Atka

Community Overview

1999 Population:

Incorporation Type:

Borough:

92 (Census 2000)

2nd Class City

Unorganized

School District: Aleutian Region Schools

Regional Native Corporation: Aleut Corporation

Regional Native Non-Profit: Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association

Village Corporation:

Village Council:

Atxam Corporation

Atka IRA Council

Community Development Quota (CDQ): Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development

Association (APICDA)

Location: 52d 12m N Latitude, 174d 12m W Longitude

Land Area: 9 square miles Water Area: 27 square miles

Location Description

Atka is a small Unangan community located on Atka Island, the fourth largest island in the Aleutian Islands and the largest member in the Andreanof Islands group. The west-southwest orientation of Atka Island is characterized by convoluted Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea coastlines, with many deep bays. The northern, roughly circular portion of Atka Island offers few sheltered areas, and beaches along the coastline are short and narrow, often backed by cliffs rising to volcanic slopes. Lowland areas between Korovin Bay and Nazan Bay consist primarily of sand dune accumulations interspersed with several small ponds (USFWS, 1985). The City of Atka is located on the southwest shore of Nazan Bay near a deep, protected anchorage. An old military jeep road connects the village to Korovin Bay near the site of an old summer fishing camp (Motyka, 1981).

The City of Atka is approximately 1,250 miles by air from Anchorage, 550 miles west of the tip of the Alaska Peninsula, and approximately 90 miles due east by air from the City of Adak, formerly a U.S. Naval station. The location of the village allows relatively easy access to the Bering Sea to the North, and to the Pacific Ocean to the south through Amlia Pass, which separates Atka and Amlia Islands. Isolation influences virtually all aspects of village life, including subsistence participation and interaction with other communities.

Climate

Atka is in the maritime climate zone of Alaska and is characterized by cool, damp weather and gusty southwest winds. Temperatures range from 20 to 60 degrees, and precipitation averages 60 inches per year. There are frequent severe storms in the winter, and calm, foggy weather in summer.

History

The Unangan people have occupied Atka Island for at least the last 2,000 years. The Ancient Unangans migrated out the chain and developed their own variance of the culture and dialect of the Unangan language. The island was considerably more populated during prehistoric times than today. Sixteen major prehistoric village sites, as well as fishing sites, have been discovered by archaeologists.

During the Russian period, Atka Island was a center for the fur trade industry in the central Aleutians. By the end of the nineteenth century, the fur trading industry had collapsed due to the depletion of the fur resources. A long period without cash income sources followed the cessation of sea otter hunting. Eventually, fox farming provided a source of cash income for the Atkans. The village prospered during the 1920's and 1930's as a result of boom years in the fox farming industry. Reindeer were brought to Atka Island in 1912 to provide a supplemental food source for the residents. In the 1930's the island became part of the Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, later to become the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

World War II brought tremendous change to the community. Residents were evacuated to an abandoned cannery in Southeast Alaska, following the bombing of Unalaska in 1942. They lived under deplorable conditions until 1945 when they were returned to their destroyed village, having lost their homes and possessions.

The post war period saw a mix of primarily subsistence and limited cash economy. Fur trapping continued but at a reduced level. Seasonal work harvesting fur seals in the Pribilofs and fishing and seafood processing in other communities drew Atkans away from home.

Since 1983 Atka has had a small commercial halibut fishery which represents only a portion of the Aleutian Islands fishery as a whole, but which is very significant in the small village. In 1983, local fishermen formed the Atka Fishermen's Association (AFA) to encourage development of a local fishery.

Culture

Atka is a traditional Unangan settlement, and exposure to the outside world has brought changes to the traditional lifestyle; however, the Unangan language is still spoken in most homes. The Russian Orthodox Church is a central part of village life. Sea lions and other sea mammals are an important part of the subsistence lifestyle, and meat is shared village-wide on an informal basis.

Economy

The economy is based on subsistence, government, and wages earned from the halibut fishery. A small local fish processing plant, Atka Pride Seafoods, operates seasonally to serve the 25-boat local fleet. The plant processes halibut, as well as some Pacific cod and sablefish. Nine residents hold commercial fishing permits, and a number of offshore fish processors carry out crew changes through Atka. Year-round income opportunities in the village are limited to education and government-related work, although the processing season may be expanded in the future. A reindeer herd on the Island provides a source of meat.

