1. Opening of the meeting
The Chair, Mr Snorri Pálmason, Norway, called the meeting of PECMAS to order at 10:08 am at NEAFC HQ. He welcomed the members of PECMAS, representing all Contracting Parties. The observer from ICES joined the meeting later in the morning.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur
The Chair went through the agenda and listed what he thought should be achieved under each agenda item. He asked for comments. The EU representative suggested deferring agenda item 3 and sub-item under 4 on pelagic beaked redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent areas, giving Parties the possibility of considering the advice received the day before. This was agreed. The agenda was adopted and the Secretariat was appointed rapporteur.

3. Thresholds and move-on rules
In a postal vote earlier this year, it was decided to request advice from ICES on thresholds of catches of live corals and sponge, move-on provisions and advice for a best practice manual for VME surveys. A proposal for a request for advice was sent to ICES and circulated to PECMAS members on 2 June 2009. A reply¹ was received on 27 September. It did not offer any precise advice. The ICES representative informed that ICES had been aware of the discussions in NAFO.

Move on and thresholds

There was general agreement that if vulnerable areas were properly mapped thresholds and move-on rules became irrelevant. The Chair noted that mapping data should be made available to ICES. The EU representative drew attention to the way NAFO had responded and suggested that ICES took a similar approach. The ICES representative was not sure if the ICES group had looked into the NAFO approach, but would check.

The Chair also drew attention to discussions in NAFO earlier this month. NAFO has decided on revised thresholds and move-on rules and he distributed the formal decision by the Fisheries Commission of NAFO.

¹ 9.3.2.4 NEAFC Request in vulnerable marine ecosystem (VMEs) concerning move/on provisions and threshold values for key indicator species.
A change was agreed from 100 kilo to 60 kilos of corals and from 1000 kilo to 800 of sponges. This was adopted.

The Chair explained the background of the NAFO process. The NAFO Scientific Council used information from research vessels, Canadian and Spanish, based on 30 min tows. Research trawl indicators of high concentrations were calculated. This was the basis for proposals for closing areas with high concentrations. It was obvious that these indicators could not be used in commercial fishing. The figures were combined and scaled up to the size of the commercial trawl (twice as wide and tow time eight times the research tows). This gave estimates of 60 kilo of corals and 1200 of sponges. To be precautionary, the threshold for sponges was reduced to 800. It is a common view that most vulnerable areas in NAFO have been closed and together with the thresholds and move-on rules will reduce the probability of fishing in VMEs to very low levels.

The Chair noted that NEAFC had earlier followed the NAFO lead. Using the NAFO values would meet requests from Heads of Delegation to bring the thresholds down. It should, however, be noted that the coral and sponge fauna in the NAFO area and the NEAFC area are quite different. He suggested using the NAFO rules until more information on the fauna was available in the NEAFC Area. There had been no discussion on changing the move-on rule in NAFO.

The US delegates in NAFO had proposed including assessments of possible damage to VMEs into fishing plans. They suggested using the FAO guidelines in these assessments. Other parties felt this was unnecessary with so many other measures in place. The 3M prawn fishery was one fishery that would have been included. At the end the US delegation accepted that these assessments would only be necessary in new fishing areas. He did not find it necessary to go into detail on this in NEAFC now, but this should be kept in mind for the 2012 review. He asked for comments.

The EU representative made a case for harmonisation between NAFO and NEAFC. He did not find the ICES reply surprising. This was very complex. The objective difficulties listed can be taken into account. He suggested that it was a prudent course of action to follow NAFO, and not send more requests to ICES in the short term. Following NAFO would be in line with the ICES comment to use more precautionary threshold levels.

The Norwegian representative pointed out that the present NEAFC levels were not based on science. The NAFO levels had some scientific basis. He could go along with adopting the NAFO levels. The Icelandic representative agreed. We cannot defend the present NEAFC levels scientifically. The Norwegian representative pointed out that stone corals are dominant in the Eastern Atlantic which is not the case in the NAFO area. There are no stone corals there. The representative of the Russian Federation and the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) agreed. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) pointed out the difference between the northern and southern part of the NEAFC area.

The Chair concluded that there seemed to be agreement on how to proceed and he would draft a formal proposal for consideration.
The proposal for consideration by PECMAS as agreed, (PECMAS 2009-2-23) was tabled. The Chair asked for comments. There were none. He suggested that the Secretariat edit the final version and forward it as a proposal to the Annual Meeting. This was agreed.

The Chair pointed out that there was also the question of a best practice manual for surveys of VMEs. ICES has asked for clarification, as follows:

It might be helpful if PECMAS in September could consider the request on a manual for 'best practices for surveys of VMEs' and provide some clarification on the purpose of scientific survey and purpose of manual

To help with a starting point for the discussion I can mentioned:

1. Do NEAFC want a manual for deepwater surveys in closed deepwater habitats that fulfil a particular purpose- i.e. monitoring of ecosystem in closed area, or monitoring of fish communities in closed area; or do they want a general code of conduct that any scientific survey needs to follow if it is to operate in a protected deepwater area (closed to fishing).

2. Best practices for surveys of VMEs require a trade-off between scientific information gained in the surveys, monetary cost, and impact on the ecosystem. The trade-offs are not scientific. How much are NEAFC member countries willing to spend? What do they want to know about areas they have closed? Were they closed because they were pristine or in order to allow recovery? The information needs are likely to be different. Do they want low impact or no impact? The amount of impact is a value judgement, not scientific. Are this trade-offs addressed in some policy documents?

3. ICES could try to frame best practices in a manner that leaves such decisions to managers. For example, we could say that best practices require photographic techniques if zero impact is desired, but sampling a very small fraction of the area with a light trawl is best practices if low impact (only local effects with no significant impact on ecosystem functions) on a small fraction of the area is accessible. We might then address the difference in cost and information content of photographic techniques and "bottom contact sampling."

