

AKSC Proposal 4 to SSL Committee to Modify Atka mackerel fishing seasons to allow fishing from Nov 1 to December 31

- Introduction materials – (Provide name of proposer or institution, address and telephone number of proposer, email address for primary contact)

Alaska Seafood Cooperative; John Gauvin, Fishery Science Director and Todd Loomis; 4241 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue West, Suite 302, Seattle, WA 98199 206 462-7684 email: gauvin@seanet.com

- Brief Statement of Proposal – (Provide a single, brief paragraph that concisely describes the action to be taken. Details will be specified in additional sections)

Modify whichever Aleutian Island Atka mackerel RPAs/measures are currently in effect to allow directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the AI from January 20 to June 10 (A) and June 10 to December 31 (B) season. This proposal, in combination with the AKSC proposal to return to the pre-2011 Atka mackerel SSL regulations (minus platoons and former seasons) or as a standalone measure with any RPA is needed to allow the Atka mackerel fleet to spread fishing effort throughout the year and further reduce the potential for pulse fishing.

- Objectives of Proposal – (Begin with a concise statement of the problem to be addressed in the proposal, and the remedy for the problem. Provide detailed description of the proposed changes to regulations, and justification for each).

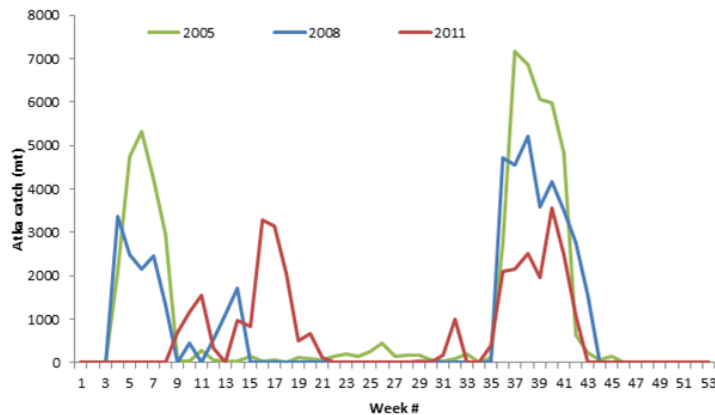
The current SSL regulations prohibit directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Aleutians, including the 541/Bering Sea area, from November 1 to December 31. NMFS and other researchers have done considerable research on how nutritional stress may be affecting SSL and none of this research in the last decade shows that fishing in the months of November and December is problematic for SSL. This proposal would allow Atka mackerel fishing to occur in November and December thereby allowing the incentives of cooperative management to further spread mackerel fishing over time and space relative to what is currently possible.

- Impacts of Proposal – (Briefly outline the effects that you think the proposed changes to management will have, including effects on Steller sea lions, other sectors of the fishery, and Aleutian Island communities).

Since the advent of cooperatives and as the seasons have been expanded to include additional months, mackerel catch per week has been lower and the harvest is more dispersed over the year. Further expanding the season dates for mackerel fishing in the Aleutians is expected to further disperse the harvest. Additionally, fishing cooperatives can develop internal agreements to ensure fishing is spread over the year if such agreements prove necessary or beneficial. Adding two additional months will lower weekly catch rates relative to whatever management scheme for the mackerel fishery is in effect. This proposal would also be beneficial because adding November and December to the allowable period for directed mackerel fishing would very likely reduce harvests during the June/August timeframe when SSL females are nursing pups on rookeries. Further, the limited telemetry data in the Aleutians shows foraging trips in winter months are mostly within ten miles, while even under pre-2011 RPAs all mackerel fishing occurs outside of ten nautical miles of SSL sites and a large fraction occurs outside of 20 nm. Based on this information, it appears that any spatial overlap with SSL foraging is likely to be smaller in winter months such as November and December than in summer.

- Supporting data and other documentation – (Provide any relevant data or other information to support your proposal).

Telemetry data for SSL tagged that were tracked in the western and central Aleutians in Fadely, 2010b as referenced in 2010 Bi-op showed more dependence on areas within 10 nm of SSL sites in winter than in summer. Also, the figure below was made from NMFS catch by week data for Atka mackerel fishing in stat areas 541, 542, and 543 (weekly catch database available at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/2012/2012.htm>). The figure shows that catch has been more dispersed and less is taken in any individual fishing week comparing 2005 (pre-A. 80 cooperatives), 2008 (first year of A. 80 cooperatives), and 2011 (first year with Jan 20 to June 10, June 10 to November 1 seasons) for mackerel. We believe that adding November and December to the allowed months for directed fishing for mackerel would improve dispersion of catch and further reduce potential effects on SSL.



- Alternative solutions – (Provide other potential solutions to the problem, if any, that the Council could consider to address the problem).

We do not know of any alternative solutions to the problem of not being able to engage in directed fishing for mackerel in November and December.

- Justification for Council action – (Provide an explanation of why Council action is required, and the consequences should the Council not take action).

If the Council does not adopt this proposal or if NMFS does not eventually approve it, an opportunity to further reduce potential for competition with SSL will have been foregone. Available information does not show that mackerel fishing in November and December is problematic for SSL. We could propose this change to NMFS independent of the suite of proposals that the Council is preparing for the SSL EIS. We understand, however, that the Council is in a better position to evaluate and put together a suite of proposals that balances all the different interests looking for changes in the SSL RPAs in the Aleutian Islands.