The community participates in the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program through the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association (APICDA). The CDQ program

began in 1992. It was developed to provide residents of rural fishing communities in western Alaska an opportunity to participate in the groundfish fishery off their shores in order to further economic development for their communities. The CDQ groups are allocated a portion of the groundfish fishery ranging from 10% for pollock to 7.5% for most other species. The CDQ program is a provision of the Magnuson-Stevens Act authorized by Congress in 1996. The federal oversight for the program is provided by the federal Department of Commerce with administration and monitoring provided by the State of Alaska.

The Atka Pride Seafoods processing plant is a joint venture between APICDA Joint Ventures, Inc. and the Atka Fishermen's Association. The plant's production is based on product that comes primarily from the harvesting efforts of local Atka fishermen and residents of other APICDA communities. The plant provides jobs and a market for the local fishermen. APICDA also provided a matching grant for the building of the community's commercial dock and is studying the development of a lodge on the island.

(Community Profile Database, State of Alaska, database online, January 2001; APICDA database online, January 2001).

Population and Characteristics

According to the 2000 census data, the population of Atka is 92. This makes Atka the third largest community in the Western Aleutians, after Unalaska and Adak.

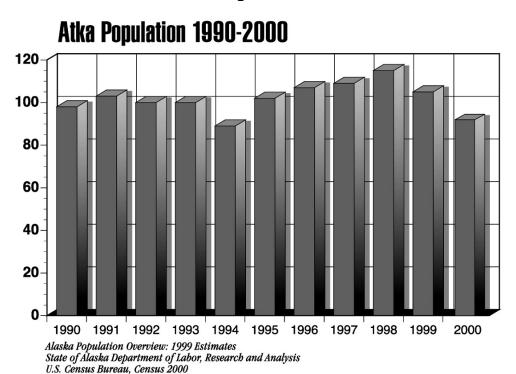
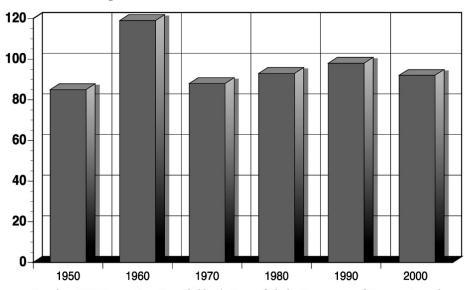


Figure 18.

Figure 19.

Atka Population Last 50 Years

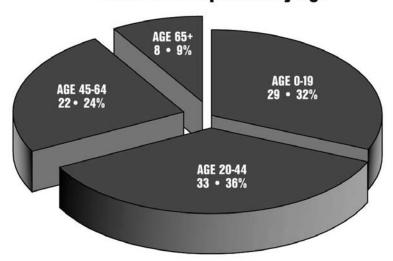


Based on 1990 Census Data Compiled by the State of Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development Alaska Community Database Website, January 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

*Note: The 1990 Census data reflects a population of 73; however, estimates compiled the Alaska Department of Labor estimate a population of 98 for 1990.

Figure 20.

2000 Atka Population by Age

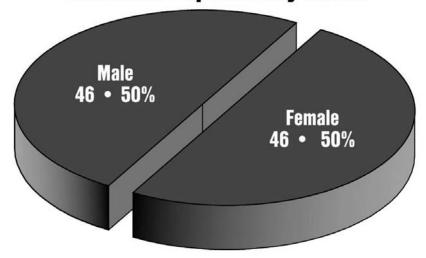


2000 TOTAL: 92 Median Age: 35.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Figure 21.

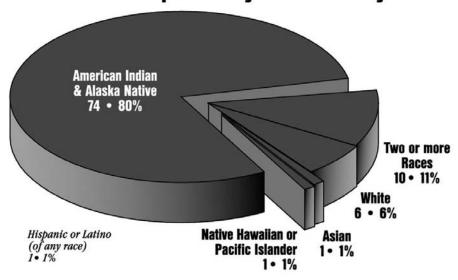
2000 Atka Population by Gender



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Figure 22.

