

2 of 2

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE MARSHALL ISLANDS ADVISORY GROUP

401205

The Marshall Islands Advisory Group provides the following comments and recommendations on issues discussed at a meeting on October 3-4, 1978 concerning the cleanup and rehabilitation of Enewetak Atoll.

1. Planting of Coconut Trees on Northern Islands of Enewetak

The Advisory Group concurs with the ODE letter of September 29 to Vice Admiral R. R. Monroe from L. J. Deal.

A final decision concerning the permissible degree of occupancy of the northern islands can be made only after conclusion of the present cleanup effort and after acquisition of additional information on applicable living habits and food chains and the movement of radionuclides such as ¹³⁷Cs, ²³⁸Pu and ²⁴¹Am through these food chains. Pending this evaluation it would be unfortunate if steps were taken that would encourage the Enewetak people to believe that a decision had already been made. (We assume that it has not been stated or implied to the people that they can expect to return to the Northern Islands at the completion of the cleanup effort.) This is particularly cogent in view of the unfortunate experience at Bikini. That experience suggests that coconuts grown on the northern islands might not be suitable for human consumption and might not be suitable for copra production. To plant coconut trees on the northern islands at this time might, therefore, require their early future destruction, which could have unfortunate ramifications. Alternatively you might require restricting their consumption, which the Bikini experience would indicate to be ineffective. Therefore, the Advisory Group recommends that coconuts not be planted now and that decisions to plant in the future be delayed until data assessments and evaluations are completed.

2. Cleanup Guidance for Subsurface Contamination

In some situations, such as those with the subsurface contamination at Boken and Enjebi, it is not appropriate to apply a generic plan such as the operation plan. Instead, in situations as well defined as these, it is better to rely on judgments specific to those situations. We would, therefore, recommend that the identified pockets of contamination on Boken be removed and that the contamination on Enjebi be left, unless further definition of the subsurface pockets indicate pockets exceeding 150 pCi/gm. Consideration should be given to removal of the asphalt under the soil on Enjebi so that vegetation will grow. With regard to the Roman Crypt, the Advisory Group would be pleased to review any plan proposed by the ODE or JIC. Based on the few data made available to us and our observations during our visit, we continue to believe it is an engineering problem that can be handled by Col. Dauchspies. Removal of the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

5009297

buried material and burial in the sea or in the Cactus Crater seems to be logical. Where the OPLAN conditions are inadequate to fully represent the situation, or where it is unclear how the conditions are to be applied, the Advisory Group believes that situation-specific judgments should be exercised by the DOE technical staff at Enewetak in conjunction with the JTG.

3. Enjebi Experimental Garden Plot

During the course of several meetings the Group has had the opportunity to refer to data that might be obtained from the garden plot on Enjebi. During its visit to the atoll in August the group briefly visited the plot. The Group has the impression that the garden has considerable potential for providing information on the relationships between radionuclides in soil and edible crops. Such information is of paramount importance in making informed recommendations about the future use of the northern islands of Enewetak Atoll and the return of the Marshallese to these islands.

Based on our limited information concerning the garden plot and on our visit to it, we are particularly concerned that the garden will not be able to provide the information needed in a timely manner.

The group strongly recommends that the role of the garden plot as a part of an overall integrated plan for making radiological assessments be carefully evaluated. If the plot has a key role, it should be clearly defined and adequately supported to carry out its mission. This should include consideration of an alternate location in the event logistics problems are insurmountable after the JTG effort is completed.

4. Plowing Experiment

A review of preliminary data from the plowing experiment suggests that plowing decreased the potential for resuspension of plutonium since the plutonium in the surface soils appeared to be nearly uniformly mixed with all of the plowed soil. Thus, plowing probably would reduce the amount of plutonium that could be inhaled. However, while plowing might reduce the health risk from inhaled plutonium, the possibility remains that plowing could increase the availability of ^{90}Sr , ^{137}Cs , ^{239}Pu and ^{241}Am to plant roots. To comment further on plowing, the Advisory Group requires comparative data on the levels of ^{90}Sr and ^{137}Cs , ^{239}Pu and ^{241}Am in plowed and unplowed soil and on the uptake of these radionuclides in plants grown in the plowed and unplowed soil. Dose assessments for the two conditions could then be obtained and used in determining the benefits of plowing with respect to rehabilitation of the Northern Islands.