

Bottle from state drifts to Scotland

On Aug. 13, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game received a drift bottle which was recovered from an island off the west coast of Scotland earlier this year.

The drift bottle was released in the Bering Strait on June 26, 1979, as part of a study of current patterns in the Norton Sound and the Bering Strait region, according to the Fish & Game Bulletin, published by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The drift bottle is made of a very tough plastic used in centrifuge tubes and must have survived several years in the polar pack ice.

Based on a review of current patterns in the Arctic Ocean, it is likely that the bottle was carried through the Bering Straits and into the Chukchi Sea by the strong northerly currents which exist in that area during the spring and summer. The following winter, the bottle was probably frozen into the icepack and carried to the west along the Siberian Coast.

During the next seven years, it was carried in a clockwise direction around the Arctic Ocean to Greenland. It may have left the Arctic in the east Greenland current and been carried to Scotland on the east Icelandic current.

The 1979 Bering Strait study involved a total of 3,400 bottles. Only 246 of the bottles have been recovered to date, so it is possible that additional recoveries may be made from the Atlantic Ocean.

The bottles were released in an effort to determine how potential oil spills from tanker traffic and oil exploration in Norton Sound might affect the area's fish and wildlife. Other drift bottle studies have been conducted in Sitka Sound, Cook Inlet and the Bering Sea.