2000 Atka Population by Race/Ethnicity

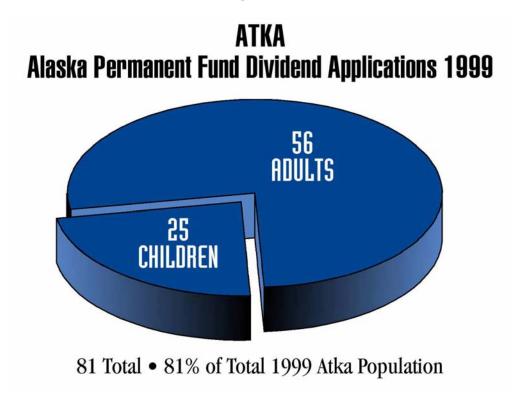


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Seasonal Population

The majority of Atka residents reside in the community year round, although some work seasonally in other locations. About 80% of Atka's 1999 residents filed for an Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, identifying Atka as their primary residence.

Figure 23.



Sources of Employment

The numbers shown below reflect the year-round regular jobs available to local Atka residents. The City and IRA Council hire casual labor from the available work force as needed. Occasionally there are special projects such as work on HUD housing that employs locals on a temporary basis.

During the summer months nearly all of the male members and many of the female members of the work force are involved in the commercial halibut fishery operated by Atka Pride Seafoods. People holding regular jobs take a leave of absence and substitutes must be found. During the summer months it is difficult to find people to do the non-fishing related work of the community. Fishermen have also found it necessary to import crew members from outside of Atka.

Table 11. Employment in Atka

Position	Annual Hours/No. Positions
City of Atka	
City Administrator	1560
Assistant City Administrator	780
City Clerk	1560
Maintenance Man	1560
Janitor	1040
Garbage Man	208
Post Office Clerk	936
Mail Truck Driver	156
Laundry	50
Road Maintenance	300
Casual Labor	400
Total positions	3 full time; 8 part time
Atka IRA Council	
President	260
Janitor	624
Environmental Coordinator	1560
Bingo Caller	416
Pull Tab Seller	416
Snack Bar Attendant	1280
Snack Bar Attendant	520
Total positions	1 full time; 6 part time
Atxam Corporation	
President	1300
Secretary	1300
Janitor	260
Total positions	3 part time
Andreanof Electric	
Clerk	156
Generator Operator	400
Generator Operator	400
Meter Reader	52
Total positions	4 part time

Position	Annual hours/No. Positions
Atka Native Store	
Store Manager	1560
Store Clerk	1560
Total positions	2 full time
Aleutian Region School	
District	
Teachers (3)	2080
Aleut Language Aide	1400
Teacher Aide	1200
Maintenance Man	1200
Total positions	6 full time
Aleutian/Pribilof Islands	
Association	
Atka IRA Administrator	1560
Community Health	1820
Practitioner IV	
Health Aide	1040
Community Health	1300
Representative	
Village Public Safety Officer	1950
Total positions	3 full time; 2 part time
Atka Fishermen's	
Association	
Manager	780
Total positions	1part time

Government Infrastructure

The City of Atka was incorporated as a 2nd class city in 1988. There is a seven-member City Council, with one member elected mayor. The City employs a City Administrator and a City Clerk. The Atka IRA Council, the local native village council is an active participant in the community, including operating the visitor accommodations and the snack bar. The City has a 2% raw fish tax and a 10% accommodations tax.

Facilities, Utilities and Services

Water and Sewer System

The City of Atka operates the water and sewer systems and garbage collection service. The community water system was constructed in 1978 and was expanded in 1982 to a new housing area. Water is supplied by a stream and wooden reservoir dam northwest of the city. It is stored in two 30,000- gallon water tanks before distribution. All homes are connected to the piped water and sewer system and are plumbed. Sewage is piped to two separate holding tanks, one for the older part of the community and one for Atka Subdivision. Wastewater flows through an outfall line into Nazan Bay. The City has requested funds to repair the reservoir dam, increase water capacity, replace connections in the old village, and treat the sewage outfall. Hydroelectric potential is under development at Chuniisax Creek.

Refuse/Landfill System

The City collects garbage twice a week.

Electric Utility

The electric utility is Andreanof Electric Corporation, which is a subsidiary of Atxam Corporation, the local Native village corporation. The electric utility is powered by diesel with a 400-kilowatt capacity. The cost in 2000 is 17.5 cents/KWH, and the State of Alaska provides a subsidy for power costs through the Power Cost Equalization program. Most homes in Atka are heated by oil-burning stoves and heaters.

Hydro Power

A hydro-electric power plant is under development about one mile south of Atka, using Chuniisax Creek. It is a water-heat recapture system. It has a capacity of 271 KW. Funding for construction is being provided by the Denali Commission and APICDA.

