

# Driftnet proposal rejected by U.S.

A tentative agreement between the United States and Japan to monitor Japanese high seas driftnet fishing vessels does not meet the requirements of the 1987 Driftnet Act.

Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, who has opposed the driftnet agreement, praised the decision by the Department of Commerce to reject the agreement.

"The negotiator's proposal was insufficient to provide reliable information on salmon interceptions which have a devastating effect on Alaska's fishing industry," Stevens said.

The rejected proposal would have allowed nine U.S. observers on the Japanese squid fleet, which is composed of more than 460 vessels.

Observers are people placed on foreign fishing vessels to monitor catches and report violations.

Even with some Canadian and Japanese observers, the number of Japanese vessels which would have been covered by observers under the proposed agreement would have totaled about 32, Stevens said.

The 1987 Driftnet Act requires high seas fishing agreements with Japan, Korea and Taiwan by June 29 of this year. If no agreements are made, President George Bush may then embargo fish products from those nations.

Agreement talks are expected to reopen before June 29.