions ASF will complete (avoid any complicating steps). Three of our Goals were focused on conservation and restoration, and one on our Research and Environment projects. All of these are externally-facing relative to the organization, as the Blueprint did not intend to include any inward-facing goals.

Lessons Learned

ASF's Management Team reviewed the Blueprint and its implementation and identified the following take-home messages:

- It was structurally sound / logical using a hierarchical reductionist approach, and had four solid and appropriate key Goals identified,

- Did not end up doing a good enough job tying the mileposts to the Objective and Activities,
- Was there clear ownership of the Objectives in the organization?
- Workload was too high, the plan was built on encumbering too much individual and department time, resulting in lack of capacity to strategize,
- Cumbersome,
- Extend the lifespan of the plan update, given ASF's ability to shape the future (high) and the rate of probable environmental change (medium - high),
- Absolutely need to make sure the plan includes steps to support organizational sustainability and success (internal objectives).

Subsequent discussions identified the following guidance for the updated Plan:

Lesson	Suggested Solution(s)
Structurally sound / logical using a hierarchical reductionist approach, and had four solid and appropriate key Goals identified	Clearly re-state and connect directly to actions to be completed
Did not end up doing a good enough job tying the mileposts to the Objective and Activities	One-step in the plan between the Program and Actions
Was there clear ownership of the Objectives in the organization?	No, ASF operates as multi-department teams. Need one Department AND position responsible
Workload was too high, the plan was built on encumbering too much individual and department time, resulting in lack of capacity to strategize	75% of time for any position at ASF will be considered fully allocated; Scope creep will remain a threat to the organization's ability to be effective.
The Plan was cumbersome to translate to some workplanning	Project-based structure needed
Extend the lifespan of the plan update, given ASF's ability to shape the future (high) and the rate of probable environmental change (medium - high)	The plan update should extend longer than previously, suggest 7-8 years.
<u>Absolutely</u> need to make sure the plan includes steps to support organizational sustainability and success (internal objectives)	The update needs to add organizational objectives commensurate with the plan scope and workload

Key Changes in Atlantic Salmon Conservation

Climate change is the over-arching priority for wild Atlantic salmon conservation in the coming years. Although we debated including climate change as a specific Goal or Objective in the

Blueprint in 2018, conceptually we viewed climate change impacts as ubiquitous across the plan with the Objectives and Activities chosen to account for them. The impacts of and needs in response to climate change have intensified during the last five years. If we were to title this updated strategic plan, it would be something close to “Securing a Future for *salar* within a Changing Climate”. This update includes Programs explicitly developed to tackle current and future impacts of climate change on wild Atlantic salmon.

Feedback on ASF’s 75th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign

In 2022 ASF undertook a listening tour interviewing 50 Directors and donors. In advance ASF staff prepared a Listening Tour Discussion Document that outlined six organization pillars for the fundraising campaign:

1. Wild Salmon Watersheds
2. Headwaters
3. Greenland Conservation Agreement
4. Research and Environment Endowment
5. Competing with Open Net-Pen Aquaculture, and
6. Raising the Noise Level.

Analysis of the results of the listening tour was completed by Abby Pond and the messages quoted below are most relevant to updating the ASF Strategic Plan.

“The top four challenges facing Atlantic salmon today, according to interviewees, are:

1. ONP Salmon Aquaculture
2. Climate Change
3. Habitat (ocean and freshwater)
4. Lack of public awareness (about Atlantic salmon and their plight)

There were no suggestions that we were missing a pillar.

“To place this in context, 50% of interviewees who highlighted ONP salmon aquaculture as a challenge also indicated that it is either too large and complex a problem for ASF to tackle or feel that any effect ASF could have on the industry is minimal. The same was true for 27% of those who identified climate change as the top threat.

“The future strategy of each [pillar] needs to be explicitly stated – what will this do for Atlantic salmon? How is this different from what we are currently doing?”

“The top three opportunities for ASF from the interviews related to building, scaling, and partnering up. ASF has longevity and credibility that interviewees see as an asset we can utilize to attract bigger and better partners. This applied to the organization, and more specifically to research as previously mentioned.

