



THE OCEAN
CLEANUP

To: All Members, Cooperating Non-Members and Observers of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and Other Regional Bodies and Arrangements with Competence to Establish Marine Fisheries Management Measures

Re: Circular on an Expert Survey on Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear

20 May 2019

We kindly request your assistance with a study that will estimate global rates and levels of the production of derelict fishing gear. The study will fill a gap in knowledge of the amount of fishing gear that is abandoned, lost and discarded annually, by gear type and region. We seek the participation in a survey of observers, fishing industry, gear manufacturers and other stakeholders with knowledge of the rates that commercial marine fishing vessels generate abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). In order to encourage candid replies, individual survey responses will be kept strictly confidential.

The amount, distribution and effects of ALDFG have risen substantially over past decades due to the rapid expansion of fishing effort and fishing grounds, and the transition to synthetic, more durable and more buoyant materials used for fishing gears. Most floating debris is now made of synthetic plastics, some readily visible, some microscopic. Yet no robust estimates have been made of the amount of ALDFG produced each year – there is no benchmark against which to assess the efficacy of initiatives to curb this component of marine debris.

Currents and wind can move floating ALDFG and other debris over long distances, in some locations accumulating into large garbage patches. Some floating debris washes ashore or sinks. ALDFG causes a variety of ecological and socioeconomic problems, including obstructing navigation, altering and damaging habitat, transporting and spreading invasive species, transferring toxins through marine food webs, causing injury and mortality when ingested by marine life, and causing ghost fishing – including of target stocks and of endangered, threatened and protected species. Many plastics are persistent, take hundreds of years to degrade at sea and may be largely impervious to degradation once sinking to the seafloor.

Survey forms are available in 20 languages from <https://tinyurl.com/survey-forms-derelict-gear> for the following gear types: gillnet fisheries, pelagic longline, pot and trap, small pelagic purse seine, tuna purse seine, demersal otter trawl, handline, troll and squid jigging. More information on the project is available online at <https://www.iucn.org/news/commission-ecosystem-management/201812/derelict-fishing-gear-worlds-marine-capture-fisheries>.

The study is sponsored by The Ocean Cleanup and the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management. Please direct inquiries and submit completed surveys by **September 1, 2019** to Dr. Eric Gilman, FisheriesResearchGroup@gmail.com.