

House legislation would control high sea driftnets

WASHINGTON — The House Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment earlier this month passed legislation designed to monitor and control high seas driftnet fishing.

The bill is sponsored by Congressman Don Young, R-Alaska.

HR 3584 would direct the secretary of state to achieve agreements with foreign countries covering the cooperative monitoring of the effects of driftnets, as well as the cooperative enforcement of all laws currently in force covering the use of driftnets.

Failure to achieve an agreement will subject those nations to sanctions against directed fishing allocations, joint venture activities and fisheries trade.

The bill also directs the secretary of commerce to report to Congress on driftnet activities and to develop recommendations on how to mark driftnets for identification purposes.

"This bill is the result of a commitment that the committee leadership made to me earlier this year," Young said. "The high seas driftnet activities being conducted by fishermen from Japan, Korea and Taiwan are a real threat to Alaska's salmon industry and its marine mammal and sea bird populations. This bill puts in place mechanisms to ensure that laws and regulations governing driftnet fishing are enforced.

"I have no illusions that this bill will terminate the driftnet fisheries, a goal which we all share," Young added. "However, it is one more step in moving the driftnet pirates off the high seas."

Young said that he expects the full Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee to approve the legislation this week with action in the House following soon after.

**Alaska's Oldest
Statewide Newspaper**