

Certificate of legal origin bill needed

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Reacting to Coast Guard sightings recently of driftnet vessels in international waters south of Alaska's Aleutian Islands, Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, urged the Senate to pass legislation requiring that a certificate of legal origin accompany all salmon in international trade.

"Our driftnet agreements with Japan, Korea, and Taiwan are not doing the job," Murkowski said in a statement before the Senate.

"Any effort aimed solely at high seas enforcement is doomed to failure. We have to address the markets for il-

legally taken fish as well."

These countries must be made aware that the United States and Alaska will not stand by and see our salmon resources decimated," he added.

The bill, S 2285, would require the U.S. State Department to open negotiations to persuade countries that import salmon to require that all salmon shipments be accompanied by a certificate of legal origin. Such certificates could only be issued by the government of salmon producing nations, and would constitute those governments' assurance that the fish were legally harvested.

The bill is currently awaiting consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"The sightings are just one more indication that we have not done enough to stop the illegal trade. Despite the agreements we have carefully cultivated with Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, the three known drift-netting nations, we are still detecting driftnet vessels fishing where they will inevitably intercept salmon," Muskowski said.

"The most disturbing aspect of the recent sightings is that, according to marking shown in Coast Guard

surveillance photos, some of these vessels may be from North Korea, a country with which we have no agreement to limit, lessen or even monitor fisheries impacts."

We can't afford to have our negotiators follow outlaw fishermen around from country to country seeking new agreements every time a fish pirate decides to reflag his vessel to a nation without a fishery agreement. We have to cut off the markets that keep them in business. S 2285 embodies this simple, straightforward approach."