



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

June 16, 2021

Honorable Debra A. Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council held its 185th meeting virtually March 23-25, 2021. Members discussed and supported a recommendation from its Mariana Island advisors regarding continued impacts from U.S. nuclear bomb testing that occurred between 1946 and 1958 in and around the Marshall Islands. Citizens of the Marshall Islands suffered serious health effects for decades following those tests.

Recently published articles reported that the Runit Dome in the Marshall Islands, where radioactive contaminated material is stored, is possibly cracked and radioactive material may be leaking into the environment.^{1,2} The Mariana Archipelago's geographic location implies it may potentially be impacted given the prevailing winds and ocean currents in the equatorial Pacific region. The Council and the governments of the Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are interested in the status of the Runit Dome's integrity, monitoring and research being conducted related to potential radioactive leakage and possible mitigation strategies to ameliorate environmental and social impacts in Guam and the CNMI. The Council would appreciate receiving information from the Department of the Interior or other appropriate agencies that are monitoring and addressing this important U.S. Pacific Islands environmental and public health issue.

Thank you very much for your attention to these requests that assist and support the U.S. citizens in Guam and the CNMI. We would appreciate your providing us with a point of contact so we may continue the dialogue.

Sincerely,

Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

Cc: Ralph D.L.G. Torres, governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Lourdes Aflague Leon Guerrero, governor, Territory of Guam

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2020-07-01/us-says-nuclear-waste-safe-marshall-islands-runit-dome>, <https://www.westhawaii.com/2020/07/28/nation-world-news/gabbard-dismisses-us-claim-that-marshall-islands-nuclear-waste-site-is-safe>

² <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/402002/leaking-nuclear-waste-dome-marshalls-consider-legal-action>