

Conservation groups' pact will help save Atlantic salmon

May 29 2018, by Patrick Whittle

Two conservation groups said Tuesday a deal has been struck with commercial fishermen in Greenland and the Faroe Islands that will help thousands of vulnerable Atlantic salmon return to rivers in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Commercial fishing for Atlantic [salmon](#) is prohibited in the United States, where the fish's Gulf of Maine population is listed under the Endangered Species Act. But the Atlantic Salmon Federation and North Atlantic Salmon Fund said their new deal with Greenland and Faroe Island fishers is a major step toward recovery because it will dramatically reduce fishing.

Coastal Greenland and the waters off the Faroe Islands are important feeding grounds for salmon. Fishermen who work those waters take fish that originate in both jeopardized populations in Maine and New Brunswick, Canada, and healthy populations elsewhere.

The agreement places new limits on fishing, including ending the Faroe Islands fishery.

Here's a look at the agreement and the status of Atlantic salmon in the United States and Canada:

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FISH IN TROUBLE

Atlantic salmon are well known to seafood fans because they are raised extensively in aquaculture—a controlled farming environment—but their wild counterparts are in trouble in some parts of the world. The fish are born in freshwater streams, head to sea for one or more years and return to their natal streams to spawn.

The most productive river for the salmon in the U.S. is the Penobscot River in Maine, which is the only U.S. state left with native Atlantic salmon populations. Less than 850 returned to the Penobscot in 2017. The number was above 1,000 per year in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

The decrease in the fish's populations is due to factors such as overfishing, habitat loss and pollution. U.S. and Canadian environmentalists and marine managers have long sought cooperation from Greenland, which has a significant harvest of the fish.

TERMS OF THE DEAL

ASF and NASF said in a statement that Greenland and Faroe Islands delegations to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization will agree to a commercial salmon quota of zero at a summit meeting next month in Portland, Maine. Greenland will retain a harvest of no more than 20 metric tons for personal and family consumption, the groups said.

The two conservation groups said they have pledged to "financially support alternative economic development, scientific research, and education initiatives focused on conservation" in exchange. ASF President Bill Taylor declined to name the cost of the initiative but said it would be in line with the market value of the salmon that the fishermen are agreeing not to harvest.

The agreement would last 12 years. The groups said the money was raised from private donors.

Tønnes Berthelsen, a financial consultant for Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland, said the agreement can go into effect when Greenland's government approves it.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In the meantime, conservationists in the U.S. and Canada state that the deal is an important step toward saving salmon. The agreement will be a major topic of discussion at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization meeting scheduled for June 12 to 15 in Portland.

"Any reduction in the fishery is welcomed," said Tommi Linnansaari, Atlantic salmon research chair at the University of New Brunswick.

"The salmon population, especially here on the North Atlantic side, is on its last legs and any effort is welcome."

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