“Partnership was identified to strategically grow our membership, geographic reach, overall capacity, and generate higher impact in our research work. It was emphasized by several people that in our regional partnerships, we tend to be the largest partner involved and the benefits are not equal. Other interviewees mentioned the success in Maine Headwaters of building effective partnerships that translate into action and finding more of these. Partnership was also linked as a potential and conscious way to grow membership.

“In research, the scale of what ASF has the potential to grow and needs to do so to provide the evidence to support better management decisions and program focus. The feedback was very clear that our supporters are passionate about our research, but are asking, “now what? And why?”

Guiding Principles of Plan Update

We can identify the following guiding principles underpinning the updated Plan based on the ASF staff review of the Blueprint and the feedback received from the Listening Tour:

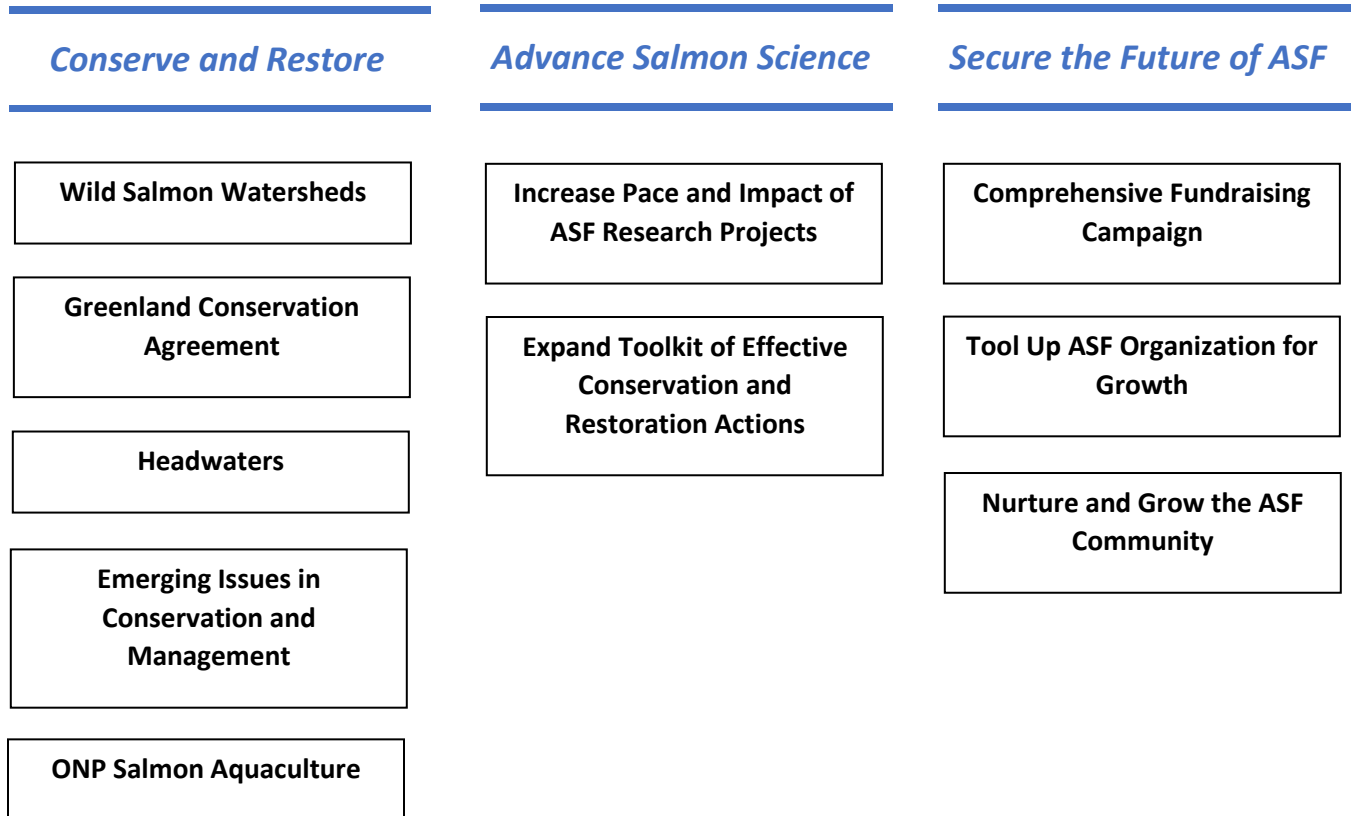
1. Climate change and ONP salmon aquaculture are difficult challenges to wild Atlantic salmon, but for ASF to make a difference these need to be tackled strategically in the updated Plan,
2. Increased focus on partnership to leverage expertise, resources, and amplify ASF influence,
3. A project-centred delivery model is the most effective and logical way forward,
4. ASF’s Research and Environment Department needs to diversify to support the full range of ASF projects,
5. ASF needs the required staff and resources, along with the tools, to get the job done.

