

Future of Amchitka Island Not Bright If AEC Tests Continue

(From ALASKA FISH & GAME TRAILS)

Karl Schneider, game biologist, Anchorage, attended a meeting in Seattle November 24-25 to review the bioenvironmental effects of the Amchitka test.

Movies of the shot were spectacular. Water was thrown off the surface of the ocean as much as two miles from ground zero. The water in the sea otter beach pen went eight feet into the air.

Overpressures were not sufficient to kill sea otters directly. However, they were great enough near the bottom of the ocean to break ear drums which could result in the eventual death of an animal had animals been diving in the area of the time of the detonation.

Overpressure near the surface (where the penned otter were) was close to zero. Some disruption of the soil and vegetation occurred; sections of cliffs and sea stacks broke loose sometimes dumping thousands of cubic yards of rock into the tidal and subtidal zones.

Sticklebacks were killed in ponds near the test site but few other fish were injured.

In all, there was no spectacular damage to the ecology of the island. However, enough damage was done to make Schneider concerned about the effects of repeated tests of a higher-yield.

These tests will be in areas with less stable soil. Recovery to damage is very slow because most of the organic material is tied up in the mat of vegetation, not the soil. Decomposition is very slow.

One can only speculate on the eventual results of repeated disruption of the vegetative mat, accelerated cliff erosion with the loss of bird nesting areas, destruction of the sea floor through rock slides, etc.

At the same point, tests may become large enough to kill sea otters and fish directly. A shot during the bird nesting season could be detrimental, particular-

ly for birds nesting around the edges of ponds.

Long term effects on the lower trophic levels of marine life cannot be measured immediately. The bulk of the animal life depends on these lower trophic levels.

Venting of radioactive mater-

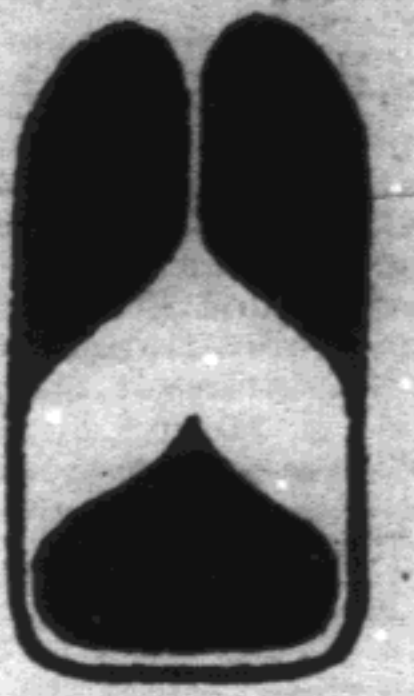
ial could cause international problems because many salmon in the area are of Asian origin.

When one considers the effects of the blasts, the pollution from drilling and destruction from tracked vehicles and other equipment, Amchitka's future is not bright.

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