



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

DEC 4 1974

Dear Dr. Biles:

We received your letter dated November 8, 1974, in which you addressed several issues concerning Bikini and Eniwetok.

We, too, feel that our offices should maintain a closer working relationship and agree that rehabilitation plans and master plan development should be coordinated with you in advance of implementation. Frankly, it was surprising that the concern you had on the Bikini construction and rehabilitation was not forcefully voiced to us until this time. Your representatives have many times observed what was being done on Bikini, yet we have no record of communication from the Atomic Energy Commission that the direction of the program was improper.

Upon reviewing the Ad Hoc Committee's report it is clear that Eneu was the first choice for habitation but Bikini was not precluded as unsafe. Thus, since the people expressed a strong desire to return to Bikini, that is where the original houses were built. It is our understanding that the AEC was made aware of the people's feelings and, as mentioned, no objection was voiced as AEC witnessed the construction program. We feel that your report entitled "Radiation Safety Considerations at Bikini Atoll," May 1970 (enclosed), serves as a sound justification to support our past efforts. Other than coconut crabs, pandanus was the only food mentioned as needing special attention and the rest of the report was positive from a safety point of view. Dr. Gustafson's 1968 report was also positive.

You also mentioned a rumor that coral other than that from the Peter-Oboe site was used in constructing buildings. Enclosed is a copy of a letter from the general contractor stating that the Peter-Oboe site was the only coral source. You will note that the Bikini District Administrator's Representative attests to the correctness of the statement.

As respects your comment on the slow coconut tree growth, the Distad Marshalls has told us that the trees are generally doing well in light of the rather limited rainfall. Trust Territory agriculturists are following up with soil checks to ascertain the need for additional nutrients.

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We have given the Japten return issue considerable thought. At this time we plan to proceed with the return, probably about April 1975, after the plan for living, working and support has been fully assessed. We feel an obligation to honor the commitment, especially since the Council passed an ordinance which in part addressed the safety consideration set forth by AEC. The Distad has also assured us that a full-time appointed representative would enforce all restrictions. At present, we are working on an interagency support agreement between the Department of the Interior and the Defense Nuclear Agency concerning the return of 50 people.

In summary, we want to restate our position that AEC must be completely involved in the Bikini project on a rather full-time basis. We suggest an interagency group be set up to participate in all programs related to Bikini. This group should include representatives from DOI, TTPI HQ, TTPI Marshalls, AEC, Holmes and Harver, and MLSC. We will take the lead in setting this up. It may be appropriate to have a meeting in the near future since a master plan is now being prepared by Holmes and Harver.

We also strongly urge that a comprehensive radiological assessment, such as that done on Eniwetok, be undertaken by AEC at the earliest possible time. The DOI/TTPI have an ongoing rehabilitation program that should not be inhibited by lack of complete up-to-date radiological data. The Office of Territorial Affairs stands ready to assist this effort in any way possible, and looks forward to your early response so we may proceed in a cooperative effort.

Sincerely yours, --

(Sgd) Stanley S. Carpenter

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Enclosures
