

# Scientist recommends 'don't clean up' Cape Thompson

By Rob Stapleton

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FAIRBANKS — A well known scientist from a Northwest lab that specializes in radionuclides and nuclear contaminants made a personal recommendation not to clean up or move the radioactively contaminated soil at Cape Thompson, 26 miles south of Pt. Hope. The site is scheduled for clean up in March 1993, at the directive of Mead Treadwell in Alaska Gov. Walter Hickel's (Independent) office.

Darrell Fisher, PhD., a health physicist and senior research scientist for Battelle Pacific Northwest Lab in Richland, WA says the 20 by 30 by 4 foot mound of dirt on Snowbank Creek on Cape Thompson, "Does not represent a threat to health."

*Continued on page 4*

# • 'Leave contamination below the permafrost' says expert

*Continued from page 1*

Richland is a site for nuclear waste disposal in the west.

The earth in question contains Cesium 137 and Strontium 85 and fallout from the Sedan nuclear test in Nevada. The site was the subject of a test 30 years ago to determine the effects of radioactive runoff in nearby drainage systems.

Fisher gave a prepared lecture last weekend at the University of Alaska/Fairbanks. After researching the history and details of this controversial experiment and methods of disposal, Fisher was invited to give the lecture at the invitation of the Engineering Department at UA/F.

Fisher also gave several personal recommendations:

- Leave the contamination "in place" below the permafrost.

- Put up a fence around the mound, with appropriate posting.

- Allow Cs-137 to decay away to undetectable levels.

- Re-allocate clean up funds to medical research, or debt reduction.

At the time this test was being disposed, "the manner in which the material was disposed of (buried in a 20 by 30 foot hole and covered with 4 feet of dirt) was strictly illegal," according to Fisher. "In fact, the disposal was 1000 times greater

than acceptable limits at that time," he adds. Estimated costs for the proper disposal are \$1 million.

The test site and disposal was brought to light after 30 years by UA/F researcher, Dan O'Neil who obtained the US Dept. of Energy records. O'Neil, who was in attendance at the lecture, found this while looking into the history and details of the un-classified material on Project Chariot. Project Chariot was a scheme by Edward Teller, of the DOE, to simultaneously create underground nuclear explosions to excavate coast line for a harbor near Pt. Hope in the early sixties.

The project was stopped

after local Alaskan Natives and the *Tundra Times* wrote concerning the long term effects to the people and environment.

Fisher states that extensive nuclear weapons testing during the sixties to beat cold war non-test treaties, 'exposed Alaska Natives to high amounts of radioactivity.'

Several Pt. Hope residents who aided in the ini-

tial exploration and core sampling of the mound at Cape Thompson this fall, attended the lecture. One was not convinced of Fisher's conclusion and stated there are more AEC documents that are classified about this test. More mounds similar to the ones at Snowbank Creek are found around Pt. Hope say the Inupiat residents who do not wish to be identified.