What is disturbing is that if the answer is open ended the task could be tremendous. To write a manual that covers all possible situations might not even be possible.

**Actions arising:** The agreed draft proposal for a recommendation on thresholds will be forwarded to the Commission at the 28th Annual Meeting for decision.

PECMAS will review using electronic communication for the points raised by ICES for clarifying the request for a best practice manual for surveys of VMEs.

4. Cooperation with ICES

4a) Report from meeting between client Commissions and ICES 4-5 May 2009

The Secretariat reported from the meeting. These annual meetings have found a reasonable form and have allowed an open and frank discussion about matters that are of concern to the three commissions, NASCO, NEAFC and the EC. Some issues have been raised several times at these meetings. One that ICES must be more explicit about uncertainty and quality of the assessments, but also that the advisory text should distinguish between uncertainty in assessment and in the conclusions. The gap between the information in the Advice Book and Expert Group reports is too large, so a fair description of uncertainties is lost in the process.
To address this problem ICES has planned two workshops that will take place in early December. The NEAFC Secretariat has been invited to participate in two ICES workshops. They will discuss the format of the ICES Advisory Report and the form of the advice.

The EU representative drew the attention to EU initiatives in the same direction and suggested that these things should be better coordinated. He pointed out the late delivery of advice for the pelagic stocks. He had expected from comments last year that it would have been possible to get the advice earlier this year. Late delivery affects discussions with stakeholders and between coastal states. He suggested that NEAFC puts pressure on ICES to deliver advice earlier. He had had conflicting information about when the surveys were available.

The ICES representative informed that this had been discussed at the Annual ICES Science Conference in September and it had been suggested moving the Expert Group and widely distributed stocks forward. He informed that, with respect to mackerel, the next triennial egg survey would take place in August 2010, so for mackerel advice could not be available early. The Norwegian representative informed that there were two surveys for blue whiting and AS herring, and the Expert Group had been reluctant to give advice before the late survey had been processed. The EU representative stressed that the late advice was a big problem for managers. The ICES representative pointed out that time was needed for review, but he would take the message back to ICES and see what can be done to give advice earlier.

**Actions arising:** In the request for advice for 2011 to ICES it will be stressed that the late delivery of advice causes serious problems for managers and stakeholders and ICES will be urged to give advice on all NEAFC stocks as early as possible, preferably in the first half of 2011.

### b) Reviewing the advice from ICES

The spring 2009 advice from ACOM, ICES, was published in June 2009 for the following NEAFC stocks/fisheries.

- **2.4.9** Beaked Redfish (*Sebastes mentella*) in Subareas V, XII, XIV and NAFO Subareas 1+2 (Shallow Pelagic stock < 500 m)
- **3.4.5** Beaked redfish (*Sebastes mentella*) in Subareas I and II. Same advice as last year.
- **5.4.24** Haddock in Division VIb (Rockall)

Just before the PECMAS meeting response on the following issues was received.

- **2.3.3.1** NEAFC request to provide information on the stock structure of *Sebastes mentella* fished in pelagic and demersal fisheries, i.e. relationship between the redfish in ICES Areas I, II, V, VI, X, XII, and XIV and the NAFO Regulatory area
- **2.3.3.3** NEAFC request to provide information concerning the timing and areas of larval extrusion of *Sebastes mentella* in the Irminger Sea in the light of the need to ensure recovery of this stock in ICES Subareas V, XII, XIV and NAFO Divisions 1F and 2GHJ
- **2.3.3.4** In order to allow the Contracting Parties to formulate an adaptive management plan for pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters, as advised by ICES, NEAFC will request ICES to provide potential elements in such a plan, including possible candidates for reference points.
- **2.4.6** Introduction to the redfish complex in Subareas V, VI, XII, and XIV
2.4.10 Beaked Redfish (*Sebastes mentella*) in Subareas V, XII, XIV and NAFO Subareas 1+2 (Deep Pelagic stock > 500 m)

9.3.2.1 NEAFC request to continue to provide all available new information on distribution of vulnerable habitats in the NEAFC Convention Area and fisheries activities in and in the vicinity of such habitats

9.3.2.2 NEAFC request to evaluate the use and quality of VMS data and records of catch and effort for providing information on the spatial and temporal extent of current deepwater fisheries in the NE Atlantic.

No response was available with respect to

9.3.2.3 NEAFC request to develop suitable criteria for differentiating fisheries into possible management types (e.g. directed deep-water fisheries, by-catch fisheries etc.) and to apply these criteria to categorise individual fisheries in order to enable NEAFC to develop fishery-based management initiative

A table of requests for advice and responses will be circulated when the advice on the pelagic stocks has been received.

The ICES representative went through the advice to hand. He especially noted that the text sent from ACOM on beaked redfish in the Irminger Sea was a consensus text, although there had been a minority statement that slope and deep should be assessed together. The dissenting view is set out in a footnote on page two of the introductory section. He also drew attention to the introductory statement about the changed perception on the beaked redfish (*S. mentella*) in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters, which is now perceived to have 3 stock components and that this was the first time ICES had given advice on the “deep pelagic and shallow pelagic” component.

The representative of the Russian Federation indicated that she supported the position expressed in the footnote to the ICES advice and referred to correspondence between the Russian Federation and ICES. (PECMAS 2009-2-20). The main problem was the use of primarily genetics for recommendations on the stock structure by the Study Group. She also noted that there was a change in the advice with respect to which of the two components, “shallow” or “deep”, that now needed particular protection. She reiterated that it was the “deep” component in the north-east that was recommended by ICES for particular protection before. She had submitted a written statement on the position of the Russian Federation and a proposed text to go into the body of the report of PECMAS. The text is found below:

(On 22-23 January 2009 the ICES Study Group on Redfish Stock Structure (WKREDS) (Chair: Steve Cadrin, USA) held a meeting to address the issues relating to the structure of redfish stock in the Irminger Sea.

