

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
Teleconference on Atka Mackerel State Waters Fishery
November 26, 2013

Summary of Actions

The Alaska Board of Fisheries met by teleconference on November 26, 2013. Seven of seven board members were present and public listen-only sites were available at Alaska Department Fish and Game (ADF&G) offices in Anchorage and Juneau, as well as the Unalaska Legislative Information Office. A live audio was also streamed through the Board of Fisheries website. The purpose of the teleconference was to consider a November 6, 2013 emergency petition submitted by the Adak Community Development Association requesting the board take emergency action to rescind its previous action creating a state-waters Atka mackerel seine fishery in the Aleutian Islands taken at the October 18-22, 2013 Statewide Pacific cod meeting.

The Department of Law advised that the regulation from the October action was not yet in effect and spoke to the option of a motion to rescind a board action in this instance, in lieu of adoption of an emergency regulation repealing the Atka mackerel fishery regulation. The Department of Law advised it was within the Board's ability to execute a rescission, noting that Robert's Rules of Order provides for rescission and that the Board of Game had rescinded decisions in the past.

ADF&G provided additional information on the potential impacts of harvesting 10 percent of the Atka mackerel allowable harvest in Steller sea lion (SSL) critical habitat as it relates to a pending Biological Opinion by the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Protected Resources Division, expected to be issued by late February. The department commented on the possibility that the Biological Opinion could mandate additional closures, limits on catch, or other management changes on the federal and parallel fisheries for the three SSL prey species at issue, in order to accommodate impacts of the new state waters Atka mackerel fishery on SSL. Those impacts might include negatively impeding the Aleut Corporation from obtaining 19,000 metric tons of pollock in the Aleutian Islands that has been unavailable for harvest due to SSL mitigation measures.

The board voted 7/0 to rescind its decision to create the state waters Atka mackerel fishery. In deliberations, board members noted that ADF&G provided new information not available at the October meeting; that even with rescission, commissioner's test fishery permits could provide additional information on the viability of an Atka mackerel fishery; and that there was the potential of re-establishing the Atka mackerel fishery in the event NMFS does not approve the pollock harvest authorized for the Aleut Corporation.