

# International Year of the Salmon (IYS): from Idea to Launch

By Mark Saunders  
Chairperson, IYS Working Group

**Quite remarkably** the International Year of the Salmon has grown fins!

A concept first proposed several years ago by Canada's Dr. Dick Beamish, IYS has been discussed widely at NPAFC meetings and was the subject of several scoping meetings held in Vancouver over the past two years. The most recent scoping meeting this spring gave shape to the initiative that has now been endorsed by both the NPAFC and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO).

The IYS has emerged as an international framework for collaborative outreach and research. Through outreach efforts the IYS will raise awareness of what humans can do to better ensure salmon and their varied habitats are conserved and restored against the backdrop of increasing environmental variability; thus the overall theme is *'Salmon and people in a changing world'*. The IYS will stimulate an investment in research and leave a legacy of knowledge, data/information systems, tools, and a new generation of scientists better equipped to provide timely advice to inform rational management of salmon.

The two-day scoping meeting last spring was attended by 51 participants including NPAFC IYS Working Group members and NASCO, academic, NGO, First Nation, and industry representatives. The group endorsed the research themes proposed at the first scoping meeting, developed an extensive list of potential donors and partners, and were able to articulate a governance and funding model that in my estimation was the key to achieving buy-in



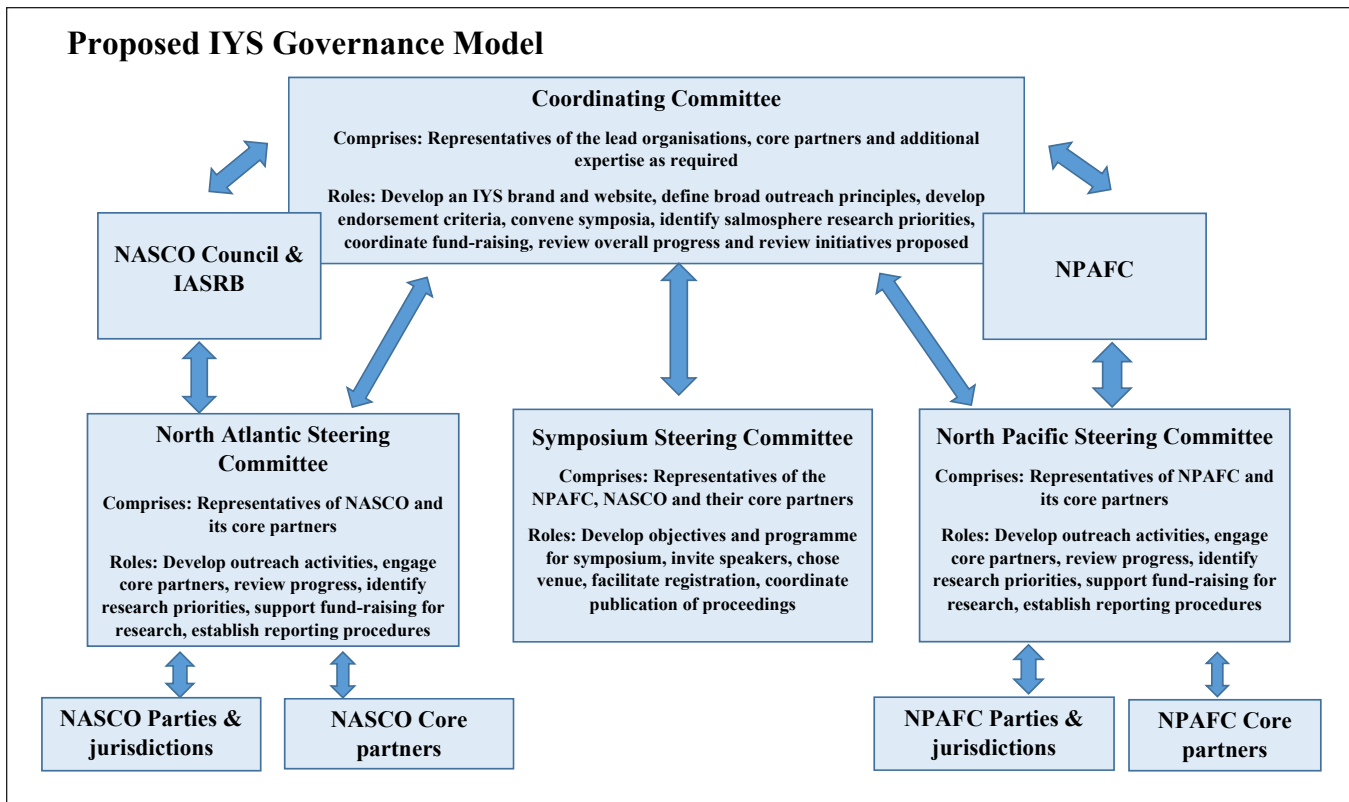
**Mark Saunders** manages the Salmon and Freshwater Ecosystems Division for Fisheries and Oceans Canada at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, BC. This Division includes staff working on salmon stock assessment, freshwater habitat, molecular genetics, fish health, and marine ecology. The first half of Marks's 30-year career focused on stock assessment and research of marine fish including Pacific hake, pollock, sablefish, and spiny dogfish. The second half of his career has included work on hydroacoustic surveys and fisheries oceanography of the California Current system. In 2003 Mark took on the task of working on the development and implementation of Canada's Wild Salmon Policy, and after completing it he returned to his current position in 2009. Mark has been active at NPAFC since 2009, serving as CSRS Chairperson from 2011–2014, and he is currently the Chairperson of the International Year of the Salmon Working Group. Mark lives with his wife and an increasingly neurotic white dog in the small town of Chemainus on Vancouver Island. In his spare time, Mark enjoys kayaking, cycling, skiing, fishing and eradicating invasive plants.