Bulk Fuel

There are 13 bulk fuel tanks in Atka. The Atka Native Store operates 8 tanks with a 70,000 gallon capacity each, and Andreanof Electric maintains 5 tanks at 40,000 gallon capacity each.

(Community Profile Database, State of Alaska database online, May 2001)

Housing

There are 42 housing units in Atka with 32 occupied, and all housing have access to City water and sewer. (City of Atka, June 2001)

Other Local Services

School

The school in Atka is the Yakov E. Netsvetov School, which serves pre-school through 12th grade. There are three full-time teachers and along with part-time teachers and staff. In 2001, the school served 20 students.

Health Care

The health clinic is the Atka Health Clinic, owned by the City of Atka, with services provided by the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. The clinic was built in 1983, and planning and preliminary design for a new clinic is underway.

Communications

The local telephone service is ACS of the Northland, with long distance provided by AT&T Alascom. Cable television is provided by the Atxam Village Corporation, and the community receives ARCS programming. Internet access is available to the community only through

providers that require a long distance call, making access very costly. Internet access is available for students at the school.

Safety, Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Law enforcement services are provided by a State-funded Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO), although the community constantly struggles to keep the position filled. The remote location makes the position difficult to fill with someone from outside the community. The community has a holding facility, and residents request the services of an Alaska State Trooper if there is a serious law enforcement need. Fire and rescue services are provided by the VPSO and the City Volunteer Fire Department. The City maintains a fire truck and an ambulance.

Retail

The Atka IRA Tribal Council operates a store that is open limited hours during weekdays and provides basic supplies and some fresh products.

Recreation

There is a Community Hall with a snack bar, and bingo is held once a week by the Atka IRA Council. The school serves as the community library, as well as a museum with a small artifact display.

Visitor Accommodations

The Atka IRA Council operates a three-bedroom house that is available for rent by visitors. A kitchen is available, but visitors must provide their own food, although lunch is available at the snack bar during week-days. The Nazan Inn is operated by APICDA Joint Ventures, and the City also has a small apartment.

Transportation

Atka has a State-owned 3,100 foot lighted gravel runway. Scheduled air service is available twice weekly between Atka and Unalaska, provided by Peninsula Airways. Major airport improvements, including extension of the runway and paving are in progress, with completion expected by 2005. Float planes or amphibious planes can be chartered and land in Nazan Bay. Coastal Transportation provides freight service from May to October to haul fish out and bring in freight. A new dock and port facility, operated by the City, were constructed in the late 1990's and are located at the fish processing plant, across Nazan Bay, abut three miles north of the village.

Development in Atka

The following table from the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development's RAPIDS database outlines a ten-year history of completed, in construction, planned, and potential development projects in the City of Atka.

Table 12. Community Capital Projects and Grants, Rural Alaska Project Identification and Delivery System - RAPIDS

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description	Project Stage	Agency Cost	Total Cost
DOT&PF	1990	Funded	Airport Runway Damage	Completed	\$ 61,404	\$ 614,041
DCED	1993	Funded	Leg. Grant/Muni. Design, Engineering and Construction Dock & Fuel Tank Farm	Completed	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
HUD/CGP	1993	Funded	Smoke alarms Housing Modernization	Completed	\$ 285	\$ 285
DCED	1993	Funded	CDBG. Construct dock's electric lighting system Dock Lighting	Completed	\$ 131,000	\$ 3,300,000
HUD/CGP	1994	Funded	Heating systems & ranges Housing Modernization	Completed	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
DCED	1994	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni Dock Water Source Evaluation/Design Ph I	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DCED	1995	Funded	Leg. Grant/Muni. Design, Engineering, and Construction. Construction to begin June 1997 Dock Construction	Completed	\$ 240,000	\$ 300,000
EDA	1995	Funded	Public Dock	Completed	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
AEA	1995	Funded	Design & install distribution system Electric Distribution Upgrade	Completed	\$ 110,000	\$ 110,000
HUD/CGP	1995	Funded	Heating systems & ranges Housing Modernization	Completed	\$ 20,271	\$ 20,271
DCED	1995	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni Dock Water Source Engineering/Design	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 51,316
DOT&PF	1995	Funded	Reconstruct existing road from the airport to a new proposed dock and port facility to include replacing a World War II vintage bridge over Dock Creek. Total project \$2,001,300 Dock Bridge & Road	Construction	\$ 18,190	\$ 181,900