Russia strongly disagreed with the approach taken at the meeting where, in fact, primarily genetic data were used as a basis of recommendations having implications for the overall management regime of pelagic redfish *Sebastes mentella* in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters. The opinion of Russian scientists was not reflected in the advice developed by WKREDS, nor was it included in the response provided by ICES to a special request of the client Commission, NEAFC.

In the light of this the Russian Federation sent a number of letters to ICES to draw its attention to this problem and to implications this situation may have for future negotiations on management measures for this stock.)
The approach that Russia suggests under the current circumstances is to undertake further research on the structure of pelagic S. mentella stock in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters with a view to developing scientific advice based on all available information and consensus among all scientists involved in studies of this stock and to adhere to the ICES advice based on the existence of a single pelagic S. mentella stock in the Irminger Sea in the meantime."

The EU representative found it difficult to discuss the ICES advice in this context. The Icelandic representative pointed out that all material had been used by the Study Group, not only the genetics. The Russian data were not in conflict with the genetic data.

The representative of the Russian Federation responded that the problems were not with the other data, but with the extent to which they were reviewed by the Study Group and their interpretation.

The Icelandic representative pointed out that it is very important to resolve this disagreement before the Annual Meeting. He suggested that the Chair of the Study Group be invited to explain the findings of the Study Group to the Commission at the Annual Meeting.

With respect to the change in the advice on the need for protection, ICES explained that the acoustic gave estimates of abundance which were only 5 percent of the original estimates from the beginning of the survey series. The Icelandic representative informed that there had been two vessels in the survey (the Russian Federation had not been able to participate). The Russian representative raised a question about the accuracy of estimates from the survey, given that the distance between survey tracks increased. The Icelandic representative responded that the variance of the survey estimate was very low and therefore the confidence in the results high.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stressed that it had been decided to give advice on three stock components. He found the advice zero catch on one component and 20000 tonnes for another was precisely advising disproportionate exploitation. It should be possible to estimate the by-catch of “deep” mentella in the North Eastern area,

The Russian Federation asked ICES about methods that could be used to avoid potential by-catch of “shallow” redfish in the north-eastern area.

The ICES representative responded that the situation in the redfish advice was unusual, and he would not like to interpret the text in the advice, as it had been very carefully drafted. He thought that the exploitation advised had to be based on the status of the component. He suggested that if clarification was sought this should be formulated in the NEAFC request for advice.

The representative of the Russian Federation asked about the ICES advice on the stock structure of S. mentella in ICES Sub-areas I and II. The ICES representative informed that the stock structure in I and II had not been very much discussed, but the issue could be raised in the NEAFC request for advice for 2010.

The EU representative asked for more information on why there was disagreement and how to solve it. This kind of advice made it very difficult to proceed. There should be a way of
handling this problem. Will we be in the same position as last year with no clear advice? The Icelandic representative did not find the advice difficult to understand. It is possible to manage a unit, even if the advice was zero directed catch.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) suggested that ICES should implement some rules on how to deliver advice in situations where there was disagreement. ICES should speak with one voice.

The Chair summed up that the discussion will continue next week at the coastal state meeting and at the Annual Meeting. He noted that the Icelandic representative had proposed inviting the Chair of the Study Group to the Annual Meeting. The Icelandic representative thought that the Chair should be asked to explain how the Group reached the conclusions it had presented. The Chair proposed that PECMAS inform the President that it was the wish of the Group that the Chair of the Study Group should be available at the Annual Meeting. The EU representative agreed, but stressed that PECMAS had to inform the Commission about its problem to do anything about this. The Chair suggested that PECMAS simply had to draw attention to the facts in the disagreement and ask that this problem be specifically addressed at the Annual Meeting.

The ICES representative explained the background for advocating that it now was the “shallow” mentella component that needed protection. He also drew attention to problems with landing data which hampered assessment work.

He noted that the request to use the same methods to split redfish stocks into components as was done with deep sea species was obsolete as a new concept of stock structure had been developed.

He then went through other responses to special requests.

9.3.3.2 Use of VMS data and records of catch and effort.

ICES has some suggestions on how to improve the usefulness of the data.

It was noted that it would not be possible to develop the VMS reporting to a full scientific reporting system. However, PECMAS could draw the attention of PECCOE to the fact that making the reporting of fishing gear mandatory and reporting depth could make the VMS data more useful and this would not be a major new requirement.

2.3.3.3 The timing of larval extrusion.

The representative of the Russian Federation drew attention to their call for clarification on how the NEAFC request for advice on areas of S. mentella larvae extrusion in the Irminger Sea had been handled by ICES. She referred to paper PECMAS 2009-02-20 containing Russia’s comment on the response provided by ICES to NEAFC to that request. She also referred to correspondence between Russia and ICES on the issue earlier this year.

The ICES representative said he would look into the matter and come back. He then went through other responses to special requests.

The ICES representative informed that he had not been able to find out more about the request for data on larval extrusion in the beaked redfish fishery in the Irminger Sea. The
representative of the Russian Federation informed that they had had a reply from ICES concerning the response to this request, which they found difficult to agree to. A copy of correspondence was provided to the ICES representative at the meeting.

2.3.3.4 In order to allow the Contracting Parties to formulate an adaptive management plan for pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters, as advised by ICES, NEAFC will request ICES to provide potential elements in such a plan, including possible candidates for reference points.

ICES has postponed this advice until 2010. There will be a special workshop in the coming year.

The EU representative asked about the possibility of improving the deep sea fisheries advice and the data. The ICES representative indicated that he was very interested in receiving new data also from the industry. The EU representative informed that the Long Distance RAC had been urged to make data available. The ICES representative stressed that if such data should be included in the assessments certain criteria had to be met.

