


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, AP, and SSC Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director 

DATE: April 13, 1993

SUBJECT: Establish Atka Mackerel as a Separate Target Species in the GOA

**ACTION REQUIRED**

Approve proposed groundfish amendment for public review.

**BACKGROUND**

Atka mackerel has recently become a target species in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This species is part of the "other species" category, which also contains bycatch species of minor commercial importance including sculpins, skates, squid, smelts, sharks, eulachon, capelin, and octopus. The other species category has been available as a Gulf-wide Total Allowable Catch (TAC) equal to 5% of the sum of TACs for all target fisheries. High landings of Atka mackerel in 1992 accounted for almost the entire TAC of other species in the GOA, resulting in other species becoming non-retainable in May in the entire GOA. Although other species were apportioned by management area in 1993, a target fishery for Atka mackerel resulted in a closure to directed fishing for other species in the Western Regulatory Area (Western GOA) on April 2.

The GOA FMP defines other species as groundfish species and/or species groups which currently are only of slight economic importance or contain economically valuable species, but insufficient data exist to allow separate management. Atka mackerel no longer meets this definition.

The purpose for the proposed amendment is to improve management and conservation by establishing Atka mackerel as a target species in the GOA. Two alternatives were examined: (1) the status quo, and (2) establishing a separate target category for Atka mackerel.

Under Alternative 1, Atka mackerel would remain in the other species category. The Atka mackerel fishery would likely utilize the entire Western GOA other species TAC. Careful management would be needed to ensure that bycatch of species other than Atka Mackerel in the Western GOA remains available for target fisheries operating in that area. Other species and target fisheries in the Central and Eastern Regulatory areas are not likely to be impacted.

Under Alternative 2, Atka mackerel would be a target category with harvest levels constrained by a TAC. Harvest levels of Atka mackerel would be based on biological stock assessments. Given the most recent estimate of GOA biomass, potential yield of Atka mackerel could be 4,800 mt. By breaking out Atka mackerel, TAC for the other species category would be slightly increased, as it is specified as 5% of the sum of the groundfish TACs. The other species category would appropriately be comprised of species currently taken in very small amounts and which are needed for bycatch in target fisheries. The other

species TACs have not been utilized for species other than Atka mackerel to any significant extent in the past two years, and are therefore expected to remain available throughout the fishing year.

The proposed amendment and analysis were sent to you in the April 9 Council mailing.