



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS  
NATIONAL NUCLEAR COMMISSION  
PO BOX 2  
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made and entered into as of August 21, 2019, by and between the Republic of the Marshall Islands National Nuclear Commission (NNC) with an address at PO Box 2, Majuro, Marshall Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands Environmental Protection Authority (RMI EPA) with an address of PO Box 1322, Majuro, Marshall Islands. This MOU sets forth the understanding of the parties related to collaboration in research and data collection and sharing relating to RMI's nuclear weapons testing history and legacy.

WHEREAS, in connection with the establishment of a partnership between the parties whereby information resources would be shared, and oversight of contractors and research activities would be shared, the parties wish to set forth their current understanding and certain agreements made to date with respect to such partnership.

**1. BACKGROUND**

The NNC was established by the Nitijela on February 28, 2017. Its creation was a result of a desire to better coordinate the government's efforts to address ongoing, unresolved issues and challenges arising from the U.S. nuclear weapons testing program that took place in RMI from July 1946 to July 1958. The core mandate of the NNC is to develop a strategy to address nuclear justice.

The NNC is also responsible for exercising general oversight over Government ministries, offices and agencies having responsibility for addressing consequences of the US nuclear weapons testing program or monitoring, assessing, documenting, or otherwise dealing with the effects of the program. The NNC is required to ensure coordination and integration in performing this role.

The RMI EPA is the key environmental enforcement agency in the country. The main regulatory responsibilities include environmental permits, development approval, environmental impact assessment (EIA) and compliance and enforcement. Apart from its regulatory and compliance functions it has an advisory role to the President and Ministers, is involved in international liaison, has reporting functions, is to conduct surveys and research, is to collate information and carry out community liaison as well as policy and planning functions in the areas of land use planning, management and conservation of natural resources, fisheries, soil conservation. Under the Coast Conservation Act, the EPA is also expected to play a key role in coastal management

including conduct of research in coast conservation, surveying the coastal zone, and creating an inventory of coral reefs.

The NNC is developing a long term, comprehensive environmental research plan to conduct studies in certain atolls to respond to concerns expressed by those atoll leaders and community members. RMI EPA's capacity in testing and analyzing both terrestrial and marine resources (water) throughout the RMI and their growing technical capacity in measuring radioactivity in the water and terrestrial environment makes them a key local partner in conducting the required research.

The NNC and RMI EPA have shared goals and objectives with respect to ensuring that RMI's environmental resources are safe and can support healthy lifestyles. Understanding the status of lagoon waters and agricultural resources throughout the RMI as a result of nuclear testing is critical to ensuring healthy communities and in turn, addressing nuclear justice.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this MOU is to enable collaboration between the parties on environmental research. The US nuclear weapons testing program had devastating effects on the RMI environment, both marine and terrestrial. NNC has the responsibility to manage and preserve information relating to the testing program, including collection of data. There is a large body of environmental research on radiation impacts to the environments of Bikini, Enewetak, Utrik, and Rongelap atolls. More research is required on these atolls and data is also needed for other atolls that were impacted by radioactive fallout from the nuclear tests and where there has been minimal research.

The Department of Energy has been conducting radiation research in the northern atolls for decades, particularly around the Runit dome in Enewetak. Important questions remain about the status of the lagoon environment around the dome and the level of contaminants in the water, groundwater, and sediment. The NNC plays a facilitating role in organizing surveys that can address outstanding questions that will provide important information for the local communities on their health and environment. A partnership with the RMI EPA in carrying out these studies ensures continued development of national capacity and independence from external influences over priorities, funding, or outcomes.

### *Research Ethics*

The RMI Cabinet adopted a Research Protocol to guide interested individuals and parties in their research into RMI's nuclear legacy. A critical component of scientific research on radiation impacts in the Marshall Islands is ensuring that communities can guide, participate in, and interpret outcomes of that research. In addition, it is imperative that research is respectful and adheres to custom and tradition so as not to perpetuate historically abusive research practices in the RMI where data is collected without permission or respect for local ownership and cultural sensitivities. Collaboration with external scientists and experts will be necessary in many cases but with strong local

involvement in research activities, we can ensure that scientific knowledge contributes to improving lives of those communities most impacted by the nuclear testing program. Through this MOU, the NNC will partner with RMI EPA in designing environmental research programs that engage the local communities and ensure that outcomes are communicated back to communities in responsible ways.

#### *Research Design*

The NNC may establish a Scientific Advisory Panel to guide its scientific research program into radiation effects on human health and the environment. Where any research is involving the ocean and terrestrial environment, NNC will work closely with RMI EPA in the design of research projects. RMI EPA may also be requested to participate in discussions of the Scientific Advisory Panel.

### **3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### *National Nuclear Commission*

The NNC will work closely with RMI EPA in the development of research projects on the marine and terrestrial environment in the RMI. In all cases, strengthening of RMI EPA's human resource capacity will be a priority in the designing of radiation-related research in the environment.

The NNC will be responsible for sourcing funding for radiation-related research in the environment and such funding requests will include resources to support additional work required by RMI EPA staff. The required time and corresponding compensation for RMI EPA staff will be determined through agreement by the NNC Chair and RMI EPA General Manager.

#### *Republic of the Marshall Islands Environmental Protection Authority*

RMI EPA will make every effort to ensure that relevant RMI EPA staff are available to support NNC-commissioned radiation-related environmental research projects. RMI EPA will also work with NNC on the interpretation and communication of scientific results to relevant atoll communities and national government leadership.

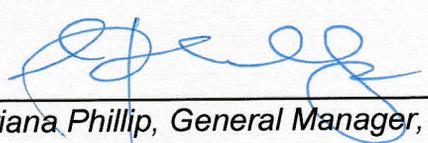
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, by their signatures below, the parties have caused this Memorandum of Understanding to be executed and effective as of the Effective Date.

**RMI NATIONAL NUCLEAR COMMISSION**

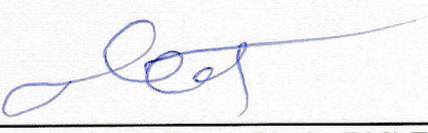
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rhea Moss-Christian, Chair

8/21/19  
DATE

**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Moriana Phillip, General Manager, RMI EPA

8/21/19  
DATE

  
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Emma Kabua-Tibon, Chair, RMI EPA

9/4/19  
DATE