Advice for the remaining NEAFC stocks/fisheries (mackerel, blue whiting and AS herring) will be released in the beginning of October.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions arising:</th>
<th>PECMAS inform the Commission at the 28th Annuals Meeting on the disagreement on advice on beaked redfish (<em>S. mentella</em>) in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PECMAS will propose that the Chair of the ICES Study Group on Redfish Stock Structure (WKREDS) (Chair: Steve Cadrin, USA) explain the findings of the Group.</td>
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<td>PECMAS will draw attention to outstanding responses from ICES in the request for advice for 2011.</td>
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5. Area management and monitoring

a) Proposal for changes to the Hatton Bank closures from The EU representative

A proposal by the European Community for a recommendation on the adoption of management measures by closing certain areas of the Hatton Bank in the NEAFC Regulatory Area was sent for a postal vote, but was rejected. Four Contracting Parties maintained that such a proposal should be presented to PECMAS for discussion before proceeding to a decision.

The EU representative explained that compared to the original ICES advice the only changes in the EU proposal were smoothing of some lines to make enforcement and control easier. This was the same proposal that had been sent for a postal vote earlier this year. This was now put through the required steps in PECMAS. The 2008 ICES advice 9.3.2.2. was distributed.

The Chair had noted that no party had expressed problems with amending the Hatton Bank closures according to the ICES advice from 2006. He asked if there was agreement that PECMAS forward the EU proposal to the Annual Meeting for adoption.
The Norwegian representative wanted some clarification if there were new data to support the proposal. He asked also about the control and enforcement aspects.

The EU representative had not much to add to what he had stated earlier. With respect to the control and enforcement aspects, the proposal had been submitted to PECCOE which had not had any comments. The reporting time of VMS data (every second hour) limited the possibilities if monitoring vessels with respect to the lines for the closed area drawn by the scientists. The Norwegian representative noted that the proposal had been based on the same material as ICES has used. Deviation from the precise advice demands a good explanation. He did not see any good scientific explanation. He asked if it was not for PECCOE to raise concerns about the control aspects?

The EU representative found that even with good scientific advice there was always a case for setting limits which were controllable. That was what the EU had done. The Norwegian representative did not understand the control aspects, but had nothing against the proposal being forwarded to NEAFC, as long as his remarks were recorded. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) observed that the lines did not seem very smooth and scientifically there was a case to be made for the particular lines proposed. The EU representative said that the lines were not scientifically based, but took control measures into account.

The Chair said that two parties had indicated that they were not completely satisfied with the explanation for the deviation from the advice from ICES. However, he suggested that the proposal should go forward, with the comments made reflected in the body of the PECMAS report.

The Chair asked if Parties were now ready to reach a conclusion. The Icelandic representative would like to have further clarification about the reason for drawing the precise lines in the EU proposal. The Icelandic representative did not dispute a need for changing the lines, but lacked the information to go forward. In light of this the EU representative thought that the comments of PECCOE on the proposal would be of particular interest. The Icelandic representative asked if the questions to PECCOE would deal with both the present closure and the extension. The EU representative suggested that PECCOE was asked to give its view on the proposal. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked if PECMAS can send requests directly to PECCOE. The Secretariat informed that PECMAS can always draw the attention of PECCOE to the control aspects. It will then be up to the group to decide if it can contribute. The EU representative will immediately after this meeting distribute a map that compares the ICES advice and the EU proposal.

The Chair felt that the Committee agreed that there was a need to implement the ICES advice. In some delegations there seemed to be some doubt that the EU proposal actually did this. He concluded that PECCOE should be asked to comment on the control aspects. It was agreed that with the comments from PECCOE the proposal will go forward as a proposal from PECMAS to the Annual Meeting.

**Actions arising:** PECMAS has drawn the attention of PECCOE to the control aspects of the proposal and invited PECCOE to comment. With possible comments from PECCOE it will go forward as a proposal from PECMAS for a recommendation to the Annual Meeting.
b) Icelandic proposal closing a blue ling spawning area

The Icelandic representative had submitted a proposal to close an area which will supplement an earlier spawning area closure inside waters under Icelandic jurisdiction - PECMAS 2009-02-14. It is a seasonal closure, mid-February to mid-April. The proposal is based on earlier advice from ICES. The EU representative asked about which part of the ICES advice it referred to and how it supplemented other areas ICES had advised on. The Icelandic representative thought that ICES had forgotten this area, which had earlier been identified. The EU representative informed that they had established protection areas, not closed areas for blue ling spawning area. The Chair suggested that PECMAS should give the proposal more time for consideration and PECMAS should revert to the issue again.

Following further considerations and discussion it became clear that PECMAS was not ready to reach consensus on the proposal.

**Action arising:** PECMAS takes no action on this proposal

6. Reporting Bottom Fishing Activity

The Bottom Fishing Regulation adopted by NEAFC in November 2008 stipulates that “Contracting Parties with vessels involved in bottom fishing activities in the period 1987 to 2007 shall, for the purpose of paragraph 1, submit to the extent possible and no later than 1 September 2009 comprehensive maps of existing fishing areas to the Secretary.”

Iceland, the Russian Federation and Portugal reported last year. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) - Faroe Islands and the EU representative - Spain reported before the 1 September deadline. The new data will be incorporated in data delimiting new and existing fishing areas. The Secretariat will coordinate this.

**Actions arising:** The data from the Faroe Islands and Spain will be analysed in the same way with the data from the NEAFC VMS database as Iceland and the Russian Federation last year and added to that dataset. The possible resulting changes in existing fishing areas will be circulated to PECMAS for information and reported to the Commission at the 28th Annual Meeting.


The WG had its first meeting on 21-22 April 2009. The report has been circulated to PECMAS and the NEAFC Secretariat highlighted its findings. It was felt that there was now in place a NEAFC Group with statistical practitioners that will take care of problems in reporting quota uptake correctly and advice on others statistics compiled by NEAFC. The Group at its first meeting developed a new reporting format that will be submitted to the Annual Meeting. Final figures for quota uptakes for 2008 and preliminary figures for 2009 will be compiled by the Secretariat and should be ready in mid-October.

