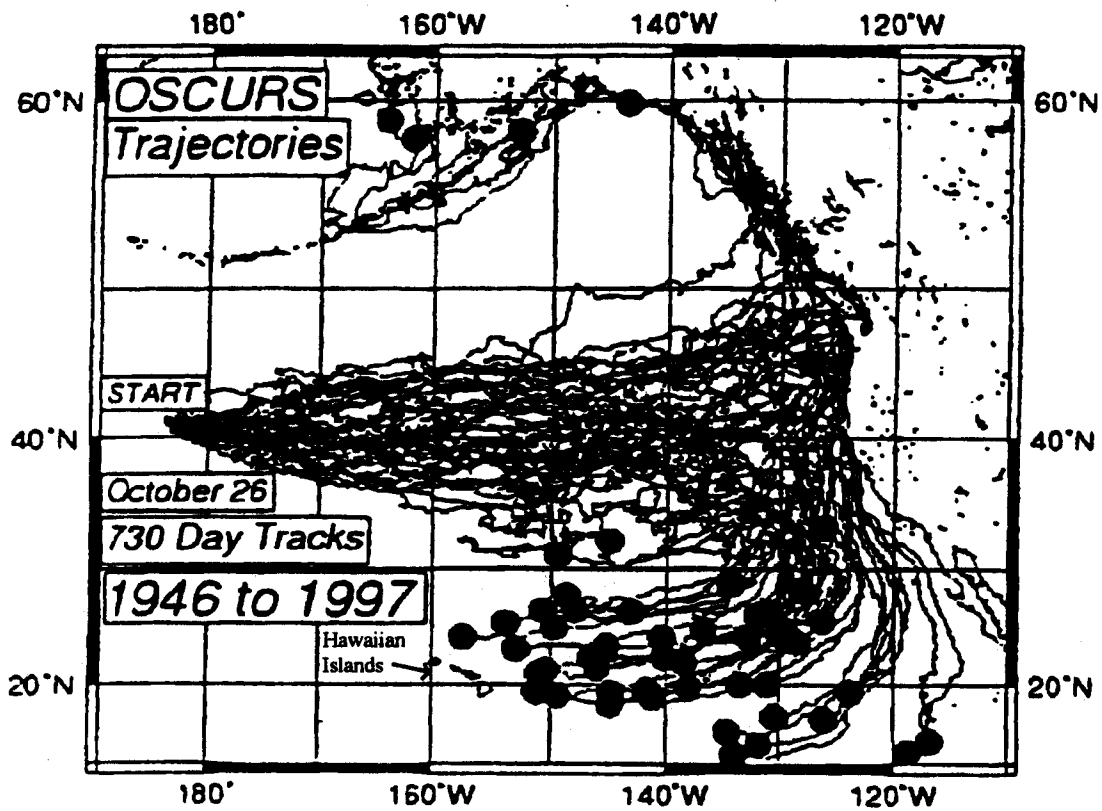




- The problem of derelict fishing gear and its adverse effects on the marine environment is Pacific-wide in nature. There is growing concern about the impacts of discarded fishing gear on protected and endangered species and the marine environment in the region.
- The surface waters of the North Pacific support one of the highest known concentrations of marine debris worldwide. Recent NMFS surveys of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) have documented substantial accumulations of derelict fishing gear on the coral reefs. This is in stark contrast to past surveys (1979–1983) that found these areas to be in relatively pristine condition.
- It is estimated that several thousand tons of derelict fishing gear are grounded on coral reefs in the NWHI.
- Sixty-eight percent by weight of the derelict fishing gear are believed to originate from the North Pacific trawl fisheries, which operate outside of the Council's jurisdiction.
- Entanglement has led to the drowning of protected and endangered marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds and other marine life, including the Hawaiian monk seal and humpback whale.
- Plastics, such as lighters and light sticks, retrieved by foraging albatrosses are killing chicks that are fed the objects.
- Derelict fishing gear threatens the ecological balance of the regions coral reef and other marine ecosystems. Once grounded, derelict fishing gear moves across the reef due to wave action, causing physical damage to corals and other essential fish habitat.
- Grounded derelict fishing gear may facilitate the introduction of alien species of marine organisms. The gear may disrupt the natural ecological balance by scouring bottom habitat, enabling non-native species to colonize these areas and eventually replace the endemic species.
- Currently a multi-agency coral reef cleanup team—composed of the US Coast Guard, National Marine Fisheries Service and others—is working to remove grounded gear in the NWHI
- An international workshop will be held August 6–11, 2000, at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu to examine the problems caused by derelict fishing gear in the Pacific region and identify solutions to this problem. In preparation for this workshop, the Western Pacific Council co-hosted a meeting with members of the fishing industry Nov. 20, during the Seattle Fish Expo.



Ocean Surface Current Simulations (OSCURS) trajectories indicating current patterns in the North Pacific.