			Rehabilitation			
DCED	1995	Funded	Some site specific conveyances; Partial Map of Boundaries filed Prepare ANCSA 14(c) Map of Boundaries	Preliminary	\$ 0	\$ 0
HUD/CGP	1996	Funded	Window Replacement. Est. completion 3/98 Housing Modernization	Completed	\$ 91,000	\$ 91,000
DCED	1996	Funded	EDA & APICDA Match Dock Construction	Completed	\$ 100,000	\$ 2,356,000
DCED	1996	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni. Total cost of the dock is estimated at \$2.3 million. APICDA contributing \$800,000 Dock Construction	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DCED	1996	Funded	RDA Ambulance/Equipment Storage Building	Completed	\$ 12,000	\$ 37,000
DCED	1996	Funded	RDA/USFS Mini-Grant Snack Bar Expansion	Completed	\$ 3,500	\$ 10,000
DCED	1997	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni Ambulance/Equipment Storage Building	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DCED	1997	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni Ambulance/Equipment Storage	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DCED	1998	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni. Local priority, from 1997 USDA/RD survey of villages Dock Project	Completed	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DCED	1998	Funded	CDBG Heavy Equipment Garage/Shop	Completed	\$ 47,916	\$ 47,916
DOT&PF	1998	Funded	Airport Snow Removal Equipment	Construction	\$ 19,800	\$ 198,000
DCED	1999	Funded	Capital Matching/Muni Equipment Storage and Maintenance Building Construction	Completed	\$ 12,500	\$ 13,158

DOT&PF	1999	Funded	Snow Removal Equipment - Grader	Construction	\$ 167,236	\$ 185,818
DCED	1999	Funded	Capital Matching Water System Upgrade	Construction	\$ 12,500	\$ 13,158
AEA	1999	Funded	Denali Commission \$600.0 Hydroelectric project	Design	\$ 100,000	\$ 700,000
AEA	1999	Funded	Denali Commission \$22.7 35% Design of Consolidated Bulk Fuel Facility	Design	\$ 0	\$ 22,727
DCED	2000	Funded	Capital Matching Clinic and Public Building Renovation	Construction	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
DCED	2000	Funded	Capital Matching Heavy Equipment Overhaul	Construction	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
DEC	2000	Funded	VSW, EPA \$103.3, AHFC \$51.7. Expand water storage or develop second water source. Local priority, from 1997 USDA/RD survey. Water shortages; build new reservoir dam to enlarge water impoundment area; replace service connections in 10 homes Water & Sewer System Feasibility Study	Completed Plan Phase	\$ 0	\$ 155,000
AEA	2000	Funded	Bulk Fuel Construction	Preliminary	\$ 100,000	\$ 1,000,000
DCED	2001	Funded	Capital Matching Community Facilities & Equipment	Preliminary	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,316
DOT&PF	2002	Funded	Airport Resurfacing and Extension	Preliminary	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,500,000
DCED	2002	Funded	Capital Matching Heavy Equipment Acquisition	Preliminary	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
DOT&PF	2005	Planned	Reconstruct approximately 1.5 miles of road. Atxax Way Reconstruction	N/A	\$ 18,100	\$ 200,000

Subsistence Patterns and Designated Use Areas

Subsistence harvests are important in Atka, both in terms of economic and nutritional value and in terms of the cultural values held by village residents. For Atkans, subsistence is the predominant way of life and the continuation of a traditional way of life.

Subsistence use areas are designated as follows: lands and waters of the coastal zone (federal lands and waters are excluded) on and around the islands of Samalga, Amutka (Volume I, map ESI-W03), Seguam (Volume I, map ESI-W04), and Atka and Amlia (Volume I, map ESI-W05); and state coastal waters surrounding the island of Adak (Volume I, map ESI-W06). These subsistence use areas were reviewed and approved by the Atka IRA Council by resolution (refer to Appendix B).

All residents of Atka contribute in some way to the subsistence livelihood that makes up 50 percent of their diet, unless employment is low, in which case it makes up 75 percent (Impact Assessment 1987). Subsistence harvests, especially for large animals such as sea lions and reindeer, are normally distributed throughout the village. Hunters use both Atka and neighboring Amlia Islands and the waters surrounding them, and the waters surrounding Adak Isalnd, harvesting different resources at different times of the year.