8. Documenting NEAFC Fisheries

1) The NEAFC Fisheries Status Report

The Fishery Status Report was released in June. A draft version had been around for almost a year before that. The report was one of the proposals from the 2006 NEAFC Performance
Review. The report will be reviewed regularly. There are still economic data outstanding and these will hopefully be improved in the next version of the Report. The Secretariat would appreciate comments and suggestions for improvements.

2) FIRMS fact sheets for NEAFC Fisheries

The NEAFC Secretariat, in cooperation with the FIRMS team of FAO, is developing fact sheets for NEAFC fisheries and their management. The first draft versions have now been prepared by NEAFC on the management part. Stock assessments will be submitted directly by ICES. The sheets will be regularly updated. NEAFC entered the FIRMS as a partner in 2005 in support of the FAO work to establish one authoritative global source for information on stock status and fisheries management.

9. Cooperation with OSPAR under the MoU

The OSPAR and NEAFC Secretariats are working on a joint note on how to make cooperation foreseen in the MoU between the two organisations operational. The note will be submitted to the 2009 Annual Meeting.

The EU representative asked if there had been any reaction from OSPAR on the NEAFC closures on the Mid/Atlantic Ridge. The Icelandic representative informed that at the OSPAR meeting discussions had focused on claims on the continental shelf especially from Iceland, claims which stretch down to the Charlie Gibbs fracture zone.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked if a decision should be made by PECMAS on OSPAR observers. The Icelandic representative referred to earlier discussions where the point was made that this may affect the open and frank discussions between managers and scientist in PECMAS. The EU representative felt that it was important to exchange views with an environmental side. If they were invited as observers, NEAFC should have the same rights in OSPAR meetings. The representative of the Russian Federation also found transparency to be a good thing and it should possible to organise the meeting so PECMAS had an open exchange of views internally and in another part of the meeting exchanged views with OSPAR. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) agreed and the Norwegian representative thought this could be a start to improve transparency. It could be reviewed as experience is gained.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) thought it would be useful if OSPAR was given the opportunity to make comments on all agenda items during the time set aside for their participation. The Icelandic representative pointed out that comments from OSPAR could also inform the discussion in PECMAS. The EU representative went along with the Russian proposal. The Icelandic representative pointed out that it was important that the participation was quite clear – it should be decided who could attend. It is obvious that it would make sense to discuss the ICES advice.

The EU representative was afraid that restrictions in access to the full PECMAS meeting may give a wrong signal. The important thing was to specify what precisely we would like to discuss with OSPAR representatives. This could raise the question of whether NGOs and others should be allowed as observers. The Chair suggested that delegations gave this more thought. The Secretariat will, based on the discussion, drafted a proposal for a way forward (PECMAS 2009-2-21).
After considerable discussion on the precise wording it was agreed to forward the following proposal to the Commission.

“PECMAS proposes that OSPAR is offered observer status in PECMAS. The OSPAR Secretariat will be invited to participate as observers.

A dedicated part of the PECMAS agenda will - in consultation with OSPAR – be set aside so PECMAS and OSPAR observers have time to exchange views on areas of cooperation under the MoU, as outlined by the Commission. The observers will have access to all documents submitted to the PECMAS meetings, but will only participate in the dedicated part of the meeting.”

**Actions arising:** The proposal will be forwarded to the Commission for decision at the 28th Annual Meeting.

### 10. Project TXOTX

This project was introduced to NEAFC at the Annual Meeting November last year. Project TXOTX is coordinated by AZTI (Spain) and involves 10 other research institute partners from both the EU representative and non-EU countries. The project is conducted in three stages:

1. Information gathering on research conducted on stocks of interest, how it is coordinated, and funding approaches, through:
   - i. A web based review to gain as much information as possible on proposed subject stocks/fisheries, current research and management.
   - ii. Based on [a], develop tailor partly completed questionnaires to relate to specific RFMOs and relevant fisheries.
   - iii. Arrange meeting with RFMOs to complete the focused questionnaire.
2. The project team will collate and synthesize this information in reports.
3. A workshop, attended by representatives of all RFMOs and countries included in the TXOTX network, will review the state of research and research coordination on shared stocks and identify priorities for future research and coordination.

Tony Beeching and Graham Pilling introduced the project to PECMAS (the full presentation is attached).

There was general agreement that a first attempt to answer the questionnaire would be undertaken by the Secretariat, to be supplemented by information received from the members of PECMAS or sources they felt would be able to contribute. The EU representative drew attention to the work of STEFC (social and economics also covered) and noted that NEAFC takes into account environmental concerns, albeit perhaps in another context from OSPAR. The Icelandic representative informed that there was not consensus in OSPAR on how far reaching OSPAR’s mandate is with respect to fisheries.

The project will at a later stage have a dedicated website to disseminate information about best practice and lessons learned (this is mandatory with EU projects 7th framework) to the general public.
**Actions arising:** The Secretariat will make a first attempt to respond to the TXOTX questionnaires. The responses will be circulated to PECMAS for comments and additional information.

### 11. Report of the Meeting

The Report will then be issued as an Annual Meeting document.

### 12. Future Meetings

There is still uncertainty about the timing of the ICES advice. It was agreed tentatively that there would only be one PECMAS meeting in 2010 and it should take place after all ICES advice was available. The EU representative reminded that there was a strong wish to move as much forward as possible. The ICES representative was not sure how far it was possible to move next year, but it was stressed that even a week forward was a help. ICES may be able to decide on the timing in time for the Annual Meeting. The EU representative also stressed interest in getting the dates for benchmarking assessments as early as possible. The ICES representative promised to send the dates for this immediately to the Secretariat.

### 13. Any other Business

The Chair suggested that the Secretariat immediately started preparing the general part of the request for advice. If there were specific requests Contracting Parties should inform the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) felt that this item should have been on the agenda at this meeting. That would have given the Committee more chance to have a closer look at the request. The representative of the Russian Federation asked about the request to ICES for 2009 on mackerel research. The Icelandic representative informed that a survey had taken place with two vessels from Norway, one from the Faroe Islands and two from Iceland. With respect to the response to the request on mackerel. See Annex 1.

