



## **LIGHT WEIGHT LOW IMPACT FISHING GEAR**

The Environmental Foot Print of the gear used by the freezer longline fleet is among the smallest of all commercial fisheries.

Longline fishing gear does not cause significant damage or disturbance to the coral and sponge habitats of the Bering Sea or the Aleutian Island Archipelago.

The freezer longline fleet only uses 9-11 mm (3/8") diameter line. This light weight gear is designed to have minimal impact on the bottom.

According to the NOAA / NMFS Final Environmental Impact Statement for Essential Fish Habitat Identification and Conservation in Alaska "Due to the light weight of the lines used with longline gear, effects on either infaunal or epifaunal prey organisms are considered to be limited to anchors and weights. Since these components make up less than 1/500th of the length of the gear, their effects are considered very limited."

In a more recent study (Heifetz et al 2009) Scientists from the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center Auke Bay Lab used video imagery to examine and quantify seafloor disturbance and damage to corals and sponges relative to fishing practices in the central Aleutian Islands of Alaska. The study found that with longline gear there was no significant difference between areas fished with this gear, and unfished areas.

These studies indicate what we have long held to be true. Longline fishing gear such as that used aboard the freezer longline fleet in Alaska has one of the lowest environmental impacts of commercially available fishing methods.

