Joint NEAFC/NAFO ad hoc Working Group  
on the possibility of making AGDC a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO

NEAFC Headquarters, London, UK, 29-30 January 2013

Report

1. Opening of the meeting

The NEAFC Secretary opened the meeting as host. He welcomed all participants. All participants introduced themselves. The list of participants is Annex 1 to this report.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Iceland nominated Mads Nedergaard, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) as Chair. His election was agreed by consensus.

Iceland nominated Trevor Fradsham, Canada, as Vice Chair. His election was agreed by consensus.

3. Appointment of rapporteur

The NEAFC Secretary was appointed rapporteur, to be supported by NAFO Secretariat.

4. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted in the form that had been circulated before the meeting. The agenda is Annex 2 to this report.

5. Rules of Procedure, and other working practices, for the ad hoc Working Group

It was decided that the ad hoc Working Group would work on the basis of consensus, and that there would not be a need to establish Rules of Procedure for the ad hoc Working Group.

6. Consideration of the effects that making AGDC a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO would have on the work of AGDC and on the work of the two organisations

The ad hoc Working Group noted that agenda items 6, 7 and 8 are closely related, and that discussions on them should be had together.

Several points were raised regarding the effects that making AGDC a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO will have. This included the following:

Status of AGDC
It was noted that a key problem in the current situation was that when NAFO asks for advice from AGDC, it is formally asking for advice from NEAFC. This was considered inappropriate. Additionally, it was pointed out that a continuation of this could potentially...
lead to NAFO forming a parallel group which in turn could lead to less harmonisation and standardisation. It was concluded that making AGDC a joint body would rectify this situation.

**Participation in AGDC**

It was noted that although participation in AGDC is currently open to NAFO Contracting Parties that are not parties to NEAFC, in practice such participation has been very limited. It was concluded that making AGDC a joint body could lead to these parties increasing their participation in AGDC’s work. This would in turn add to the expertise available in AGDC and increase the experts’ ability to learn from each other. Furthermore, with greater participation there would be an increase in the harmonisation and standardisation on the basis of the advice of AGDC.

It was also noted that although AGDC has been open to Contracting Parties of other RFMOs, there has not been such participation in practice. It was concluded that making AGDC a formally inter-RFMO body could encourage participation by relevant experts from such parties.

**Role of AGDC**

It was stressed that AGDC is, and will remain, an advisory group. There would therefore not be a fundamental change to the nature of the output from AGDC if it were to become a joint group. The current ability of the relevant parties to get advice from AGDC would be maintained.

It was concluded that making AGDC a joint body could create a better basis for it to contribute more widely to harmonisation and standardisation, both between NEAFC and NAFO and in an even wider context.

**Tasks**

Some participants felt that the added value of making AGDC a joint group would be even greater if its potential tasks were extended, in particular by strengthening AGDC’s role in the important task of promoting harmonisation and standardisation towards compatible data management schemes for monitoring, control and surveillance, and for science. The on-going work on electronic reporting systems was mentioned as an example in this context.

It was concluded that AGDC should not be restricted to issues that would strictly be considered as being “data communication”, but the mandate should be wider (i.e. “data management”). It was agreed to address the range of the potential extension in the context of formulating the draft Terms of Reference, under agenda item 10.2.

**Practical considerations**

There was a discussion on the effects that making AGDC a joint group would have on the number of meetings and the costs of participating. It was concluded that there should not be an effect on the number of meetings, as this is already dictated by the workload of AGDC rather than the number of experts attending meetings. This would be unchanged. However, rotating meetings between the Eastern and Western sides of the Atlantic, rather than having them always on the Eastern side as is the current practice, might result in some increased costs for those on the Eastern side. On the other hand, it would result in a decrease of the cost of participating for those on the Western side, and thereby add to the encouragement of their increased participation.

It was noted that the increased harmonisation and prevention of duplication, which are expected consequences of a joint group, should result in lowering the Contracting Parties’ costs regarding data management.
7. Consideration of whether it is advisable to establish an AGDC that is a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO

On the basis of the discussions that are reflected in this report under item 6, the ad hoc Working Group concluded that it is advisable to establish an AGDC that is a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO. It was agreed to formally make the recommendation to the two organisations that this be done.

8. Examination of the substantive and practical issues regarding making AGDC a joint body of NEAFC and NAFO, including identifying any potential obstacles and considering solutions to overcome them

The discussions under this item are reflected in this report under item 6.

9. Examination of possible working practices for a joint AGDC, including arrangements for meetings and the roles of the respective Secretariats

It was noted that the working practices of a joint AGDC, and the roles of the Secretariats, would be set out in the Rules of Procedure for a joint AGDC. This will therefore also be reflected under agenda item 10.3.

Among the points that were discussed in this context were the following:

The two Secretariats should alternate in hosting the meetings. They should handle the preparations for, and act as rapporteur to, the meetings that they host.

When one organisation asks for advice on a particular issue, the other organisation should be made aware of the discussions to promote harmonisation in the technical solutions applied by NEAFC, NAFO and other RFMOs.

Experts from other RFMOs should be welcomed in the work of a joint AGDC. Furthermore, it might be useful to have experts nominated by other intergovernmental organisations.

A joint AGDC should be open to requests from non-Contracting Parties to NEAFC and NAFO, but such requests should normally come through RFMOs, rather than directly from individual States.

It should be possible for a joint AGDC to work intersessionally, when necessary.

The meeting calendars of both NEAFC and NAFO, including both the Annual Meetings and meetings of PECCOE and STACTIC would have to be considered in deciding on the usual timing of meetings of a joint AGDC.

The most suitable time for a regular meeting of a joint AGDC was considered to be in late January or in February. If another meeting is required in the same year, the most suitable timing was considered to be in late May or in June. If a third meeting is needed, its timing would have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.
10. Formulation of draft documents:

Reporting under this item focuses on the outcome in the individual sub-items, but not on the discussions that lead to the outcome.

1) NEAFC and NAFO Recommendations establishing a joint body;

A conclusion letter to be forwarded to the 2013 Annual Meetings of NEAFC and NAFO was formulated, and agreed on by the ad hoc Working Group. This letter is Annex 3 to this report.

2) Terms of Reference for a joint body;

Draft Terms of Reference for a joint NEAFC/NAFO body were formulated and agreed on by the ad hoc Working Group. These Terms of Reference are Annex 4 to this report.

3) Rules of Procedure for a joint body; and

Draft Rules of Procedure for a joint NEAFC/NAFO body were formulated and agreed on by the ad hoc Working Group. These Rules of Procedure are Annex 5 to this report.

4) any other matter for which it is appropriate to formulate a draft before a joint body is established

No other matters that require the formulation of a draft were identified.

11. Any other business

It was agreed that the Secretariats shall present the report and recommendations of the ad hoc Working Group to PECCOE and STACTIC, for information.

12. Arrangements for future meetings of the ad hoc Working Group

It was agreed that no further meetings of the ad hoc Working Group were required, as this meeting finalised the task it was given.

13. Report to the Annual Meetings of NEAFC and NAFO

The report of the meeting was adopted on 30 January 2013. The Chair will present the report of the ad hoc Working Group, and its recommendations, at the 2013 Annual Meetings of NEAFC and NAFO.

14. Closure of the meeting

The Chair closed the meeting and wished all participants a safe journey home.