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Report of suspected IUU driftnet fleet in the North Pacific, 2017

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**Submission By
Ocean Friends Against Driftnets**



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OFAD detected a warm water formation during the 1st week of May located around 38°N x 179°W, just east of the dateline, in the CA. This formation looked ideal for fishing Albacore Tuna as proven in past years. OFAD was hoping to sail on F/V Ocean Joy by this time, but was still doing maintenance work and would not be ready for fishing until the middle of June.

OFAD registered with Global Fishing Watch. A website made for tracking fishing vessels around the world using Automated Identification System (AIS). This is a key tool for detecting IUU fishing and comparable to the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) used by fisheries to keep track of their vessels. This kind of tracking was recommended by the United Nations back in 1991, but still is not been in full effect. Not all Countries, or vessels, comply to this, has been getting better all the time.

Using Global Fishing Watch, OFAD watched as the Japan's Pole and Line (Bait boat) vessels moved into the area. The water formation expanded to the Northeast around 39°N x 176°W. OFAD was sure that this was a fishy area being that more vessels from Japan were showing up and staying in the area.

By the last week of May, and into the 1st week of June, the fleet was joined by vessels from China & Chinese Taipei. China and Taipei do not use the "Pole & Line" method of fishing for Albacore. They are known to use the drift net method of fishing which is illegal. All these fishing vessels were close to each other indicating they were fishing for the same fish.

By June 5th, OFAD president notified USCG who confirmed seeing the fishing fleet and that they would get back to us. OFAD also notified WFOA, Sea Shepherd, and others that might be interested.

June 20th, F/V OCEAN JOY sailed for fishing. OFAD set out to observe the West Coast Albacore fishing grounds. After spending 3 weeks at sea, OFAD observed little to no sign of production.

The water conditions were poor and only small traditional areas having Albacore. The stocks were unhealthy and would only hold up to 3-4 vessels for a short period of time. The whole coastal fleet suffered low yields of production. Many fishermen considered that it was still early, and the fish were still “off shore”.

Meanwhile, OFAD’s vice president continued to monitor Global Fishing Watch. He noticed that the number of Chinese vessels had increased. He also mentioned that it was as if they were following the Japanese vessels around. Saying that the fishing area had grown and moving back to the Northwest. By the end of June, the fleet was centered around 40°N x 179°W – 174°W.

July 12th, F/V OCEAN JOY entered Westport, WA. to prepare the vessel to observe fishing “off shore” and to see, 1st hand, if this fleet from China was fishing with driftnets, or not. We unloaded what few fish we had caught, took on enough fuel to last 90 days at sea, and applied for WCPFC area endorsement permit with NOAA. After many attempts to contact USCG for a follow up report from the previous month, OFAD president spoke to USCG officer. USCG Officer would not give any details, but stated that the vessels in question were fishing for squid and that there was no sign of driftnet activity. USCG Officer said that there was a Coast Guard cutter in the area. OFAD President passed on that F/V OCEAN JOY was sailing to the area to see 1st hand and hoped that this was true.

July 17th, F/V OCEAN JOY set sail for 40°N x 179°W. July 25th, Ocean Joy entered the CA west of 150°W with little to no significant sign of Albacore. July 29th, Ocean Joy encountered some fish at 43°N x 158°W. Some of fish that were caught had driftnet scratches on them. We moved further west to 43°N x 163°W where we found more fish and more driftnet marked fish than before. OFAD Vice President passed on the word that the Chinese fleet was moving west at a very fast pace. Vice President said that the Japan fleet was still hanging around, but that all the Chinese & Chinese Taipei vessels were vacating the area.

This would make sense if the Chinese vessels were illegal & there was a cutter in the area. If these vessels were in fact fishing squid, they would be separated from the Pole & Line fleet from Japan & way to the North by 50 miles or more. They would not just vacate the area if they were in fact ligament fishing vessels. They would be listed as “squid fishing vessels” with the WCPFC in which these vessels were not. These Chinese vessels were listed as “Tuna Longliners” with the WCPFC.

OFAD decided not to pursue any more to the west, being that there was no chance to investigate the presumed IUU driftnet fleet. F/V OCEAN JOY slowly worked back to the East towards the Westcoast. We contacted USCG and let them know that many of the fish caught had markings from driftnets. We were lied to & that it was not the 1st time! In years past, we made driftnet reports & the USCG told us the vessels were Longline boats while we still had driftnet monofilament wrapped up in the propeller. Totally insulting my intelligents!

Then again, we must be very stupid to think anything would be done to stop this IUU driftnet fishing. Our fishery is experiencing a long & painful death. There is no justice here.

In conclusion, another good year for IUU fishing & the worst Albacore Troll season ever. Word is there are some 700 tons of fish competing on the same loin market as us. This fish is coming from Korea, Chinese Taipei, Seychelles, & South Africa. The loins are poor quality with blood in the meat & heavily bruised. This is up 3-4 times higher from the previous year of only 150 tons.



OFAD feels it is High time that WCPFC put sanctions on these countries repeatedly using IUU driftnets.

Regards, OFAD

President John Harder