

Pipeline break fouls Yukon lake

By DAVE ABLETT
Sun Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — More than 160,000 gallons of diesel fuel were spilled into a Yukon lake three years ago from a U.S. Army pipeline that crosses Canadian territory.

The spill, caused by corrosion of the eight-inch pipeline killed a significant number of fish.

There have been recurring problems since then — last year the lakeshore turned red in places — but these problems have not been traced by the army to the diesel fuel spill.

Canadian officials were concerned that they were the result of the spill.

The major pipeline break, one of three breaks in the 290-mile Canadian section of the line in the past three years, was discovered May 17, 1968.

It is described in U.S. army

corps of engineers' report obtained by The Sun.

Because of this spill, and others, the army said, "it was recognized that a corrosion problem of major proportions existed on the Haines - Fairbanks pipeline although the true extent of the problem was not known and could not easily be determined."

The line was built in 1954-55, the Canadian section by Marwell Construction, of Vancouver.

The first corrosion break in the line occurred in 1964.

To keep a watch on the line for breaks and spills, army planes fly along the route weekly. To keep the 50-foot wide right-of-way clear for aerial surveillance the army said the land is sprayed with defoliants — the controversial Tordon 101 mixture used by B.C. Hydro in its clearing operations is one such herbicide.

In addition, Tordon pellets, containing 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D are used. And the army also uses a soil sterilant called fenuron.

It is not clear from the army reports whether the nearly 1,800 acres of Canadian pipeline right of way are sprayed by U.S. planes. A section of the line cuts across the north-west tip of B.C.

While corrosion is the major problem, the line has sprung leaks from bullet holes as well.

And in the first year of operation, there was a major problem because ice formed in the line.

The army found it had to have the line cut in 28 places in the Canadian section to remove ice and slush so the fuel would flow.

With removal of the ice blocks, the reports point out, fuel spilled out. There is no record of how much but one such spill covered an area up to five feet deep in jet fuel, killing a number of trees.

Last September, the army said, a section of pipe had to be replaced at the Clukshu River crossing in the Yukon. This river is also known as the Unahini River.

"This was accomplished in co-operation with Canadian authorities to protect a major salmon spawning area against possible contamination," the army said.

The major spill in May 1968 took place near Dezadeash Lake in the Yukon.

24-6-1

Type: Diesel Oil

NOT now

34-6-2

NEVER USED

NO - Alberta Corrosion
Investigation - + ground
along by Tordon
U.S. Personnel.

TORDON 101 USED

