



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

July 6, 2021

Ms. Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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Dear Ms. Simonds:

The Secretary has directed me to reply to your June 16, 2021, letter regarding the March 23-25, 2021, virtual meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WestPac). You wrote that during this meeting WestPac members discussed the continued impact of the nuclear-weapons tests that the Department of Defense carried out in the northern Marshall Islands 1946-1958, tests whose consequences have caused Marshall Islanders severe suffering which endures to this day.

Your letter mentioned WestPac members' particular interest in Runit Dome within Enewetak Atoll and the status of Runit Dome's integrity and the monitoring and research which the Department of Energy has conducted related to potential radio-active leakage. You asked for information from the Department of the Interior about addressing this significant environmental and public-health issue.

While Article VII of the agreement subsidiary to Section 177 of the Compact of Free Association, Public Law 99-239 (January 14, 1986), obliged the Marshall Islands Government to bear full responsibility to maintain and to monitor Runit Dome, the Department of the Interior has made *no-year* funds available to the Department of Energy to conduct radio-chemical analysis of the groundwater surrounding and in the Runit Dome containment structure. In fiscal year 2020 the Department of Energy worked closely with the Marshall Islands Government to develop a credible groundwater monitoring program consistent with the requirements of Public Law 112-149, including plans to drill new holes to collect representative water samples for radio-chemical analysis. The Office of Insular Affairs made \$1,689,000 available to the Department of Energy for this purpose.

The Secretary has asked me to thank you for your keen interest and that of WestPac members in this matter of great importance to not only Enewetak Atollers specifically but all Marshall Islanders.

Sincerely yours,

Nikolao I. Pula Jr.
Acting Assistant Secretary
Insular and International Affairs