The Chair noted that a final list of which requests had been responded to could not be drawn up, before the last pieces of advice (pelagic stock) had been received from ICES.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had some thoughts about the work of PECMAS. Before PECMAS there had been an ad-hoc process, where a group of scientists handled the request for advice from NEAFC to ICES. He noted that at the outset the mandate of PECMAS was very open and the Committee had had to fill the space. He saw this as a fruitful process and the forum created as interesting. However, one should be aware of the mixed nature of the Group. He personally had expected a free discussion on how to implement scientific proposals. Now there seemed to be a tendency to stick to delegation positions. More policy was not necessarily the way forward. He asked

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2 **3. Regarding a scientific survey programme for mackerel in the North East Atlantic**

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of seasonal distribution and migration of the mackerel stock in the Northeast Atlantic, coordinated research and surveys are needed. In order to investigate the feasibility for this, the Contracting Parties have agreed that a coordinated scientific survey programme should be organised. Norway will invite experts from the NEAFc members to a meeting to organise the survey, including an appropriate survey protocol. This meeting will take place early in 2009. NEAFc requests ICES to evaluate the survey plan and the survey protocol as soon as possible in 2009.
whether the Commission should make a review of the performance of PECMAS. The EU representative to some extent agreed and found that plain talk can happen and should happen. How this can be combined with the positions of the various parties is not easy to answer, but a strengthening of the network side of the Group could work. The Icelandic representative agreed with the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) on what had been the intention from the outset. There may be value in getting guidance from the Commission. The ICES representative asked if a related issue was the importance of the support from ICES, asking ICES experts to appear at PECMAS meetings. The Secretariat raised the question of the timing of the detailed presentation of the ICES advice.

14. **Actions arising**

The specific actions arising are listed in the report from the meeting under the relevant agenda item.

15. **Closure of the meeting**

The Chair closed the meeting at 2:45 pm, thanked everybody and wished them a safe journey home.
PECMAS 2
(28 – 30 Sep 2009)

TXOTX April 2008- March 2011

Cefas: Graham Pilling
Tony Beeching
Phil Large
• Review research and research coordination on stocks of shared interest between the EU, Member States, RFMOs & third countries.

• Analysis of data and methodologies applied in assessment and management, to identify data and research gaps and opportunities for greater research coordination in support to scientific advice to fisheries management.

• Synthesis: research conducted, funding for data collection, analysis, assessment methods and management priorities.

• Make recommendations to improve cooperation to enhance research and resource sustainability; and support social and economic welfare in fisheries.
Outputs

• A global synthesis of information gained from the project.

• The synthesis will Identify:
  • research gaps or duplication.
  • best practice and potential improvements for programs
  • specific research topics & areas to fill identified gaps.
  • where co-ordination of a regional research program will bring added benefits.

• A peer-review & Stakeholder Workshop.

• Dissemination of outcomes to policy-makers, FMOs, stakeholders, media & the general public etc.
Cefas Role

Cefas is working with Non-Tuna RFMOs and associated bodies including:

NEAFC NAFO SEAFO NASCO ICES GFCM OSPAR
Questionnaire Structure

- **Section 1**: RFMO structure, management issues & mechanisms

- **Section 2. RFMO science**
  - Focused on the 5-6 stocks where EU has a strong interest.
  - Stocks may be selected on basis of state of stock, value, landings, ecosystem impacts, ecosystem significance, PET species and socio-economic considerations.

- **Section 3 – Ecosystems**

- **Section 4 – Environment**

- **Section 5 - Socio-economics**
Project Status ~ NEAFC

- Phil Large presented an overview to the Commission and gained their approval and agreement to participate in the project.

- Web searches provide background information on NEAFC, its structure, activities and relationships with other organisations

- A meeting with Kjartan Hoydal, Secretary, gained further support and advice on how best to proceed; Kjartan:
  1. Agreed to review the generic questionnaire to best apply it to NEAFC, and to complete Section 1, with support appropriate scientific bodies (PECMAS, ICES etc.)
  2. Arranged for Cefas to present to PECMAS, with the intention of identifying key persons/organisations to help with completing specific sections of the questionnaire
  3. As chair of the RSN, will brief the network on the TXOTX project and suggests that we present a draft final report at their January 2011 meeting
  4. Encouraged us to meet with OSPAR
Identifying expertise

- **Section 1**: RFMO structure, management issues & mechanisms: To be completed by NEAFC Secretariat with support from appropriate scientific bodies (PECMAS, ICES etc.)

- **Section 2**: RFMO science: to be completed by those with a scientific lead on the stocks (5 or 6) where EU has a strong interest (one copy per stock)

- **Section 3**: Ecosystems

- **Section 4**: Environment

- **Section 5**: Socio-economics

Cefas:  Graham Pilling  graham.pilling@cefas.co.uk
Tony Beeching  tony.beeching@cefas.co.uk
Phil Large  phil.large@cefas.co.uk
http://wiki.azti.es/ txotx
Request to ICES for Scientific Advice for 2010
First draft

1 Background

1.1 Requirements in the amended Convention

Reference is made to the Memorandum of Understanding of 2007 between NEAFC and ICES.

According to the 2006 amendment of the NEAFC Convention, the objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable, environmental and social benefits.¹

When making recommendations for management measures the NEAFC Commission shall

- a) ensure that such recommendations are based on the best scientific evidence available;
- b) apply the precautionary approach;
- c) take due account of the impact of fisheries on other species and marine ecosystems, and in doing so adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures that address the need to minimise harmful impacts on living marine resources and marine ecosystems; and
- d) take due account of the need to conserve marine biological diversity.