The Updated Plan

ASF Management Team has prepared a draft Updated Plan as follows:

Overarching Goal – Be the Global Leader in Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation and Research

Pillars for Success:



The updated Plan has three Pillars for Success. The first Pillar, Conserve and Restore, is an amalgam of three of the Blueprint Goals – Sustainable Fisheries (e.g., Greenland Agreement), Open-net Pen Aquaculture, and Connectivity and Productivity. This last Goal captured ASF’s freshwater programs which is now comprised of three Programs: Wild Salmon Watersheds, Headwaters, and Emerging Issues in Conservation and Management.

The Blueprint Goal of Understanding Marine Mortality was ASF’s Research and Environment program. We heard clearly that Research and Environment needs to scale up substantially and continue to support other programs across ASF. Advancing Salmon Science becomes its own Pillar in this update, with two key and expanded Programs (Increase the Pace, and Expand the Toolkit) that will rely heavily on partnerships with other eNGOs, academic and research

institutions. This model allows ASF to rapidly scale up to investigate varied research topics without encumbering the organization with additional staff and associated commitments.

The last Pillar, Secure the Future of ASF, is about the 75th Anniversary Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign, making sure ASF has the staff complement and expertise, and tools and supports to be successful, along with diversifying ASF's base of support internally and externally through strategic communications and marketing projects. The Blueprint did not address internal-to-organization needs; it re-focused ASF conservation operations only.

All Projects under each of the Pillars are chosen based on ability to move the needle for salmon conservation and be clear about different/additional actions needed. All projects are based on scaling up and partnering. For example, the Greenland Conservation Agreement includes new components for outreach and engagement on-the-ground in Greenland as well as developing research projects with Greenland partners. Partnerships are part of the project design DNA of Wild Salmon Watersheds, Headwaters, and on Open-net Pen Aquaculture – ASF is simply unable to deliver on these programs without strong and committed partners.

With partnerships comes the need to manage those partnerships. ASF needs to recognize this deliberate focus by supporting staff for success through assigning appropriate workloads and supporting any training needs. Staff need time and freedom to develop key relationships and the skills to make them successful.

Tackling the impacts of Climate Change and taking pro-active action is the main theme of this updated plan. ASF's Wild Salmon Watersheds program is an explicit recognition of the need to act now to prepare for increased pace of climate change. Emerging issues in salmon conservation (including management decisions, environmental impacts of land use decisions) will have substantial focus on effects from climate change. Expanded Research and Environment projects will support Wild Salmon Watersheds and Headwaters research needs around future climate impacts, with our existing telemetry datasets allowing assessment of changes due to climate. Measuring the effectiveness of freshwater actions / mitigations allows effective and rapid interventions to mitigate climate change impacts.

At the time of writing, ASF staff are finalizing the individual projects that comprise the actions of this Plan update. Each project will contribute directly to Program success, have clear objectives and measures of success, and facilitate accountability as well as organizational administration. Additional details will be available at the time of presentation at the upcoming Board meetings in Toronto in late April 2023.