



DISTINCTIVE PINK LIFT BAGS MADE BY HALCYON DIVE SYSTEMS ARE BEING USED TO RETRIEVE ABANDONED GHOST NETS AND OTHER PLASTIC WASTE FROM THE WORLD'S OCEANS. THE SPECIAL FABRIC FOR THE BAGS WAS DEVELOPED BY TRELLEBORG.

Trelleborg materials are renowned for being present in a huge range of technologies and environments worldwide, but sometimes they can be found in the unlikeliest of places that surprises even Trelleborg itself.

Recently, while watching a television news report about removing plastic waste from the oceans, Steve Brockman, a Vice President and Commercial Direct within Trelleborg Industrial Solutions, noticed something familiar: the bright pink lift bags being used for the task contained a polyurethane coated fabric that had been produced by Trelleborg.

In the news report, the bags, made by Trelleborg's customer Halcyon Dive Systems, were being used by Greenpeace and others to remove 'ghost nets', fishing nets that have been abandoned to drift in the world's oceans causing all manner of havoc to sea life.

"I am proud that Trelleborg can make a contribution to help address what is a growing problem," says Brockman.

GHOST NETS: THE BANE OF THE SEAS

In fact, ghost nets have become a bane of the seas. They are left behind after being caught on coral, dropped by fishermen, or just carelessly discarded because they are worn out. But out of sight does not mean they're gone. The forgotten nets keep drifting in the water like specters in a haunting dance, continuing to do their job, but helping no one or anything. Fish,



Ghost nets are commercial fishing nets, some the size of football pitches, which have been lost or abandoned by a fishing vessel and remain in the sea, continuing to catch and kill fish and other forms of marine life.

crabs, turtles and other sea creatures still become caught in these nets, slowly perishing due to starvation or strangulation.

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) estimates that 640,000 ghost nets are left behind in the sea each year. That amounts to ten percent of the 14 billion pounds (6.3 billion kilograms) of waste that makes its way into the ocean annually, and it accounts for 85 percent of the plastic that makes up the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

The Global Ocean Explorers Survey Foundation (GOES) warns that the bits of plastic filling the seas are merging with toxic chemicals from sunscreens, fire retardants (PBDE), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), tin and mercury, bonding together and being mistaken for food by plankton and other inhabitants of the sea.

These poisonous cocktails have already wiped out an enormous amount of the plankton population on Earth, and GOES says we have only ten years to correct this death spiral. Plankton eat a significant amount of carbon dioxide and produce an astounding 75 percent of the Earth's oxygen. That's more than the Amazon rainforest. If all the planet's plankton are killed off, it spells doom for all life on Earth.

HOW HALCYON'S DIVE BAGS AID THE WAR ON OCEAN PLASTIC

"There's a tremendous amount of plastic out there -- wherever you look, wherever you go, you'll find plastic, even in the Arctic," says Mark Messersmith, Chief Operating Officer of Halcyon Dive Systems. Halcyon has for many years been providing equipment like the dive bags Steve Brockman spotted in the news report



to Ghost Fishing teams that work around the world to dredge the discarded nylon nets from the sea.

The firm sponsors conservation efforts in Europe and Central America, providing lift bags and diving equipment. Divers attach the bags to debris, then inflate them with their air tanks to lift them off the ocean floor. Messersmith says it can be a tedious and risky business. “There are many small animals living on the nets and you don’t want to cause further damage. It can become dangerous and takes skill.”

The company is located in north Florida in the US, in the heart of the underground paradise for technical divers, those who are daring enough to explore the water-filled cave network that holds the freshwater supporting the surf side communities. Halcyon evolved from the specialized needs of these divers, who explore the dangerous underground depths of bodies of water all over the world, including the famous north central Florida’s freshwater Ginnie (75 feet deep) and Wakulla (300 feet deep) springs.

Nowadays, Halcyon distributes its diving gear around the world. “We’ve built a good team and we have a great product. Our reach through the diving community is pretty much unparalleled,” says Messersmith.

As well as its supply of dive bags worldwide, Halcyon is committed to other conservation projects. It runs Global Underwater Explorers (GUE), a specialized dive training agency known worldwide, and Project Baseline, a non-profit organization. This is dedicated to documenting water bodies to build databases that will establish a

baseline to allow for objective scientific evaluation in the future.

“Conservation has always been of interest to us; it’s who we are. Science and communities of people working together can change the trajectory,” says Messersmith.

He adds that Halcyon has streamlined its packaging and supply lines to utilize recycled, biodegradable, environmentally friendly materials as often as possible. The company even powers its facility with solar energy. “We’re not kidding when we say we’re making an impact.”

DIVE EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER

Dive equipment supplier Trelleborg provides about 9,000 yards of polyurethane laminated nylon fabrics to Halcyon each year for use in dive equipment, such as the lift bags used to recover lost nets in Ghost Fishing projects.

“Trelleborg products are very important to Halcyon,” Mark Messersmith, COO, Halcyon Dive Systems. Since 2002, Halcyon has been using products from Lamcotec, a company based in Monson, Massachusetts, acquired by Trelleborg in 2018.

For more information on Trelleborg’s range of coated material solutions, please visit www.TrelleborgECF.com.

Coated Fabric Key Features

- Air Holding
- Durable
- High Abrasion Resistance
- High Strength Weld
- Hi-Vis
- Lightweight
- Rapid Prototyped
- Water-Resistant

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