The Commission shall provide a forum for consultation and exchange of information on the state of the fishery resources in the Convention Area and on the management policies, including examination of the overall effects of such policies on the fishery resources and, as appropriate, other living marine resources and marine ecosystems.

The ecosystem approach has been reviewed regularly by the NEAFC Commission. There is general agreement that the way forward is incrementally adding elements that integrate environmental concerns in the fisheries measures.

1.2 International trends

The UNFSA UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks states maximum sustainable yield has developed into a limit reference point for fishing mortality in well managed fish stocks rather than a target. The “Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development”, ² Johannesburg 2002, agreed³ that, to achieve sustainable fisheries, stocks should be maintained or restored to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield and aim to achieve these goals for depleted stocks on an urgent basis and where possible not later than 2015.

¹ Article 2 of the 2006 amendment to the Convention
³ 31. To achieve sustainable fisheries, the following actions are required at all levels:
   (a) Maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield with the aim of achieving these goals for depleted stocks on an urgent basis and where possible not later than 2015;
1.3 Scientific basis for management measures for fisheries

UNFSA is prescriptive with respect to determining stocks status. Annex II of the UNFSA stresses the use of precautionary reference points. Two types of precautionary reference points should be used: conservation, or limit, reference points and management, or target, reference points. Limit reference points set boundaries which are intended to constrain harvesting within safe biological limits within which the stocks can produce maximum sustainable yield. Target reference points are intended to meet management objectives. Some authors suggest that the MSY should be the limit reference point rather than the target.

The differences in estimated fishing mortality and spawning-stock biomass in the same year from subsequent assessments, as shown in retrospective analyses even in the best assessments, causes problems that have to be addressed by management i.a

- Do annual TACs result in a desired level of fishing mortality?
- Can the uncertainty in the advice be made explicit to allow managers to gauge the true risks involved in their decisions?
- Can the advice be presented in a way so the science is more transparent and stakeholders and managers can deal with uncertainty up front?

The ecosystem approach and, in general, the impact of fisheries on species other than target species and habitats is expected to be added incrementally and integrated into the measures already in place in the years to come. This involves area management for which NEAFC seeks specific advice.

2 Specification of requests

2.1 Standard recurring advice

NEAFC requests ICES to provide advice on the status of fish stocks in the NEAFC Convention Area in accordance with the MoU between ICES and NEAFC. Reference is especially made with respect to ANNEX 1. Ecosystems and stocks for which advice is given:

Advice is provided regarding marine ecosystems within the geographical scope of this agreement. The particular stocks are those listed below. In the case of the stocks for which a Client Commission has specific responsibility, the primary request to ICES shall be made through that Client Commission.

Advice shall normally be provided for each calendar year. However, for stocks where measurement precision is low compared to the expected magnitude of changes in stock size advice may be provided at intervals greater than each year. For short-lived species and highly seasonal fisheries the timing of the advice shall be adapted as appropriate;

and ANNEX 2: Recurring advice required from ICES:

“Recurring advice shall be given in the context of ecosystems and fisheries.

“The recurring advice shall include information on the state of marine ecosystems and human impacts including historical developments in main parameters and information on the present state and recent development of stocks. The recurrent advice shall provide information on state of stocks and fisheries including - when available - historical developments in spawning stock biomass, total stock biomass, fishing mortality, landings and discards.
The recurring advice regarding fisheries management will include advice on long term management strategies and short and medium term implications of these as detailed below.

Implementation issues shall be specifically addressed in the advice. Regarding fisheries management advice ICES will evaluate implementation issues and the outcomes of specific management measures. Specifically, when new regulations are introduced ICES shall provide evaluations of these when sufficient information is available.

When IUU (Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported) fishing is indicated to take place ICES will consider the effects on the stocks of such fisheries in the advice.

When providing its advice regarding fisheries ICES shall take account of all available information and the context of fisheries management including information from the fishing industry, ecosystem considerations, environment and hydrographical conditions, regulations in force that affect fisheries, factors affecting fishing operations and information about the fisheries, development of fisheries technology and relevant performance changes and other relevant factors that affect fishing or fish stocks.

Advice from ICES shall in all cases take account of the accuracy and precision of the available assessments and forecasts. Information about the accuracy and precision of assessments and forecasts shall be presented and considered in the advice.

If ICES is aware of implementation problems regarding agreed management plans the advice should highlight this and consider these issues in its advice on short term implications of these management plans.

If agreed management plans or recovery plans exist which ICES does not consider in accordance with the criteria defined in the NEAFC Convention or if no agreed management plans exist, ICES shall advice on management measures (including options for management plans) which ICES finds in accordance with the NEAFC Convention. If significantly different, the advice shall be given separately for a risk avoidance approach, based on the Precautionary Approach, and an MSY approach within the limitations of the Precautionary Approach. The short term implications of such measures shall be provided.

The short term implications will, when adequate data are available, be expressed as quantified consequences of the management measures currently implemented for that stock or fishery. For the management year (or years in the case of multi-annual management regimes), the short term consequences of relevant management measures should be given for relevant intervals of action while reflecting the uncertainties regarding expected outcomes.

In those cases where the uncertainties in the evaluation of outcomes are such that a quantitative distinction between management measures is not possible ICES shall provide quantitative or qualitative information regarding expected outcomes of relevant management measures over intervals of action which reflect the uncertainty in the evaluation. In cases where data are insufficient to provide the basis for quantitative advice ICES shall provide information on the reasons for this deficiency and advice on management measures which, given the uncertainties, are considered consistent with the NEAFC Convention.

Ecosystem approach

The advice shall be based on an ecosystem approach. This will be implemented incrementally so that any information on the interactions between fisheries, the fish stocks and the marine ecosystem is considered and incorporated in the advice as it becomes available; specifically, taking ecosystem and environmental considerations into account when providing the recurring advice mentioned above, ICES will:

a) Assess the extent to which fishing disturbs the marine ecosystems and, where reference levels have been established, compare the impact to the reference level chosen.

b) Provide any new information regarding the impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem including small cetaceans and other marine mammals, sea birds and sensitive habitats.

c) Inform NEAFC of any notable impact of other factors on and imbalances in ecosystem structure that may prejudice the stocks of commercially valuable species and its long term exploitation;

d) Propose reference points as guidance for management purposes in an ecosystem context.

