



MILJØVERNDEPARTEMENTET

Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization



Heidi Sørensen, State Secretary
Ministry of the Environment
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Photo: Jan Rabben/NN/Samfoto

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to Norway and Molde!

Let me start with reminding us all why we are here.

We are here because we share a passion for an amazing fish, its habitats and the nature the salmon lives and breed in.



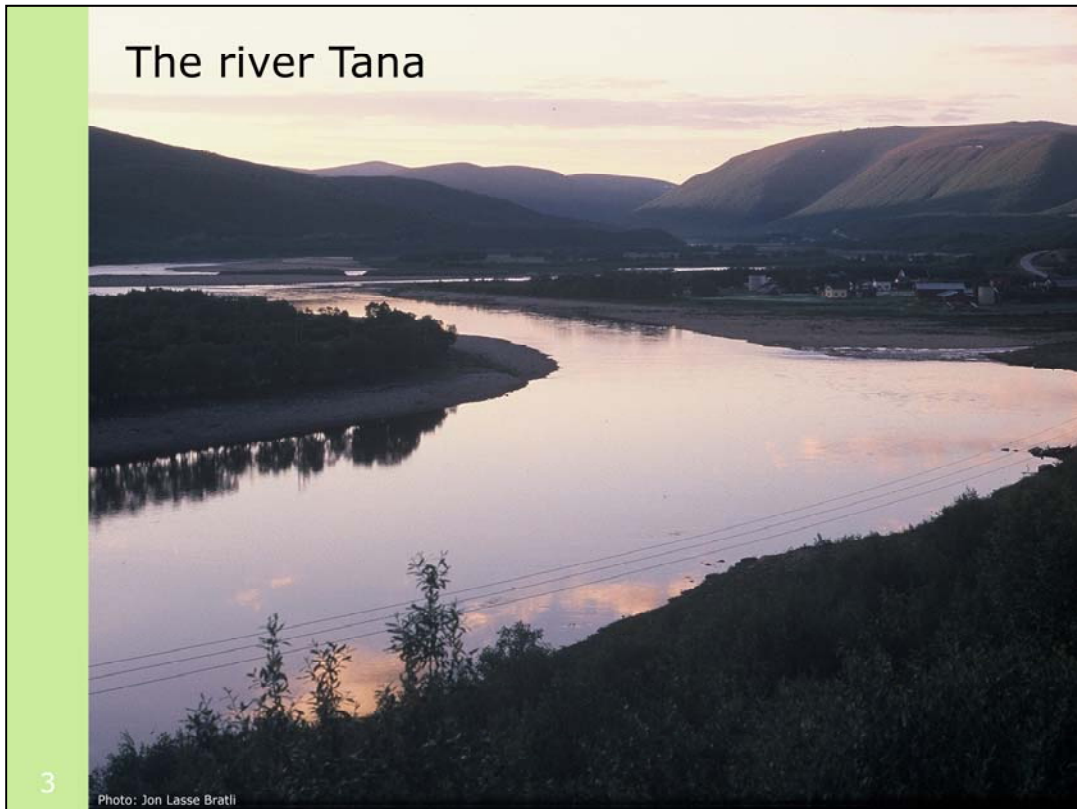
This picture is about the passion. This is the river Alta in the north of Norway. It is a very important and popular salmon river.

In Norway we have more than 400 salmon rivers, with a broad genetic diversity. This represents around one third of the world's resources of North Atlantic salmon.

Norway's proportion of the salmon resource, and the great variation in nature and salmon rivers, implies that Norway may be considered as a "salmon superpower". In addition, Norway has one half of the worlds production of farmed salmon.

It also means that we have a major responsibility for the species as such.

The river Tana



The River Tana - where this picture is taken - is regarded as the most productive North Atlantic salmon river.

In 2008 around 120 tons of salmon was caught in this river alone – equalling 15 % of the total salmon catch in Norway.

A special challenge is related to mixed stocks fisheries on the more than the 30 different stocks in this river - of which several must be regarded as vulnerable or even threatend.

The stocks in Tana is a resource we share with Finland, and we have a bi-lateral agreement and close cooperation on the management of this valuable resource.

Wild salmon

- has substantial economic value
- is important for recreation and tourism
- has cultural traditions
- is the basis for salmon aquaculture



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This is my friend Bodil, who has caught a wild salmon in the river Alta in the north of Norway.

The wild salmon is one of the hallmarks of Norway. Fishing for salmon has always been an integral part of our culture and economy.

Almost 100.000 anglers take part in salmon fisheries in Norway every year.

The direct and indirect value of the river fisheries can roughly be estimated to 1 billion Norwegian kroner (close to 100 million pounds sterling).

However, the total socioeconomic value and benefits to man of the wild salmon, can hardly be exactly measured. Neither can the pure joy in Bodil's eyes, holding her first self caught salmon.

In addition, wild salmon is the basis for salmon aquaculture.



We are all aware of the considerable threats facing the North-Atlantic salmon stocks.

1. Changes in sea temperature and marine ecology probably has considerable effect on the stocks.
2. The parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris* has affected 46 Norwegian salmon stocks, and the parasite is still found in 21 rivers.
3. Acid rain affects large areas in southern Norway, and more than 25 stocks are lost as a result of this.
4. Sea lice is considered one of the major threats against migrating smolt on the west coast.
5. Hydroelectric power production has affected 146 salmon stocks - 35 of these seriously.
6. Escapees from salmon farms represents a grave challenge, and may on a long term be the most serious threat to our salmon stocks.
7. Mixed stocks fisheries poses a general threat to vulnerable stocks in all coastal regions.

These threats represent considerable challenges – both separately and in combination.

Our common goal, however, must be to reduce the total strain to an acceptable level.



This picture is from Nærøyfjorden, on the west coast. It is both a National salmon fiord and a world heritage site

These conservation measures cover all the challenges listed in the previous slide, and were adopted through a White book presented to the Parliament by our Government in 2006.

As part of the White book, the most valuable stocks have been given special protection in 52 National salmon rivers and 29 National salmon fiords.



This waterfall is part of the river system merging into the river Driva, in the valley Sunndalen, in this county.

Driva is one of several salmon rivers infected by the parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*.

Fighting *Gyrodactylus salaris* has high priority in our salmon management. The budgetary spending has been increased threefold under our Government.

Based on our experience, it is of vital importance to avoid further spreading of this deadly parasite to other NASCO Parties.



As I mentioned, Norway produces about one half of the world's farmed salmon.

Norway's experience as a major aquaculture producer has demonstrated the importance of reducing adverse effects from salmon aquaculture.

In 2006, a new and ambitious action plan was introduced to reduce the number of escapees from aquaculture farms. The action plan describes measures like improved regulations, better practice and strengthened control.

The aim is to reduce the number of escapees to levels that poses no threat for the wild salmon.

Sea lice is presently another grave threat to salmon stocks, and my Government has recently presented a new strategy to reduce levels of infection in wild salmon.



This is the river Numedalslågen in the south of Norway. It is a National salmon river.

International cooperation on salmon management within the framework of NASCO is of vital importance.

Norway is committed to – and highly appreciates – the valuable work within this organization.

I will also emphasize the valuable contributions from ICES (the international council for exploration of the sea) and the constructive role of our NGOs.



I am assured that also this year's meeting will provide important results – including guidance on habitat protection and restoration.

Mr President, NASCO's work and recommendations will continue to play an important role in shaping Norway's salmon policy.

And let me assure you that our passion has never been stronger.

I wish you all a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Molde.

Thank you for your attention!