Table 13. Subsistence Resources Uses by the Residents of Atka

Wildlife	Fish	Intertidal	Plants
Sea lion	Sockeye salmon	Sea urchin	Crowberry (mossberry)
Harbor seal	Chinook salmon	Razor clams	Strawberry
Walrus	Coho salmon	Butter clam	Wild parsley (petrusky)
Reindeer	Pink salmon, eggs	cockle	Wild rice
Ducks & birds	Chum salmon	Blue mussel	Yarrow
Emperor geese	Dolly Varden	Limpet	Edible roots; lupine, bog orchid
Gull eggs	Halibut	Chiton	Cow parsnip (putchky)
Other bird eggs	Cod	Red chiton	Beach rye grass for basketry
Fox	Pogy (greenling)	Octopus	
	Pogy eggs	King crab	
	Atka mackerel	Sea cucumber	
	Yellow sculpin	Sea anemone	
	Herring and eggs		

Source: Crayton, 1985 (from Veltre and Veltre, 1983)

Sea lions are hunted all along the coast of Atka, Adak and Amlia Islands, but effort is concentrated on rookeries and haulout areas. Hunting is usually done from three or four skiffs at one time, with two hunters in each boat. Sea lions are most heavily hunted from mid-October to mid-April.

Harbor seals are hunted all along the coasts of both Atka, Adak and Amlia Islands, and at haul out areas. Harbor seals are taken through the year, and it is estimated that 30 are harvested annually. Ninety percent of the harbor seals that are shot are retrieved by the hunters. Walrus are also harvested when present during the fall and winter.

Forty reindeer were introduced on Atka in 1912, and since that time the heard has grown to an estimated 2,000 animals. These feral reindeer are hunted throughout the year, though the most

popular hunting time is in the fall and the least popular time is in the spring during the calving season. Hunting is done from boats near shore, and is concentrated on the western side of the island. Approximately 100 reindeer are harvested annually by Atka residents (Crayton, 1985) and additional reindeer may be harvested by the crews of crab fishing vessels, which occasionally come ashore to hunt.

Foxes are trapped on both Atka and Amlia Islands; however, only blue fox are found on Atka while both blue and silver are found on Amlia. Trapping is done primarily along the coast during the months of December and January.

Salmon, cod, and halibut are the most important fish species used for subsistence by Atka residents. The salmon fishery occurs in the bays with gill nets and beach and round haul seining. Atka residents consider sockeye to be the most desirable species of salmon. Cod and halibut are caught with hand lines, skates, or deep-sea poles. A significant number of Dolly Varden or Arctic char are also harvested each year by Atka fishermen. Other fish species used for subsistence include pogies (Japanese perch), Atka mackerel, yellow sculpin, bullhead, and herring.

Common Eiders are the bird most often hunted on Atka. In a good year up to 150 geese, primarily emperor geese, are harvested. A great number of other birds are also hunted by Atkans including scoters, teal, and goldeneyes. All families harvest eggs locally, the most common being gull eggs; eider eggs are also used by village residents. Atkans have historically harvested a wide variety of marine invertebrates including sea urchins, clams, chiton, limpets, blue mussels, octopus, and crabs. Sea cucumbers, sea anemones, and sea snails are eaten less often.

Plants constitute a relatively small portion of the local diet. Plants harvested locally include wild parsley (petrusky), bog orchid, sarana roots (Kamchatka rhododendron), and berries. Driftwood is collected on the beaches and used for heating and cooking at camps; cottonwood is used for black bull (chew) and for smoking salmon. Beach rye grass is used for basket making.

Table 14. Sea Lion and Harbor Seal Harvest and Take Estimates, Atka, 1992 - 1996

	Year	Harvest	Struck/Lost	Total Take
Sea Lion				
	1992	28.6	9.9	38.5
	1993	25.1	0.0	25.1
	1994	45.5	8.7	54.2
	1995	40.0	0.0	40.0
	1996	17.3	0.0	17.3
Harbor Seal				
	1992	28.6	9.9	38.5
	1993	32.7	0.0	32.7
	1994	73.7	8.7	82.3
	1995	42.5	0.0	42.5
	1996	22.7	2.2	24.8

Source: Wolfe and Mishler, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Technical Paper 241, The Subsistence Harvest of Harbor Seal and Sea Lion by Alaska Natives in 1996, June 1997