ICES will in addition give warnings of any serious threats from fishing activities alone or in conjunction with any other relevant activity to local ecosystems or species as soon as ICES is aware of such threats.
Provision of information

In support of its advice ICES shall provide NEAFC with:

a) A full methodological description of the assessment and advisory procedure for each stock, updated whenever a significant change is made;

b) Estimates of landings, fishing mortality, recruitment and spawning stock together with information or estimates of the uncertainty with which these parameters are estimated. These data shall be provided electronically;

c) Estimates of relevant reference points for management;

d) On request, complete data records used for assessment purposes shall be provided. These data shall be provided electronically;

Such information should be provided whenever significant changes are made or can be detected, but not normally more frequently than implied by the schedule in Annex 3. However, NEAFC should be informed immediately of any new information indicating a previously unforeseen biological emergency.”

2.2 Non-recurring advice

Regarding redfish stocks in the North Atlantic (ICES areas I, II)

a. NEAFC requests ICES to provide information on the stock structure of Sebastes mentella fished in pelagic and demersal fisheries, i.e. relationship between the redfish in Sub-areas I, II.

2. Regarding vulnerable habitats and deep-water species.

a. Vulnerable deep-water habitats in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

NEAFC requests ICES to continue to provide all available new information on distribution of vulnerable habitats in the NEAFC Convention Area and fisheries activities in and in the vicinity of such habitats.


NEAFC requests ICES to evaluate the use and quality of VMS data and records of catch and effort to be received from NEAFC in order to provide information on the spatial and temporal extent of current deep-water fisheries in the NE Atlantic. If data quality allows such analyses, these should be provided with particular emphasis on activity in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

NEAFC reiterates its request that ICES develop suitable criteria for differentiating fisheries into possible management types (e.g. directed deep-water fisheries, by-catch fisheries etc.) and to apply these criteria to categorise individual fisheries in order to enable NEAFC to develop fishery-based management initiatives. Shortcomings in data quality that impede this exercise should appear in the evaluation under pt 1
RECOMMENDATION BY THE NORTH EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 OF THE CONVENTION ON FUTURE MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN NORTH EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES TO ADOPT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES BY

CLOSING CERTAIN AREAS OF THE HATTON BANK IN THE NEAFC REGULATORY AREA IN ORDER TO PROTECT VULNERABLE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS FROM SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS

Taking into account the closure by NEAFC for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2009 of an area of the Hatton Bank in order to protect deep-water corals under Recommendation IX – 2007 and extended by Recommendation IX – 2008;

Considering that the Recommendations adopted by NEAFC expire at the end of 2009;

Acknowledging that the Spanish interdisciplinary research project (ECOVUL/ARPA) has been underway since 2005 and has been focused on investigating deep-sea vulnerable marine ecosystems and habitats in the Hatton Bank;

Acknowledging that this research project has identified three new areas of cold-water coral reefs on the western slope of the Hatton Bank;

Considering that in its 2008 advice, ICES supported the current closed area as being suitable to protect vulnerable habitats and that new data on the distribution of cold-water corals (and outcrops likely to support cold-water corals) indicated that further areas on the north-west Hatton Bank outcrops should be closed to damaging fishing activities to protect vulnerable habitats;

Bearing in mind the discussions on this matter which took place in PECMAS during 2008; and mindful that the delineation of the new closure area must permit the necessary control to ensure compliance with the measures;

The Contracting Parties recommend the following measure:

1. The use of fishing gear which is likely to contact the seafloor during the normal course of fishing operations shall be prohibited in the following area:

On the Hatton Bank within the area delimited by the following coordinates:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing closure</th>
<th>ICES Proposal</th>
<th>New Proposal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 59°26'N 14°30'W</td>
<td>1 58°11,15'N 18°57,51'W</td>
<td>1 58°11,15'N 18°57,51'W</td>
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<tr>
<td>B 59°12'N 15°08'W</td>
<td>2 58°30'N 18°45'W</td>
<td>2 58°11,57'N 19°11,97'W</td>
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<tr>
<td>C 59°1'N 17°00'W</td>
<td>3 58°47'N 18°37'W</td>
<td>3 58°28'N 19°11,06'W</td>
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<td>D 58°50'N 17°38'W</td>
<td>4 59°5'N 17°32'W</td>
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<td>E 58°30'N 17°52'W</td>
<td>5 59°16'N 17°20'W</td>
<td>5 58°53,14'N 18°43,54'W</td>
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<td>F 58°30'N 18°45'W</td>
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2. This measure shall be in force until 31 December 2015. Before that time, the measure shall be reviewed by the Commission with the intention of extending the period that the recommendation is in force, unless the conclusion of the review is that the continued application of the measure or parts of the measure is not required.

3. If scientific research demonstrates that there are sub-areas where no vulnerable marine ecosystems are found within the areas referred to in paragraph 1 of this measure, the measure can be amended by the Commission to exclude those sub-areas from the prohibition under paragraph 1. However, in so deciding, the Commission shall continue to be mindful that the delineation of the closure area must continue to permit the necessary control to ensure compliance with the measures.

4. Within the area defined in paragraph 1, Contracting Parties intending to conduct fisheries related scientific research shall notify NEAFC of their intended research programmes.

5. This closure is without prejudice to any sovereign rights of Coastal States over the continental shelf in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including sovereign rights of Coastal States to exploit sedentary species on the continental shelf.

6. The closures referred to in Recommendation IX – 2007 in respect of the Rockall Bank, the Logachev Mounds and the West Rockall Mounds shall remain in force.