by answering the nagging question "How would the IYS work?" On the third day, the NPAFC IYS Working Group with the notable assistance of our NASCO partners put these ideas to paper, producing a proposal ([NPAFC Doc. 1663](#)) that was approved by both organizations at their annual meetings in May and June, respectively.



IYS 2<sup>nd</sup> Scoping Meeting participants in Vancouver, BC. Photo credit: NPAFC Secretariat

## Proposed IYS Governance Model



So how will the IYS work? Independent Pacific and Atlantic IYS Steering committees, which will include key partners, will oversee outreach activities, identify research priorities, support fund raising and establish reporting procedures. The two committees will identify members to participate in an IYS Coordinating Committee and a Symposium Steering Committee. Outreach and research will be planned at three spatial scales. At the hemispheric or “salmosphere” scale, the basin scale (Pacific, Atlantic, Arctic or Baltic), or at the scale of the local coastal area.

For example, all parties are interested in understanding salmon survival across life stages, particularly when salmon inhabit marine environments. Telemetry is a tool well suited to all marine areas. Through the Coordinating Committee, research relating to development of this technology could be planned with partners across the hemisphere. At the basin scale, the respective Steering Committees will plan research to answer questions unique to the North Atlantic or North Pacific areas. At the small scale, individual or multiple research groups may consider partnering under the IYS banner to conduct localized telemetry studies.

Regarding funding arrangements, note that the research monies are not front-end loaded. The respective North Pacific or North Atlantic steering committee independently establish their research priority, develop a research plan, and then work with partners to find the

funding. The research outcomes will be targeted and well defined; an approach that appeals to funders.

NPAFC and NASCO both agreed to provide financial resources to support the development of the IYS website, logo/brand, and to host the IYS Symposium. The focal year of the 7-year initiative will be 2019 with the kick-off symposium planned for autumn 2018.



(Left to right) John Field (Pacific Salmon Commission), Peter Hutchinson (NASCO), and Sue Scott (Atlantic Salmon Federation) at the reception of the IYS 2<sup>nd</sup> Scoping Meeting at the Vancouver Aquarium. Photo credit: NPAFC Secretariat

I am very excited by the potential of the IYS to raise the level of awareness of salmon and to raise the bar for salmon science at this pivotal time. It was remarkable to be at the NASCO meeting in the Ahr Valley in Germany just a week after attending the NPAFC meeting in Busan, Korea. In the two places, separated by thousands of kilometres, I was having identical conversations about science and social issues. Every conversation seemed to open doors for potential collaboration or learning opportunities,

going both ways between the North Pacific and the North Atlantic. I know I am very fortunate to have had that opportunity, and I can envision the IYS making real or virtual hemispheric connections possible for researchers, politicians, students, and everyday people.

Over the next year, I eagerly anticipate implementation of the IYS. For more information on the IYS, please go to [www.npafc.org/new/science\\_IYS.html](http://www.npafc.org/new/science_IYS.html).



*Mark Saunders with Heads of Delegations of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany. (Left to right) Francesca Arena (European Union), Daniel Morris (United States), Sylvie Lapointe (Canada), Arne Eggereide (Norway), Mark Saunders (NPAFC), Steinar Hermansen (NASCO President), Emanuel Rosing (Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Konstantin Drevetnyak (Russian Federation). Photo credit: M. Owen, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK*



View of Dongbaekseom Island in Busan. Photo credit: Harold Belongilot



Jagalchi Fish Market in Busan. Photo credit: Vladimir Radchenko